The Ashura Movement and Dimensions of Reinterpreting Islamic Political Rationality

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Abstract

To honor the Ashura movement, it is essential to reinterpret Islamic political rationality in its various dimensions. This task necessitates recognizing and distinguishing the roles of three significant variables, including goals, methods, and tools in this movement. Characteristics such as universality, stability, global applicability, sanctity, alignment with human nature and religious texts, and the maximal acceptance of the goals of the Ashura movement underscore their central importance relative to methods and tools. These characteristics even render the nature and role of methods and tools meaningful only in light of the goals. Accordingly, the enjoining of good and forbidding of evil, as the most crucial religious and political goal, alongside other sacred and universal goals of the Ashura movement, determines the nature and functioning of methods such as mourning rituals and tools, because methods and tools are valuable only when they serve meaningful goals. Moreover, paying attention to the hierarchical relationship between the three variables of knowledge, affection, and obedience to the Imams, particularly Imam al-Ḥusayn, is crucial in deriving religious and political models from the Ashura movement. This focus prevents excess emotionalism and enhances our religious and political rationality. Ultimately, the necessity of religious and political rationality in the Ashura movement requires distinguishing the intrinsic attributes of the Imams, especially Imam al-Ḥusayn, from their incidental attributes. Specifically, recognizing their role in religious guidance, from which the enjoining of good arises, is more important than focusing on seeking worldly and otherworldly needs from them. Thus, our religious and political rationality demands that we seek and follow the true goals of the Imamate and the Ashura movement, utilizing only those methods and tools that prove useful and effective, as methods and tools are temporary and transient and do not possess inherent sanctity.

Keywords

Goals, methods, tools, political rationality, Ashura movement.

Introduction

In contemporary times, the question of our religious and political rationality as Muslims in general, and Shias in particular, encompasses the inquiry into how we understand the religious and political dimensions of the Ashura movement and how we preserve and utilize it in all aspects of our material and spiritual lives. Nearly 14 centuries have passed since the Ashura event, and its historical expansion has led to diverse accounts and interpretations, as well as various verbal and substantial distortions. This context has compelled dedicated religious scholars to reconsider the Ashura movement. This reconsideration should focus on a renewed understanding of the Ashura phenomenon itself, examining how the Imams viewed it, its historical continuity over the centuries, and especially the necessities of preserving and perpetuating it in today's religious and political conditions.

The verbal and substantial distortions of the Ashura movement by the ignorant and emotional masses double the responsibility of those aware of the movement's true nature. The masses have, through excessive emotionalism, reduced the spirituality of Ashura to daily livelihood concerns and sought to fulfill all their material and semi-material needs from Imam al-Ḥusayn (peace be upon him) and other martyrs of Karbala. They have portrayed these figures as indebted to us, as if their martyrdom was solely to meet our worldly and otherworldly needs. On the other hand, some misguided individuals have interpreted the Ashura event in a supra-human manner, making it impossible to derive religious and political models from it, thus distorting its social and particularly political aspects and neglecting the rich goals of this movement. Historically and superficially, the manner of narration, and fundamentally, the understanding and political interpretation of the Ashura movement, have always been significant religious and political challenges posed by some Shias and followers of Imam al-Ḥusayn (peace be upon him). This ongoing threat, coupled with the people's superstitious beliefs and the exploitation by contemporary figures akin to Muʿāwiya, makes the mission of Shia scholars even more critical and valuable.

This research aims to address the question: What are the requirements for religious, political, social, and realistic rationality among Shia and Muslim thinkers in honoring the goals of this great Islamic and human movement? In response, despite all the valuable research and efforts made by our thinkers, a relatively new approach is adopted here, emphasizing the fundamental distinction among three essential variables: goals, methods, and tools in the narration, understanding, preservation, transmission, and implementation of

the Ashura movement. Our claim is that one historical reason for the proliferation of verbal and substantial distortions in the religious and political dimensions of the Ashura movement, especially among devotees of the Ahl al-Bayt (the Prophet's Household), is the lack of attention to the differing roles of the three elements: goals, methods, and tools, and their different functions. In other words, the Ashura movement itself inherently has religious and political goals that should have been preserved and expanded over history using appropriate methods and tools. However, the confusion of these three variables and some followers' misunderstanding of their differences and functions have sometimes led methods and tools to replace the goals of Ashura, causing Shias to overlook the religious and political goals, which were the primary intent of this movement. Therefore, before delving into the event and movement of Ashura, we will first generally explain the nature, characteristics, and functions of goals, methods, and tools in religious and political movements to clarify their place in the Ashura movement and reveal the consequences of misusing them.

1. The Necessity of Recognizing the Religious and Political Characteristics and Functions of Goals, Methods, and Tools

As mentioned, in any religious, social, and political movement, such as Ashura, there are inherent goals that need to be protected, preserved, and utilized during the movement's occurrence and afterwards, like 14 centuries after the martyrdom of Imam al-Ḥusayn (peace be upon him) and his loyal companions. The importance of this distinction is that it can be examined in all significant human movements, particularly in the Ashura movement. It plays a crucial role in correctly understanding the Ashura event and avoiding deviations in narrating, understanding, interpreting, and applying its religious and political teachings. To make the discussion about the differences in the nature, roles, and functions of goals, methods, and tools clearer, we can cite specific religious and political instances in the Ashura movement, such as enjoining good and forbidding evil, advocating for freedom, and avoiding oppression as its goals. Methods of preserving Ashura include writing books of Ashura story, holding Ashura mourning ceremonies, producing films and series, writing various research books, and composing poems. Finally, constructing some religious places, giving vows, using chains, drums, trumpets, and similar actions can be seen as tools. Here, we will first outline their general characteristics and then identify their specific features concerning the Ashura movement.

2. Goals

Understanding the goals behind the formation of a religious or political movement is of paramount importance because the identity of religious, political, and social movements is defined by the goals they pursue. Furthermore, the significance of goals lies in the fact that the subsequent two variables—methods and tools—derive their meaning, functionality, and value solely from the goals; without them, they are devoid of substance. Therefore, comprehending the nature and general characteristics of the goals of religious and political movements, such as Ashura, is crucial and will greatly assist us in recognizing these movements. Characteristics such as universality, absoluteness, stability, inherent sanctity, global applicability, rationality, and alignment with religious texts, congruence with human nature, and the potential for universal acceptance are among the general features of the goals of religious movements like the Ashura movement, which are briefly explained below.

a. Absoluteness, Universality, and Generality

The absoluteness and generality of the goals of religious movements imply that the goals pursued by these movements are not partial, temporary, or confined to a specific time or place. Instead, they are goals that are necessary and usable for all of humanity, across all times, places, and geographical and human conditions. In other words, universality is the most important characteristic of the goals of religious and political movements with divine roots. For instance, in the Ashura movement, religious and political goals such as enjoining good, forbidding evil, rejecting humiliation, seeking freedom, advocating for justice, and emphasizing human dignity are universal and general goals. These goals are not confined to the geography of the city of Kufa, or Iraq at that time, or even the Islamic world; they pertain to all Islamic and non-Islamic lands and all human beings, both Muslims (Shia and Sunni) and non-Muslims, across all eras. This is why Imam al-Ḥusayn's call to such general and universal goals has always been and continues to be accepted and sought by freedom seekers, justice advocates, and truth seekers, regardless of their religion, sect, nationality, or race. Indeed, this feature of an authentic religious and political movement allows for its religious and political modeling and utilization by all truth seekers and justice advocates. It is in this context that Mahatma Gandhi, the leader of India's independence movement, recognized the path to India's victory in emulating the Ashura movement of Imam al-Ḥusayn, stating, "If India wants to become a successful nation, it

should follow the life of Imam al-Ḥusayn" (Navaei, 2011, p. 388).

b. Stability and Immutability

Another crucial characteristic of the goals of religious and political movements is their stability and immutability over times, centuries, different locations, geographies, and diverse peoples. In other words, universal political goals such as the pursuit of freedom, justice, enjoining good, forbidding evil, seeking truth, and avoiding oppression and humiliation never wear the garment of a specific time or place; they transcend the boundaries of time and space and remain perpetually stable. Hence, Imam al-Ḥusayn's call for freedom and justice has always been a living call, consistently attracting followers from various nations, nationalities, and ideological and political perspectives. More importantly, the passage of centuries and changes in people's lifestyles, thought patterns, and scientific and technological advancements have never been able to tarnish or wither these goals. Instead, nearly 14 centuries after the Ashura event, and with the rational growth of humanity, especially Muslim and Shia individuals, new horizons of the eternal and everlasting goals of this exalted religious and political movement are continually revealed, further highlighting its freshness.

c. Inherent Sanctity

Inherent sanctity refers to the characteristics of goals that are respected and highly valued by all nations, perspectives, and viewpoints. Goals that are universal and perpetually stable and that do not change with spatial and temporal shifts can be considered inherently sacred. Such goals are intrinsically and universally valuable and sacred without any additional considerations. In contrast, the goals of certain political movements may possess transient and circumstantial sanctity, such as nationalism, Arabism, or racism, which only hold sanctity for specific nations or times and usually lose this sanctity after a short period, potentially even turning into anti-values. Therefore, the inherent sanctity, universality, and immutability of the goals of religious and political movements, like the Ashura movement, attract the hearts of all truth seekers and freedom lovers. In this context, Iqbal Lahori, a contemporary Pakistani thinker, stated, "No example of courage better than that of Imam al-Ḥusayn, in terms of his sacrifice and valor, can be found in the world. I believe that all Muslims should take Imam al-Ḥusayn, who sacrificed himself in the land of Karbala, as their role model and follow him" (Navaei, 2011, p. 391). Indeed, the inherent sanctity of such goals enables them to

transcend temporal and spatial boundaries, captivate the hearts of freedom seekers, shape their personalities, and motivate them to action and revolution. Moreover, this sanctity is indelible and eternal because it is based on the pure and divine nature of humanity.

d. Alignment with Religious Texts

Another fundamental characteristic of the goals of religious and political movements is their alignment with the core teachings and principles of the religion. Since the primary aim of divine religions is the spiritual and moral elevation of humanity, leading them to material and spiritual happiness, they introduce universal teachings and commandments. These include faith in monotheism and the afterlife, enjoining good, forbidding evil, seeking freedom, and advocating justice. Religious movements, therefore, form precisely to achieve these exalted religious goals. This reality is not only evident in the reformative and political movements of the divine prophets but is also frequently observed in Imam al-Ḥusayn's awakening movement. For instance, enjoining good, one of the fundamental religious and political teachings of Islam, is identified by the Imam as one of the most crucial political goals of the Ashura movement. This identification implies that such a movement does not seek goals outside of Islamic teachings; rather, Imam al-Ḥusayn's Ashura movement revolves around the very goals Islam advocates. Divine movements, in accordance with religious texts like the Quran, set enjoining good, forbidding evil, and striving in the way of God as their main goals and programs, as repeatedly mandated by the Quran for truth-seeking freedom fighters (Quran, 9:112; 34:46).

e. Alignment with Human Nature

Alignment with human nature means that all people, regardless of religion, race, nationality, or other environmental characteristics, inherently recognize and even seek such lofty goals. This characteristic is significant because the pure and divine nature of all humans inherently desires the realization of divine and political goals like justice, freedom, opposition to oppression, support for the oppressed, the spread of good deeds, and the elimination of evil deeds. Such goals even have numerous adherents among non-religious people. This is why, on the Day of Ashura, Imam al-Ḥusayn (peace be upon him) tells the enemy forces, "If you do not have faith, at least be free men" (Khwārazmī, 1947, vol. 2, p. 33). This statement precisely underscores the importance of this feature, emphasizing that freedom and liberation, as human qualities, are

fundamental and aligned with the pure human nature. Furthermore, divine religions affirm these intrinsic human goals and introduce numerous teachings to elevate them.

f. Rationality

The rationality of religious movements is one of the most significant features of their goals. Rationality includes various forms such as theoretical, practical, instrumental, axiological, and deontological rationality. In the common parlance of the literature, rationality can be defined as the acceptance of adherence to logical reasoning. That is, the acceptance of any argument that conforms to logical principles can be considered rational and possesses its own specific rationality. Accordingly, some philosophers equate rationality with being argumentative, while others accept it when there is no contrary evidence against the judgment or concept in question. Overall, it can be said that rationality, considering all its types, pertains to beliefs, actions, and behaviors that are aligned with general logical and rational principles, possess necessary coherence, and yield expected real outcomes. Accordingly, the following attributes can be considered for rationality:

1) Being based on evidence and logical deduction.

2) Having internal coherence and lack of contradiction among beliefs.

3) Acceptance by the majority of people, especially the wise.

4) Greater alignment with the conditions and exigencies of people's tangible lives and their life goals.

5) Playing an effective role in improving worldly life and fostering hope for people's spiritual salvation.

6) Greater conformity with self-evident logical principles and common understanding.

7) Simplicity and the possibility of being understood and explained by a larger number of people.

In the literature of philosophy and politics, various types of rationality are considered, such as theoretical, practical, axiological, instrumental, and deontological (Malekian, 2012, p. 438-439). Given the diversity of forms of rationality, it can be said that genuine religious movements, like the Ashura movement, have goals with the necessary theoretical, practical, axiological, deontological, and instrumental rationality. In other words, such movements theoretically possess logical and self-evident goals that align with human nature; practically, they have designed logical strategies to achieve their

political goals across different times and conditions; they are based on human values; and from an instrumental rationality perspective, they have considered the necessary means to actualize their political goals. In fact, universality, generality, divine origin, and alignment with human nature naturally guarantee the rationality of the goals of religious movements like Ashura. It is due to this rationality that the religious and political goals of such movements transcend time, space, eras, and nations, capturing the hearts of all freedom-seekers.

After outlining the sublime goals of religious movements like Ashura, one can claim that there is a logical connection between these goals. Religious and political movements naturally seek goals that possess attributes such as universality, generality, sanctity, stability, rationality, and alignment with human nature and religious texts. For these reasons, they can serve as models for all nations, times, and places.

In summary, if a movement can be identified with goals that are universal, general, inherently sacred and sublime, rational, and in accordance with the pure and divine nature of humanity, such a movement can undoubtedly gain widespread acceptance from diverse groups of people across all times, places, and various religious and political contexts. The presence of these sublime attributes in religious and political movements like Ashura has made them movements for all people from all intellectual spectrums and all religious and non-religious orientations, thus holding a special appeal for everyone. It is for this reason that, after about 14 centuries, the Ashura movement and its outlined political goals continue to hold significant value and esteem for all segments of society, and there are still aware individuals striving tirelessly to achieve these sublime goals (Motahari, 1987, vol. 2, p. 47-40).

3. Methods

At the outset of this discussion, it was noted that for our religious and political rationality, it is essential to reexamine the goals, methods, and tools associated with religious and political movements, such as Ashura. This reexamination ensures that tools and methods are optimally employed to achieve the political ideals and aspirations of Ashura, while also preventing their confusion or substitution. Therefore, this section focuses on the role of methods. Politically, socially, and logically, methods refer to the collection of material, spiritual, scientific, social, political, artistic, literary, and similar strategies employed to achieve, maintain, and expand specific goals and ideals. For example, in the context of the Ashura movement, the political actions taken by Imam al-Ḥusayn and his companions through various means to achieve the

movement's goals are considered methods serving Ashura's ideals. These actions include Imam al-Ḥusayn's decision to leave Medina, his journey along the main route to Mecca, writing a will to his brother Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafiyya, bringing his family with him, inviting people of his time to join him, staying in Mecca and engaging with other Muslims, traveling from Mecca to Kufa, sending Muslim ibn ʿAqīl to assess the situation in Kufa, delivering speeches to the armies of Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Riyāḥī and Umar ibn Saʿd on the Day of Ashura, among others. All these were political methods employed to serve the goals of the Ashura movement, adaptable to the exigencies of the time.

These methods were continued after the martyrdom of Imam al-Ḥusayn and his companions by figures such as Lady Zaynab and Imam al-Sajjād through their enlightening sermons, and by the infallible Imams in subsequent centuries to keep the event of Ashura alive, such as their emphasis on commemorating this event by any means possible.

Considering the historical developments and the expansion of the Ashura movement into various scientific, political, religious, artistic, and literary fields within the Shia world, today we see that writing books on the martyrdom, composing poems and elegies, delivering speeches and eulogies, lamentation songs, chain-beating rituals, passion plays (taʿziya), and the creation of films, theater productions, paintings, and publishing scholarly works in the form of articles, stories, and plays all play roles similar to methods in achieving or preserving the goals of a religious and political movement like Ashura.

The most significant feature of these methods is their varying roles depending on the different times, places, and the perspectives of the people using them. For example, Imam al-Ḥusayn's political methods for achieving the goals of Ashura were different from those of Lady Zaynab and Imam al-Sajjād Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, which in turn differed from those of the subsequent Imams and the Shi'a scholars in later centuries. However, all these diverse political methods aimed at preserving, expanding, and realizing the specific goals of the Ashura movement. Thus, while the methods differed, there was unity in their goals and aspirations.

From this diversity in the nature of methods and goals, several conclusions can be drawn: unlike goals, the political methods of a religious movement like Ashura are neither universal nor immutable. Instead, they change with the times and circumstances and the changing attitudes and spirits of the people. Methods do not possess inherent sanctity; if they attain temporary sanctity, it is only because they play an effective role in realizing, preserving, and

expanding the lofty goals of religious and political movements like Ashura. Methods primarily benefit from practical and instrumental rationality, which is fluid and variable, changing with different human thoughts and living conditions. Ultimately, methods are not universal and never gain the unanimous support of all intellectual spectrums and societal strata; even the best methods receive relative and changing acceptance.

4. Tools

Tools generally refer to a collection of material and semi-material objects employed in various ways within the aforementioned religious and political methods. In other words, tools play a supportive and facilitative role in these methods. Therefore, elements such as the construction of mourning venues like Takaya and Husayniyyas as religious places, the act of making vows, and the use of mourning tools like banners, processional standards (kutal in Persian), horns, drums, cymbals, chains, and all other instruments used in promoting the rituals and teachings of religious and political movements can be considered as tools. They serve the methods, and both methods and tools serve the goals. Consequently, tools are entirely dependent on the nature of the methods, and as the methods for preserving religious and political movements like Ashura evolve and change, the tools also naturally undergo change, development, and replacement.

Therefore, none of the characteristics of the goals of a religious and political movement, such as universality, sanctity, inherent rationality, conformity with religious texts, stability, and generality, are inherent in the tools, nor is it necessary for tools to possess such attributes. Instead, due to the intermediary role of tools and their complete dependence on people's thoughts and lifestyles, changeability, development, lack of sanctity, and being particular and localized are intrinsic characteristics of tools. Hence, the tools for mourning and commemorating religious and political movements like Ashura do not hold any religious validity or sanctity. They are merely tools and can be used for any purpose, and if some individuals attribute a kind of sanctity to them, it should be noted that this is a contingent and subjective sanctity that may have more detrimental than beneficial effects.

5. Comparative Analysis of Goals, Methods, and Tools

The discussion provided lays the groundwork for recognizing the nature, validity, role, and functions of the three variables involved in preserving religious and political movements like Ashura. By considering the

characteristics of universality, sanctity, rationality, stability, conformity with religious texts, and alignment with human nature, the relationship among the three variables—goals, methods, and tools—can be comparatively assessed with these essential features. This comparative analysis will highlight the similarities and especially the differences among these variables, leading to a proper political understanding of their nature and preventing their confusion. In this context, the specificity and locality of tools are more pronounced than that of methods. Concerning sanctity, the goals of religious and political movements are always sacred, while methods and tools usually lack sanctity, as methods are the political strategies for achieving, preserving, and promoting the goals, and tools are merely the objects used for this purpose. However, some may attribute respect and sanctity to methods like mourning rituals or tools like chains, banners, and processional standards, which may undermine the goals of a religious movement.

Regarding rationality, it was stated that religious movements possess sufficient theoretical and practical rationality because they are based on the pure and divine nature of humans. However, methods and tools can only be seen as instrumentally rational or as practical and instrumental rationality, which also change and evolve with the transformations in people's thoughts, necessities, needs, and lifestyles.

In terms of stability, the goals of religious and political movements, like Ashura, have historical stability and do not become obsolete over centuries. However, methods and tools are always changing and evolving with societal transformations and take on different forms. Regarding conformity with religious texts, the goals of religious movements, with Ashura being a prime example, have a religious origin and align with Quranic teachings. However, there are no specific methods or tools prescribed in religion for preserving these goals; rather, based on the political and social conditions of human life, people can employ any suitable and rational method and tool.

Regarding conformity with human nature, it should be noted that the goals of religious and political movements typically align with the pure and divine nature of humans, while methods and tools conform to the necessities, conditions, and lifestyles of people.

6. Religious and Political Dimensions of the Goals, Methods, and Tools in the Ashura Movement

The previous discussions on distinguishing the differences in nature, function, and religious and political characteristics of the goals, methods, and tools

related to movements such as Ashura, enable a clearer understanding of these three variables specifically in relation to the Ashura movement. This allows for recognizing the value of each while highlighting the risks of conflating them.

6-1. Religious and Political Goals of the Ashura Movement

As mentioned, the core of any religious movement is its religious and political goals and ideals. The methods and tools associated with the movement derive their value and validity solely from these goals. Thus, identifying the religious and political goals of a movement is fundamentally and inherently prior to understanding its methods and tools. In this regard, comprehending the divine and political goals of the Ashura movement holds intrinsic and essential precedence over its other aspects.

The most important source for understanding the divine and political goals and ideals of the Ashura movement is the speeches and sermons of Imam al-Ḥusayn. Emphasis is particularly placed on his statements from the time he left Medina until his martyrdom in Karbala, covering approximately six months of his life. During this short period, about seventy speeches and sermons from Imam al-Ḥusayn have been reported, given at various times and locations. These provide a precise understanding of Imam al-Ḥusayn's religious and political aim of refusing allegiance to Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiya and rising against him, and indeed, the overall reformative and political goal of his movement. Before delving into examples of these speeches, it is essential to outline the major divine and political goals of the Ashura movement as derived from his various statements:

1) The fundamental principle of freedom and liberation from all forms of oppression,

2) The duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil,

3) Rejecting humiliation and refusing to accept any form of disgrace,

4) Raising awareness and spiritual elevation of humanity,

5) Reviving the authentic teachings of Islam,

6) Refusing allegiance to and collaboration with a tyrannical government,

7) The necessity of supporting the oppressed,

8) Affirming and spreading divine and human values such as justice, self-sacrifice, and fidelity,

9) Reforming the political disarray of the Muslim community and rectifying religious deviations,

10) Establishing an Islamic government to ensure true justice and freedom.

The following statements from Imam al-Ḥusayn highlight the reasons, goals, and divine and political ideals of his reformative movement and revolutionary uprising:

6-1-1. The Religious and Political Responsibility of Muslims in the Face of Social and Political Corruption: In the year 58 AH, about two years before Muʿāwiya's death and the start of the Ashura movement, Imam al-Ḥusayn delivered a highly significant sermon during the Hajj pilgrimage in Mina. In this sermon, he not only praised the virtues of the Prophet's family and their infallibility but also emphasized the heavy responsibility of enjoining good and forbidding evil. He stressed the necessity for the scholars of the Islamic community at that time to react and rise against Muʿāwiya's corruption and tyranny. In the concluding part of this crucial sermon, Imam al-Ḥusayn pointed to the deplorable and humiliating conditions of the Islamic society, attributing these conditions to the worldly desires of the Prophet's companions and followers. He warned them of the disgrace that had engulfed the Muslim community, and attributed the success of individuals like Muʿāwiya in dominating the society's affairs to the fear of death and worldly attachments among Muslims (Najmi, 2014, p. 388; Majlisī, 1996, vol. 97, p. 79; Ṭabarsī, 1959, vol. 2, p. 17).

6-1-2. Refusal to Pledge Allegiance to a Corrupt Government: After Muʿāwiya's death in mid-April 680, the governor of Medina, Walīd ibn ʿUtba, was instructed by Yazīd the son of Muʿāwiya, to obtain the pledge of allegiance from Imam al-Ḥusayn, Abdullah ibn Umar, and Abdullah ibn Zubayr. Imam al-Ḥusayn refused to pledge allegiance, explaining to Walid that his refusal was due to the corruption of the Umayyad regime and the rightful leadership of the Prophet's family. Considering the historical context and priority, it can be said that the refusal to pledge allegiance to Yazīd was the first political reason for Imam al-Ḥusayn's departure from Medina and the initiation of his reformative and political movement. This refusal directly followed Yazīd's ascension to the caliphate and the subsequent invitation by his representative for Imam al-Ḥusayn to pledge allegiance (Khwārazmī, 1949, vol. 1, p. 184; Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs, 1903, p. 19; Majlisī, 1996, vol. 44, p. 325; Najmi, 2014, pp. 37-36; Motahari, 1987, vol. 2, p. 26). Another significant aspect of this event is Imam al-Ḥusayn's emphasis on the corruption and illegitimacy of individuals like Muʿāwiya ruling over Muslims.

6-1-3. Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil for Reforming the Muslim Ummah: In Imam al-Ḥusayn's statements to his brother, Muḥammad ibn

Ḥanafiyya, the first clear articulation of the goals behind refusing allegiance to Yazīd is evident. These words were spoken when the people of Kufa had not still sent letters of invitation to him; rather, Imam al-Ḥusayn expressed them as he was leaving Medina to avoid pledging allegiance to Yazīd and his agents. He said to his brother, Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafiyya: "I did not come out for the purpose of self-glorification, arrogance, corruption, or oppression. Rather, I have come out seeking to reform the Muslim Ummah of my grandfather, the Messenger of Allah. I intend to enjoin good and forbid evil, and to follow the tradition of my grandfather and the way of my father, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib" (Khwārazmī, 1949, vol. 1, p. 273).

In this concise statement, Imam al-Ḥusayn emphasizes his commitment to avoiding personal desires and highlights the most important goal of his religious and political movement: enjoining good and forbidding evil, and reforming the corrupt Muslim Ummah of the Prophet. The second goal, which is to reform the Ummah and revive the practices of the Prophet and Imam ʿAlī, is a clear example of enjoining good and forms the foundation of the Ashura movement. It should be stressed that enjoining good and forbidding evil was the primary goal and driving force behind Imam al-Ḥusayn's divine and political movement (Motahari, 1987, vol. 2, pp. 14-16).

6-1-4. Invitation to the Book of Allah, the Tradition of the Prophet, and True Happiness: After arriving in Mecca, Imam al-Ḥusayn utilized every opportunity to inform the Muslim community about the religious and political goals of his uprising. In a letter to the people and leaders of Basra, he emphasized his rightful position as the most qualified person to govern and invited them to act according to the Book of Allah and the tradition of the Prophet to achieve true happiness (Najmi, 2014, p. 73). The aim of Imam al-Ḥusayn in inviting the people of Basra was to seek their support, even if it meant using their help to capture Kufa and establish an Islamic government there. This preliminary goal ultimately served the true and genuine objective of reviving and adhering to the Book of Allah and the forgotten traditions of the Prophet. Thus, in this instance as well, enjoining good and forbidding evil is the central and primary religious and political goal of Imam al-Ḥusayn's Ashura movement.

6-1-5. Establishing a Just Government: It seems that it is a historical fact that after Muʿāwiya's death and Imam al-Ḥusayn's refusal to pledge allegiance to Yazīd, followed by his departure from Medina to Mecca, the Shia and prominent figures in Kufa, who were tired of Muʿāwiya's tyranny and his agents, saw this as an opportune moment to invite Imam al-Ḥusayn to Kufa.

They wrote numerous letters, inviting him to come to Kufa, lead an uprising against Yazīd, and establish an Islamic government. When Imam al-Ḥusayn received these letters—approximately 18,000 letters—it was natural for him as an Imam, scholar, and religious-political leader to verify the authenticity of these letters and the sincerity of the invitees. If the people of Kufa were sincere in their invitation, Imam al-Ḥusayn was compelled to assist them, as his objective was to establish justice and freedom, and revive the traditions of the Prophet and the commands of Allah. His mission aligned with the goals of the oppressed people of Kufa (Motahari, 1986, vol. 1, p. 170).

Imam al-Ḥusayn's religious duty and commitment to justice required him to use conventional means to aid the people of Kufa and counter the tyranny of the Umayyads. To achieve this, he dispatched Muslim ibn ʿAqīl to Kufa with a letter for the people of Kufa in early September 680, and he himself left Mecca for Kufa after some days. Although he received news of Muslim ibn ʿAqīl's martyrdom on the way in Thalabiyya station, this incident did not justify his return to Mecca or relocation elsewhere, as there was still the possibility of achieving his goals by overcoming the Umayyad forces in Kufa. Loyal Shia who were willing to sacrifice for his exalted religious and political goals remained, and cities like Mecca or Medina were not safe havens for him. Consequently, Imam al-Ḥusayn continued his journey towards Kufa until he encountered Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Riyahi's thousand-strong army at Sharaf station, which blocked his path. In the ensuing dialogue with Ḥurr and his troops, Imam al-Ḥusayn made it clear that he was responding to the people of Kufa's invitation to establish a government in Kufa and assume their political and religious leadership (Ibn Athīr, 1967, vol. 3, p. 280; Shaykh al-Mufīd, 2009, pp. 224-225).

The nature of Imam al-Ḥusayn's methods and statements in this context reveal several truths.

The invitation from Muslims to Imam al-Ḥusayn, as a religious and political leader, to rescue them from the tyranny of the oppressors, placed a significant responsibility on him. Consequently, responding to the call of the people of Kufa and going to their city to assist them and assume religious and political leadership was not only a religious duty of Imam al-Ḥusayn but also a preliminary religious and political goal. This could play a crucial role in realizing the fundamental goals of the movement, such as enjoining good and forbidding evil and reviving Islamic values. However, contrary to some scholars' interpretations, this was not the primary goal (Salehi Najafabadi, 1983, pp. 66, 94-98). Furthermore, if Imam al-Ḥusayn had refused the people

of Kufa's request, how could he claim to advocate for justice, freedom, and the revival of lofty Islamic and human values? How could he defend his righteousness in the presence of historical conscience and future generations?

6-1-6. Rejecting oppression and political reaction against tyrannical rulers: In the subsequent stages of the reform movement, Imam al-Ḥusayn used every opportunity to expose the anti-religious nature of the Umayyad rule and to remind the faithful of their duties and the consequences of negligence. This demonstrates the essence of his awakening political movement. At the station of Baydha, in a speech to Ḥurr's soldiers, he emphasized the necessity of committed individuals to react against oppressive and corrupt rulers (Ibn Athīr, 1967, vol. 3, p. 280; Khwārazmī, 1947, vol. 1, p. 229).

6-1-7. Rejecting humiliation: After encountering Ḥurr's army, Imam al-Ḥusayn faced Ḥurr's demand for a humiliating pledge of allegiance to Yazīd. From this point forward, in his speeches, he placed significant emphasis on the main objective of avoiding humiliation and embracing an honorable death. This emphasis intensified upon his arrival at Karbala, as if the free individuals, in order to revive their reformist movement, had to offer their noble lives through honorable death (Khwārazmī, 1947, vol. 1, p. 237; Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs, 1903, p. 69). The emphasis on living honorably is also of particular importance in various instances of Imam's speeches. Accordingly, in his speeches on the day of Ashura, addressing ʿUmar ibn Saʿd's army, he reiterated this issue. In this context, Imam, in his final moments, expressed emphatically: "Death is better than accepting disgrace, and accepting disgrace is better than entering Hellfire" (Khwārazmī, 1947, vol. 2, pp. 8-7 , 346).

6-1-8. Freedom as a central aspect of human life: The principle of freedom was the last statement of Imam al-Ḥusayn before his martyrdom. Observing the depravity of those intending to loot the tents of his family, he emphasized freedom, the most important human trait and a consistently highlighted theme in his speeches. This was not only among the most significant goals of Imam al-Ḥusayn's reformist and political uprising, but also a fundamental aspiration of all great reformers throughout history and across all regions.

6-2. Analysis of Our Religious and Political Rationality Regarding the Goals of the Ashura Movement

In the preceding paragraphs, the primary goals of the Ashura movement were articulated. It is crucial to note that not all these goals hold equal importance; rather, they follow a hierarchical order and possess a gradational relationship.

Thus, "enjoining good and forbidding evil" can be considered the most significant among these goals, with other goals either following from it or deriving their meaning through it. Based on the pivotal role of this principle, Morteza Motahari asserts that Imam al-Ḥusayn was martyred for the sake of this principle, which he deems the most fundamental religious and political tenet essential for the survival of the Islamic society. The absence or neglect of this principle leads to the collapse of human societies (Motahari, 1987, vol. 2, p. 76; 1986, vol. 3, p. 285).

The fundamental goals of the Ashura movement, which have been endorsed by subsequent Imams and informed scholars, remind us today of our rational duty to comprehend the nature, significance, and value of these religious and political ideals. This understanding transcends emotional and sensational perspectives on the Ashura movement. We must continually reassess these goals with a rational approach to manage our lives against the injustices of oppressive governments. A rational view of Ashura and its immense religious and political goals teaches us that Imam al-Ḥusayn and his loyal companions did not perish due to a lack of support or vulnerability; rather, they were martyred, because they steadfastly adhered to such lofty and valuable religious and political goals. Therefore, our rational responsibility lies in recalling and reiterating these goals, especially by referring to Imam al-Ḥusayn's own words, to use them as a model in all aspects of our lives.

A rational perspective on these sacred, universal, and inherent human goals teaches us that despite the brutal martyrdom of Imam al-Ḥusayn, his loyal companions, and his six-month-old son by bloodthirsty men, an event that has deeply hurt the pure emotions of countless people for centuries, the sacred and sublime religious and political goals of this movement illuminate the dark scene of Ashura, enlightening the horizon of freedom-loving individuals until the end of time. Motahari emphasizes the sanctity of the Ashura movement, noting that its religious and political goals are not confined to any specific geography but are focused solely on truth and justice. This movement raises the cry for justice and the fight against oppression in an extremely dark and oppressive environment, fostering growth, insight, and the character development of free and justice-seeking individuals. The courage and boldness to revive freedom and justice become increasingly apparent daily. According to him, "Bestowing character upon a nation involves instilling in them love and ideals. If they have ideals obscured by dust, it is necessary to remove the dust and revive them" (Motahari, 1987, vol. 2, pp. 139-142; 1986, vol. 3, pp. 41-44, 50, 171).

Thus, our religious and political rationality necessitates not merely weeping and mourning for the martyrdom of Imam al-Ḥusayn and his companions but rather reflecting on, contemplating, and reiterating their ideals and goals for establishing this movement. Merely repeating lamentations over Imam al-Ḥusayn's brutal and unjust martyrdom while neglecting the sacred goals for which he was martyred is a mistake driven by the dominance of emotions over rationality. A rational approach to the religious and political ideals of Ashura requires avoiding emotional excess and wisely emphasizing the centrality of Imam al-Ḥusayn's goals and their application in our time. This emphasis on rationality does not mean dismissing the emotional aspects of the Ashura movement, as they are also significant and have played a role in the historical development of this movement.

6-3. Methods of the Ashura Movement and Our Religious and Political Rationality

In previous sections, it was explained that methods in religious movements generally serve the realization, preservation, and expansion of the goals and ideals of those movements. This characteristic can be referred to as goal-oriented methodology, meaning that the nature of the goals determines the appropriate and rational methods at various stages of a religious and political movement. If a movement can achieve such success in employing its methods, it can be said to possess the necessary practical rationality, as it has successfully utilized suitable methods to achieve its objectives. This characteristic is evident in the several-month period of Imam al-Ḥusayn's uprising. For instance, political actions such as the forced and public departure of the Imam from Medina, traveling via a known route to Mecca, meeting with prominent figures, engaging in numerous dialogues with people in Mecca, stopping at various stations and speaking with travelers, writing letters to leaders of certain cities, delivering enlightening sermons in front of the forces of Ḥurr and ʿUmar ibn Saʿd's armies, rebuking ʿUmar ibn Saʿd's soldiers who had invited the Imam, and many other examples, all illustrate Imam al-Ḥusayn's effective and appropriate use of all available political methods to achieve the objectives of the Ashura movement.

In reality, after the martyrdom of Imam al-Ḥusayn and his loyal companions, as attested by history, the Infallible Imams, in the peak of Umayyad and Abbasid oppression, saw the best political method as the commemoration and reminder of the Ashura event. This was because the Umayyads, using all their might, attempted to erase this event from people's

minds. Indeed, during the Umayyad era, in an atmosphere poisoned with propaganda, the Ahl al-Bayt engaged in enlightening the people and neutralizing their propaganda and deceit through various political means, one of which was ordering the holding of gatherings to commemorate the tragedy of Imam al-Ḥusayn, reciting elegies, recounting the events of Ashura, and designating Ashura as a day of mourning and the virtues of weeping and causing others to weep (Ayazi, 2009, p. 185).

The question now arises: What is required in the present era for our religious and political rationality in appropriately utilizing the methods of commemorating Ashura? To answer this question, one must first consider the general characteristics of methods mentioned in previous pages. It was stated that the methods of religious and political movements, such as Ashura, are characterized by being specific, temporary, non-sacred, time and place-bound, non-universal, and changeable. These characteristics highlight the variable and intermediary role of methods under different temporal and spatial conditions. Now, considering the various methods that have been prevalent since the martyrdom of Imam al-Ḥusayn and have undergone their own evolutionary processes, one can refer to the roles of political, social, and scientific methods in their diverse and new forms.

First, it is necessary to explain that the historical expansion of methods used to commemorate the Ashura movement shows that these methods have undergone numerous changes over the past fourteen centuries. Some of these, such as chest-beating, chain-beating, or self-flagellation in mourning ceremonies, have emerged in the last two to three centuries. Therefore, the temporal and spatial circumstances and the perspective of the people have determined the nature and function of the methods. Consequently, our rational mission necessitates emphasizing the relativity and non-sacredness of methods, using them as long as they effectively contribute to preserving, expanding, and promoting the religious and political goals of the Ashura movement. It should be noted that some methods may lose their functionality over time and their use may not only fail to preserve the goals of the Ashura movement but may even act against its objectives. Furthermore, the diversity of methods makes the role and place of emotion and feeling within them more varied. For example, in mourning and elegy recitation, emotional and affective approaches naturally have a greater impact, whereas in written scholarly works, the rational aspect is more pronounced. Considering the temporal and spatial conditions, appropriate and rational use should be made of all these methods (Amin, 2009, p. 82).

Therefore, our rational mission in commemorating the Ashura movement is to highlight the intrinsic connection between knowledge, love, and following Imam al-Ḥusayn and the teachings of his Ashura movement. This emphasis ensures that we do not consider the criteria for being a follower of Hussein in terms of mourning, weeping, wearing black, chest-beating, making vows, or chain-beating, although these actions are commendable in themselves. Instead, recognizing the intrinsic link between knowledge, love, and adherence to Imam al-Ḥusayn's teachings leads to identifying a follower of Imam al-Ḥusayn by religious and political criteria such as freedom, justice-seeking, enjoining good, forbidding evil, truthfulness, honesty, humanity, adherence to promises, and other moral and religious virtues. Unfortunately, one of the significant threats to Imam al-Ḥusayn's mourning ceremonies today is the promotion of love for Imam al-Ḥusayn over the understanding of him and adherence to his teachings. This misguided approach has led people to confuse the inherent attributes of the Imams, particularly those of Imam al-Ḥusayn, with their incidental characteristics. According to Shia teachings, Imams are the true interpreters of the Quran and the best guides for people to attain worldly and eternal happiness. This is emphasized in numerous Shia traditions, particularly the Hadiths of Thaqalayn, Ghadīr, and Manzila. Therefore, guiding us towards religious and political teachings such as monotheism, Prophethood, the afterlife, justice, freedom, honesty, trustworthiness, avoiding humiliation, enjoining good, and forbidding evil, along with other Shia doctrinal and ethical teachings, is one of the most important functions of the Imams, including Imam al-Ḥusayn. These characteristics can be referred to as the inherent attributes of the Infallible Imams. Conversely, the incidental attributes of the Imams are those secondary functions given to them due to their special status with God, such as interceding for sinners on the Day of Judgment and fulfilling the needs of Shia believers in this world. Unfortunately, the public's neglect of the inherent attributes of the Imams and excessive attention to their incidental attributes has caused a shift in the functions of the Imams, especially Imam al-Ḥusayn. Today, many people's love for the Infallible Imams is not because they seek guidance from the Imams in understanding fundamental religious teachings and practicing them. Instead, they seek material solutions to their problems through intercession, asking for cures for diseases, the birth of children or sons, buying a house, paying off debts, getting out of prison, marriage, and similar issues.

6-4. The Role of Tools in Our Rational Mission

As explained earlier, tools, compared to goals and methods, usually refer to

material and semi-material objects used to play a useful role in achieving, preserving, and expanding the goals and ideals of a divine and political movement like Ashura. According to this definition, for the Ashura movement, items such as building Husayniyyas, setting up Takyas, sacrificing animals, giving vows, feeding people, chains, banners, poles, drums, and similar items are tools used in various ways. The critical point about tools is that people's tastes and livelihoods determine their nature and function, and thus tools inherently have no particular properties. For example, Husayniyyas and Takyas serve as places and tools for mourning and commemorating the Ashura movement. The history of Shia communities shows that such places have been established for about 250 to 300 years, from the mid-Safavid period, and expanded during the Qajar era. This historical reality means that before the Safavid period, Shia also mourned without using Takyas and Husayniyyas. However, over time and with changing living conditions, these places were specifically created for mourning and commemorating Ashura. The same instrumental role can be attributed to feeding mourners, sacrificing animals, giving vows, and similar practices. The result is that tools, at a lower level than methods, cannot be attributed any inherent sanctity, universality, stability, or other significant features. Tools are only temporarily valuable as long as they serve the methods effectively; otherwise, they may become useless or even harmful. Therefore, using tools should only aim to improve methods, and both methods and tools should aim to achieve, preserve, and expand the religious and political goals of the Ashura movement.

Conclusion

A rational analysis of the nature of religious and political movements, such as Ashura, guides us to the necessity of distinguishing the content and function of three factors: goals, methods, and tools, in identifying these movements. The goals of religious movements, like Ashura, possess characteristics such as universality, timelessness, sanctity, rationality, religious roots, and alignment with human nature. These features enable their historical continuity, transcendence of temporal and spatial boundaries, and the capturing of the hearts of freedom-loving people from various lands. In contrast, the methods and tools employed in religious and political movements do not share the characteristics of the goals; they are utilized according to the changing temporal and spatial conditions and shift in function accordingly. From the perspective of a philosophical analysis, the goals have a fixed nature and role, whereas the methods and tools change their nature and role according to the goals.

Given this reality, important religious and political goals for the Ashura movement can be considered such as enjoining good, forbidding evil, reforming the Muslim Ummah of the Prophet, reviving the traditions of the Prophet and ʿAlī, refusing allegiance to oppressors, supporting the oppressed, seeking justice and freedom, and similar aims that possess the aforementioned characteristics of religious movement goals. Therefore, the methods of preserving the goals of the Ashura movement and the tools employed for this purpose are only valid and valuable as long as they effectively play their role in maintaining, expanding, perpetuating, and realizing the goals of Ashura. Hence, in preserving the Ashura movement, no method or tool is sacred, universal, absolute, fixed, and unchangeable; rather, all methods and tools have relative validity and functionality. Even mourning, which has been most emphasized, is merely a method that has so far played a useful role and has relative value and validity. It is conceivable that with changes in the mindsets and lifestyles of future generations, the method of mourning for Imam al-Ḥusayn might completely change, or mourning might be entirely abandoned, and new forms of methods for preserving the Ashura movement might emerge that play a greater role. The conclusion is that rationally, bias towards the methods and tools of preserving the Ashura movement is indefensible, and since only religious and political goals are intrinsic, the methods and tools are contingent and their nature is defined and determined according to our needs.

Another important point that can be deduced from distinguishing goals, methods, and tools is the differentiation between the essential attributes and accidental attributes of the infallible Imams. The essential attributes, in the context of the Ashura movement, pertain to the goals of this movement; that is, the primary guidance of Imam al-Ḥusayn is directly related to his religious and political goals in establishing the Ashura uprising. In contrast, the accidental attributes of Imam al-Ḥusayn, such as miraculous healing, are unrelated to the core objectives of his Imamate and his revivalist movement; rather, these are incidental attributes and divine graces granted to him for his followers. Therefore, our rational duty regarding the Imams in general and Imam al-Ḥusayn in particular is to focus on their goal of Imamate and Imam al-Ḥusayn's religious and political goal of the Ashura movement, rather than attaching ourselves to him and his companions for the fulfillment of personal desires. Ultimately, the love for Imam al-Ḥusayn and the effort to understand his aim at following his life-enhancing teachings. These three aspects—love, understanding, and following—serve as longitudinal methods that can play a significant role in achieving the true goal, which is our genuine happiness. In

this journey, visiting the holy shrine of Imam al-Ḥusayn and other Imams is merely a method for drawing closer to the spirit of their life-giving teachings to provide a basis for our spiritual elevation, not for gaining religious and social status and boasting to others.

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