

## An Analysis of Dimensions and Components of Religious Insight in Nahj al-Balagha

### Abstract

Insight is one of the valuable and admirable attributes that a Muslim must possess in his personal and social life to follow a transcendental path in his life. Imam Ali (AS) underlined the importance of pathology of excellence that is realized through religious understanding in Nahj al-Balagha and specified several educational factors and efforts for it. Due to its inclusion of thorough teachings relating to many disciplines of knowledge, including beliefs and ethics, Nahj al-Balagha is one of the sources of Islamic studies that have managed to address human knowledge needs, including the issue of religious insight. In this regard, the researcher has inferred and categorized the dimensions, constituents, and educational effects of religious insight from the perspective of Nahj al-Balagha in the present paper utilizing the qualitative content analysis method in the form of a conceptual framework of the research. The present paper provides detailed explanations of the discovered dimensions, which generally involve remembering God, self-actualization and soul-purification, guardianship-centeredness, religious zeal and devotion, piety, not being worldly, and meditation in the Quran. The researcher was prompted to undertake this paper by the desire to determine the dimensions and components of a religious insight framework for a believer.

**Keywords:** *religious insight, Nahj al-Balagha, dimensions, components, concepts, themes.*

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### Introduction

The subject of insight and religious insight is one of the significant issues that religious experts have always brought up in the sphere of religious teachings. What has influenced victory and success more than any other factor, according to a brief examination of the events and study of Islamic history from the time of the Prophet of Islam and the Infallible Imams (AS) to the Islamic revolution and the modern era, is the degree to which people benefit from the insight. The importance of insight, particularly religious insight, has been highlighted throughout history and among the celestial faiths, particularly in the teachings of Islam, particularly in the Holy Qur'an and Nahj al-Balagha. The topic of insight has garnered much attention outside of the Qur'an, particularly in the biographies of religious figures from earlier centuries like Muhammad Baqir Majlesi and Muhammad Ibn Ishaq Koleini, etc. Their works contain related information, demonstrating that they were fully aware of its significance even though it was never published or widely disseminated; thus, they remained in a closed environment.

The researcher was motivated to conduct this study because he aimed to determine the dimensions and components of the religious insight framework for a believer to evaluate himself and adhere to their realization. In this way, an individual, his family, his society, and even his world can move according to his insight. How is it possible that despite the revelation of divine prophets and saints, the significant and fateful events that have happened throughout history, such as the stories of

various people like people of Lut, Thamud, and Noah, as well as the followers of the last prophets and religions and the infidels and polytheists of the Quraysh and the Companions of Saqifa and Safin as well as the tragic incident of Karbala, would not happen and what attributes need to be present in people to prevent them? The prominent problem that Imam Ali faced during his sovereignty was the problem he had with those people. Those whom Imam Ali describes as follows (Ibn Abi al-Hadid, 1998: 42): "Be prepared to march to the people who have deviated from the right and do not see it<sup>1</sup>." Due to a lack of insight, those who could not discern between the look of the Qur'an, i.e., its handwriting and cover, and its meaning, were duped by Muawiyah and Amr ibn al-aas' simple trick. Political swindlers frequently exploit lack of insight as a technique to obstruct high Islamic interests. In a sermon, Imam Ali described their condition: "Indeed, you are the worst people; you are arrows in the hand of the devil who utilizes your bad existence to hit his mark, confuse doubt, and mislead others" (Sobhi Saleh, 1994:185).

To answer the research question, a literature review was performed, including numerous definitions and classifications provided for the idea of religious insight, and a framework of this concept was presented. Following that, narratives regarding rationality and its derivatives were collected and studied through qualitative content analysis by reviewing notable narrative works. The result of the data analysis was the framework of rationality dimensions and components from the perspective of Nahj al-Balagha. Finally, the research's

<sup>1</sup> اسْتَعْدُوا لِلْمَسِيرِ إِلَى قَوْمٍ حَيَارَى عَنِ الْحَقِّ لَا يُبْصِرُونَهُ،

conceptual framework is offered based on the dimensions and components of religious insight taken from Nahj al-Balaghah. To answer the research question, by studying the existing documents, firstly, the literature of the study includes various definitions and classifications expressed for the concept of religious insight reviews, and a framework of this concept is presented. After that, by examining the famous narrative books, the narratives about rationality and its derivatives were collected and analyzed by the qualitative content analysis method. The data analysis results in forming a framework of the dimensions and components of rationality from the point of view of Nahj al-Balaghah. Finally, the conceptual framework of the research was presented regarding the dimensions and components of religious insight extracted from Nahj al-Balaghah.

### Literature Review

People like Shahid Motahari, professors and esteemed faculty members in schools of theology and universities, and students have studied the insight issue in some scientific and research centers of Iran in the last decades in a limited way through writing books, articles, and dissertations. The research and studies that have been done on this issue are briefly described in the following section.

Mohammad Hadi Mansouri (2015), in his dissertation titled "Insight and its role in following Imam," argued that the truth of insight consists of two main elements: a) cognition with spiritual belief and b) perspicuity and mediation. By investigating the interpretative and narrative sources, as well as historical statements, it becomes clear that the emergence of insight is the result of a unique process that begins with "listening to the facts," "thinking about what you have heard," "perspicuity and mediation," "learning a lesson," and "stepping on the bright path."

Hossein Gholipour (2018), in his dissertation titled "Human social sphere from the perspective of Nahj al-Balaghah with the approach of transcendental wisdom," described insight as a key element in advancing both transcendental wisdom and the human path in Nahj al-Balaghah. Insight fights ignorance and lack of insight, prejudice, stagnation, superficial and partial comprehension of religion, the drowning of people and society in protracted dreams, the amassing of money by some society members, and the great value placed on wealth in society.

Shirin PourEbrahim (2013), in a study entitled "An investigation of 'Insight' concept in Qur'an language and framework of cognitive semantics," pointed out that the sensory realms of sight and sound are not included in the conception of insight. The physical experience of eyes and ears in the real world is the foundation for the metaphors above and schemas. However, the religious content of the Qur'an influences the modeling from the origin to the destination.

### Insight

'Insight' is defined as knowledge, vision, awareness, alertness, shrewdness, and certainty (Moein Dictionary, 2004, Vol. 1: 534).

Sight (Basirat) is different from insight (Basar). Sight is related to the eyes and the sense of seeing. The plural word for 'Basirat' is 'Basaer' while it is 'Absar' for 'Basar.'

'Insight' means wisdom. 'Insight' in Arabic means heart belief, knowledge, certainty, cleverness, and lesson (Ibn Manzoor, Volume 2: 814)

The word 'Insight' is a representative idea. It refers to the heart power or secret inner strength that can discern the truth. The power of the heart and interior illuminated by the holy light is 'insight.' The holder of 'insight' can perceive the truth from this light (Hashmi Rafsanjani, 2006, Vol. 6: 263). 'Insight' is like a sight for the soul. Just as a person sees the faces and appearances of things through the eyes, insight is an eye that sees the truth for the soul.

As a result, a person's worth and reputation are determined by his insight, vision, and level of knowledge. The insight results from a deep-seated desire for the light of revelation and imamate. People who lack insight are devoid of human existence because they have negative thoughts, cannot perceive the truth, and cannot find happiness.

### Religious Insight

The path of religion and religiosity is pursued with insight and vision, and heavenly messengers' calls were always based on insight and vision. They never called people to follow mindlessly and unwisely. The last prophet, Muhammad (PBUH), emphasized religiousness and sought God with wisdom. When one asked him, "What do you invite folks to do?" He stated: "*This is my way; I invite to Allāh with insight, I and those who follow me.*" (Yousef, 108) (Majlisi, 1983: 147) About this Ayah, the Prophet of Islam outlined his policy and his followers in the following way: "*I invite everyone to the one and only God, and I do not follow this path with imitation and lack of insight, but with awareness and insight, and I call all the people of the world to this path.*" The Prophet's speech demonstrates that followers of a religious leader must likewise share the same insight and vision to be able to call people to the truth.

In one of the supplications quoted from Imam Ali, he asked God for insight into religion:

*O Allah, I ask you, for the sake of Muhammad and his family, to put peace upon Muhammad and his family and to put the light in my sight and the insight into my religion* (Qomi, Doa after Morning, 2007)

'Religious insight' is more than just knowledge about religion; it is compatibility with religious practice, which leads to illumination on various topics. As God says in Quran: *O you who have believed, if you fear Allāh, He will grant you a*

*criterion* (Anfal/29). Criterion might be something by which to judge between truth and falsehood. Also interpreted as a 'way out' of difficulties.

As a result, 'religious insight' has been attained in the context of religion. It signifies insight into the truth of religion, which benefits one by enabling one to tell what is right and wrong in various situations. Therefore, in this context, the term 'religious insight' refers to the ability to understand various issues under the guise of a sincere belief in religious truths and a concrete dedication to religious orders. As seen from Imam Ali's perspective, a person of insight is a righteous person who discerns the truth from the appearance of things and finds the path to it: (Sobhi Saleh, 1994: 213). A wise man has listened and considered, observed and comprehended, and taken guidance from the lessons. Consequently, he has followed the bright path and avoided falling into abysses and being lost in the furnace of paths.

### **The Danger of Ignorance in Religion**

Examining the significance and necessity of religious insight reveals that Faith is the driving force behind the believer's progress toward excellence and closeness to God. However, the movement of this engine will not reach its target unless the way is illuminated and smooth, and insight and awareness are the lights that enlighten this path of perfection and excellence, the compass and searchlight of the believer's walk. On the other hand, a lack of insight, vision, and a clear grasp of the issues would surely prevent this movement from reaching its target. As a result, just as it is necessary to have eyes to move from one point to another, it is also important to watch the way and identify the road from the pathless. An insightful eye is also important to take the proper path and fulfill life's lofty and magnificent objectives. Knowing the truth and having insight is essential for walking the path of righteousness, achieving life's noble objectives, avoiding detours in political and social affairs, and avoiding false interpretations and inaccurate stances. Therefore, religious insight, correct understanding of issues, correct analysis of life events, and political-social issues are crucial for everyone.

Islam's regeneration school instructs us to act based on a thorough awareness of the issues at hand and insight into the dynamics of friendships, rivalries, judgments, support, and viewpoints. We must also behave with awareness, conviction, and knowledge of what is right and wrong, as well as the ability to communicate our thoughts and take stances. Imam Ali's opinions on the principles and techniques for developing religious understanding are crucial and essential because Imam Ali, as an innocent person, is immune to sin, error, and mistakes. He is a person with the highest human positions, insight into human happiness and sorrow, and comprehension

of both, which may easily summon him to a good end as a guide and warn him of a terrible end. Therefore, it would seem that the principles and rules that are simple to understand, along with examples from well-known religious examples and distortions, are the most appropriate and effective teaching components when dealing with religion.

God gave man free will and the means to develop insight when He created him. Man can use them to acquire complete insight. The degree to which one gains knowledge and insight depends on the significance of understanding, why humans were created, and the tools and resources made available to them. The majority of nations can see the impacts of lack of understanding in human history, which has caused religion to stray from its intended course and had many negative repercussions on the fate of adherents of divine religions (Ebrahimzadeh, 2009: 52). For some reasons, throughout the early stages of Islam's development, opposing forces and shallow, gullible Muslims were unable to deviate from the path of righteousness while the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) was still alive. However, as soon as he passed away, these aberrations became apparent in several ways, including hypocrisy, rejection of Imam Ali, and return to the bigoted and worldly culture. Additionally, satanic tendencies emerged during Saqifah<sup>2</sup>, then later under the sovereignty of Imam Ali in the forms of deviators, apostates, and violators (Nakesin, Qasetin, and Mareqin), and finally under the sovereignty of Imam Hassan and Imam Hussain. Because of the ignorant and deceitful Muslims, Imam Ali was forced to remain in his home for 25 years, losing five golden years of his rule that might have been utilized to consolidate and rebuild the foundations of true Islam.

It is written in history that during the battle of Safin, some people were deceived by the evil tricks of the enemy and turned their backs on the battle and stood in front of Imam Ali. In this regard, Imam Ali said a sentence that clearly shows the prominent role of insight in perseverance and stability and the ability to analyze and recognize right and wrong, especially in the field of struggle and jihad, doubts, and seditions: "*This flag of struggle will not be carried by anyone except those who have insight and patience.*" (Sobhi Saleh, 1994, 755). He also said in a sentence emphasizing insight: "*May God have mercy on the one who thinks and learns a lesson, and as a result of learning a lesson, becomes a person of insight and seer*" (Sobhi Saleh, 1994, 149).

In another place, Imam Ali stated about insight: "*Indeed, God, Subhan, and Magnificent, made His remembrance the light of hearts, so that the ear can hear after deafness, and the eye can see after blindness, and man can be tamed after enmity*" (Sobhi Saleh, 1994, 343).

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<sup>2</sup> An event in early Islam where some of the companions of the Islamic prophet Muhammad gathered and pledged their

allegiance to Abu Bakr, the successor of Muhammad and the first caliph.

In this sentence, the meaning of blindness is the blindness of the heart, which is the worst and most dangerous blindness. In a narration by Prophet Muhammad, he said: *The truly blind are the inwardly blind. The blind is not the one who does not have eyes but does not have the eyes of the heart* (Bahrani, 1995, Vol. 3, 915).

Prophets and holy saints have long urged people to go past the surface level and focus on the true nature of events and situations. In essence, the objective of the Prophets, especially the great Prophet of Islam (PBUH) and the revelation of the Holy Quran, has been to liberate humanity from their lack of insight. People with insight know no other axis in life and alter their stances with the proper compass. However, the only viewpoint that governs the lives of those without insight is that of the world. They are referred to in Nahj-al-Balagha as being deaf and blind wherever the world's manifestations (pleasure, power, wealth, lust, etc.) are the cases and whenever insight is not taken into account. For instance, a bird's ability to fly is restricted by even a lightweight on its foot, and the same is true of humans. His spiritual growth is limited by worldly reliance. In contrast, moving away from one's interests and dependencies liberates his attitude and orientation, fosters the development of his vision and insight, and heightens his insight (Modaresi, 1998: 125):

*"Certainly, this world is the end of the sight of the (mentally) blind who see nothing beyond it. The sight of a looker (who looks with the eye of his mind) pierces through and realizes that the (real) house is beyond this world. The looker wants to get out of it while the blind wants to get into it. The looker collects provision from it (for the next world) while the blind collects provision for this very world"* (ibid.).

According to those above, religious insight has piqued the interest of thinkers who have authored books and essays on the subject. As a result, by reading and pondering on Nahj al-Balagha, it is possible to understand the features of religious insight. This explanation undoubtedly raises the level of religious insight.

## **2.1. Dimensions and Components of Religious Insight from Nahj al-Balagha's View**

### **2.1.1. Remembering God**

All spiritual, moral, and societal consequences linked with remembering God stem from remembering the truth and not forgetting Him. The objective of worship is to remember God, which polishes and purifies the heart and prepares it for heavenly manifestations. On the issue of remembering God or the spirit of worship, Imam Ali stated:

*"God uses His remembrance to polish people's hearts. By doing this, hearts are given the ability to hear after being deaf,*

*see after being blind, and be tame after being rebellious and defiant"* (Jafari, 1994, Vol. 17: 254).

It is a mystical perception that Nahj al-Balagha has of remembering God. After the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), Imam Ali's (AS) words and mystical worships are the source and inspiration for mystical views of worship in the Islamic world. The realm of remembering God, according to Nahj al-Balagha, is another world. The pleasures in the world of remembering God are incomparable to those in the three-dimensional material world. This globe is buzzing with excitement and movement that lead to an unnamed city rather than Egypt, Iraq, Syria, or any other area on Earth. There is no night and day, darkness, grief, or turbidity in Nahj al-Balagha devotion; rather, it is all brightness, honesty, purity, and intimacy.

Imam Ali described the beauty of this mysterious world as follows:

*"How happy and prosperous is the one who fulfills the duties of his Lord (Allah is his helper, and he always confesses to His Uniqueness). He crushes sufferings and sorrows like a stone under a mill. He avoids sleeping at night and keeps awake at night. When the army of sleep attacks, he makes the ground his bed, and his hands act as his pillow. He is among those whose worries for the Day of Judgment steal sleep from their eyes, they get up, and their lips start praying to God. The dark cloud of their sins recedes due to their constant asking for forgiveness. They are the party of God. Indeed they are the saviors"* (ibid: 416).

The veils of negligence are lifted from the heart's eyes, and the individual has a clear understanding of the truth when he exalts the name of God and lists all of His qualities, including wisdom, the ability to hear and see, compassion, mercy, and concern for his servants. They are completely submissive to God's demands due to the passions' uproar dying down and their ability to hear God's call with their soul.

### **2.1.2. Self-Actualization and Soul-Purification**

In all the phases of his virtuous life, Imam Ali was a practical manifestation of the school he attended. From his perspective, the most important thing is that a person begins to reform from the inside. Anyone who escapes the confines of his ego is a migrant to Allah. Emigration from vice to virtue and from passion to wisdom. *"So whoever has the will to go to God, then he should go out with us"*<sup>3</sup> (ibid, 402).

Agricultural land preparation and proper planting, weed removal, and early insect management result in a high-quality and desired crop. This is likewise true of the human soul (Beihagi, 1996: 120). Acquiring godly attributes and acts, eradicating unseemly traits and generally receiving proper knowledge provides a person with divine understanding. In

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<sup>3</sup> فمن اراد الروح الى الله فليخرج

several instances, Imam Ali stated this reality. For example, after listing some of the characteristics of truth seekers and knowledgeable believers, he stated:

*By self-cultivation, discipline, and sincerity, a wise believer liberates himself from blindness. He discerns the direct route with his insight, walks in it by thoroughly understanding its indications, and successfully navigates its stormy lustful waves. He grasps the most trustworthy handles for direction and clings to the strongest lifelines. He has therefore arrived at the place of assurance that he can perceive the truth as sunlight<sup>4</sup>.*

Nahj al-Balagha is an encyclopedia of Islamic ethics. Imam Ali, in sermon 42, stated:

*"O, people! What I fear most about you are two things - acting according to desires and extending hopes. As regards acting according to desires, this prevents from the truth; and as regards extending of hopes, it makes one forget the next world"* (Translated by Shahidi, 2005: 40)

*O creatures of Allah! The best adviser for himself is he who is the most obedient to Allah, and the most deceiving for himself is he who is the most disobedient to Allah. Deceived is he who deceived himself. Envious is he whose Faith is safe. Fortunate is he who takes a lesson from others, while unfortunate is he who falls victim to his desires. You should know that even the smallest hypocrisy is like believing in more than one God, and keeping the company of people who follow their desires is the key to obliviousness from religion and is the seat of Satan. Be on your guard against falsehood because it is contrary to Faith. A truthful person is at the height of salvation and dignity, while a liar is on the edge of ignominy and degradation. Do not be jealous because jealousy eats away Faith just as fire eats away dried wood. Do not bear malice because it is a scraper (of virtues).*

*Furthermore, know that desires make wit forgetful and make memory oblivious. You should falsify desire because it is a deception, and he who has desires is in deceit."* (Ibid.: 86).

In reality, Imam Ali wishes to set an example for his companions by describing the traits of sincere believers, guardians of Islam, and companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Perhaps these scorching words will affect their frigid hearts, waking them up to Jihad with oppressors and people.

### 2.1.3. Guardianship-Centeredness

Faith in the prophets of God leads to the illumination of the heart and insight of a person, and guardianship-centeredness also leads to insight. Because we cannot understand many things and appreciate their depth, connecting with people with flawless intellect, knowledge, and infallibility can understand

and realize the truths and become insightful at all times. Adhering to the guardianship of the people of the Prophet's family or Ahl al-Bayt is one way to get insight, and anyone who turns to their pre-lights will be saved from darkness and acquire vision and waking.

The third pillar of religious understanding is the idea of guardianship. A discerning person should believe in and use two significant and central signs of guardianship-centeredness in his acts and behavior. The first is genuine love for God, His chosen saints, and believers' general love for one another. The second step is to accept and obey their guardianship (wilayah). Imam Ali described Imamate and obeying the Imam as divine requirements in Nahj al-Balagha, alongside prayer, fasting, Hajj, and Jihad. In sermon 252, he introduced the notion of guardianship (wilayah) in organizing the affairs of the Islamic nation (Ummah).

It is also stated in the sermon of Imam Ali bin Mousa al-Reza (PBUH) (the eighth Imam of Shiites) in a congregational mosque on Friday:

*"Imamate is the head of religion, the inspiration behind Muslims' social structures, the driving force behind the advancement of humanity, and the inspiration behind believers' respect. The foundation of a successful Islam and its long branch is imamate"* (Koleini, 1385, translated by Sadegh Hassanzadeh, Vol.1:2006).

Of course, there is much talk about the importance of Imamate and the influence of the Islamic government in the order of the Muslim community and preserving their existence. Here it refers to an interpretation of Imam Ali's words:

*"He made obedience (to the Muslim imams) to (respect and strengthen) the position of Imamate."*<sup>6</sup>

The participation and coordination of the populace are unquestionably what enhance the Imams' Imamate and the rulers' power. We also state in matters of the Islamic government: *"The Imamate system will likewise disintegrate without the obedience and cooperation of the people."*

One of the most fundamental pillars of a government is the support of the populace and the people's votes. An Imam can construct a comprehensive system for the Ummah, but comprehensiveness can only be attained with the support of the populace.

In the fourth part of sermon 34, there are more contents in this field; Imam Ali stated: *"O people, I have rights over you, and you have rights over me. As for your rights over me, that is to counsel you, to pay you your dues fully, to teach you that you may not remain ignorant, and instruct you in behaviorism that you may act upon. As for my rights over you, it is the fulfillment of (the obligation of) allegiance, well-wishing in the presence*

<sup>4</sup> قَدْ أَبْصَرَ طَرِيقَهُ وَ سَلَكَ سَبِيلَهُ وَ حَزَفَ مَنَارَهُ وَ قَطَعَ عِمَارَهُ وَ اسْتَمْسَكَ مِنَ الْغُرَى بِأَوْتَقَتِهَا وَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بِأَمْتَتِهَا فَهُوَ مِنَ الْيَقِينِ عَلَى مِثْلِ ضَوْءِ الشَّمْسِ

إِنَّ الْإِمَامَةَ زِمَامُ الدِّينِ وَ نِظَامُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَ صَلَاحُ الدُّنْيَا وَ عِزُّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِنَّ<sup>5</sup> الْإِمَامَةَ أَسُّ الْإِسْلَامِ النَّامِي وَ فَرْعُهُ السَّامِي؛ وَ الطَّاعَةُ تَعْظِيمٌ لِلْإِمَامَةِ<sup>6</sup>

or absence, response when I call you, and obedience when I order you” (Sobhi Saleh, 1999)

Regarding obedience to the guardian, it is well clarified that the imams of Ahl al-Bayt are infallible; as Imam Ali (clearly says:

“Look at the people of the Prophet's family. Adhere to their direction. Follow their footsteps because they would never let you out of guidance or throw you into destruction. If they sit down, you sit down; if they rise, you rise. Do not go ahead of them, as you would go astray, and go not lag of them as you would be ruined!” (Motahari, 2001: 170).

These expressions are the clearest reason for their infallibility; such orders are not valid for those innocent of sin and error.

#### 2.1.4. Religious Zeal and Devotion

God's assistance is all-encompassing and universal. For this reason, it begins at the rank of upholding religious obligations, true and complete Faith, steadfastness on religion throughout life's stages, enjoining to good [Ma'ruf] and forbidding evil [Munkar] throughout those stages, encouraging people to follow God's religion and the like, and is advanced to the level of taking on the responsibility of Jihad in the manner of spreading the word of God on Earth. As a result, religious zeal entails defending and assisting in everything related to trust in God, in any area, in any place, and at any time, so that the believer will go to any length for the sake of God and to protect the truth and to be prepared to meet any person or power (Modaresi, 1998:12).

Imam Ali underlined the importance of adhering to this index at all times and in all circumstances, to the point where he regarded it compulsory to maintain the Faith till the end of one's life, as he remarked.: “You have to defend your religion even if you do not have a moment left in your life” (Sobhi Saleh, 1994: 385)

The necessity of religious zeal is that a person with full insight uses all his possibilities to help the religion of God, as when Imam Ali was entrusting the sovereignty of Egypt to Malik Ashtar, he obliged Malik to help the religion of God with his heart, hands, and tongue. He stated: “Help the religion of God Almighty with heart, hand, and tongue” (Sobhi Saleh, 1994: 426).

A zealous individual seeks to please God and supports the religion of God even if it costs him his life. Being careful about the definition of religious zeal leads to the realization that the teachings and commandments of Islam, such as Jihad, enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, Tawallá (Friendship) and Tabarrá (Hatred), and religious education is examples of religious zeal. It will never be achieved without religious insight. These teachings and rulings are highly

obvious in Nahj al-Balagha verses; for example, a few of them are mentioned below.

Imam Ali encouraged the people of Kufa to jihad against the Basra rebels and stated: “It is boiling like a huge cooking pot, and rebellion is fixed on its axis moving with full force. So, hasten towards your amir (commander) and proceed forward to fight your enemy, if so wills Allah to whom belongs Might and Majesty”<sup>7</sup> (Sobhi Saleh, 1994: 363)

In case to encourage people to enjoin the good and forbid the evil, Imam Ali stated: “Words are in your control until you have not uttered them, but when you have spoken them out, you are under their control. Therefore, guard your tongue as you guard your gold and silver, for often one expression snatches away a blessing and invites punishment” (Makaram Shirazi, 2008: 828)

“Enjoining to good [Ma'ruf] for the good of the common people; and forbidding from evil [Munkar] for the control of the mischievous...” (Ibid: 792)

Over many other laws in the world, Islamic law has the significant advantage of holding all members of society accountable for what occurs in society. Therefore, everyone is responsible for reminding him of his duties when he deviates from them. On the other hand, everyone has to reprimand him and prevent him from continuing when someone openly engages in evil or does something against Islamic law.

Therefore, enjoining to good [Ma'ruf] for the good of the common people and forbidding evil [Munkar] is a reason to prevent the actions of fools.

It is noteworthy that in the enjoining to good [Ma'ruf], the main emphasis is on common people, which indicates that the special people perform their duties and usually do not do anything to be enjoined to good. On the other hand, regarding forbidding evil [Munkar], the main emphasis is on foolish people, which indicates that a wise person does not sin, and those who sin oppress themselves and society. They are foolish and ignorant (Makaram Shirazi, 1996, Vol. 14: 88).

It should be noted that the lowest level in this sense is the ability to deny something from the bottom of the heart, which is feasible for everyone because rejecting and reacting to an unacceptable behavior is compulsory for every obligee to the extent of his abilities. On the other hand, denial by force is at the highest and final level, while denial by mouth is at the middle level. The degrees of handing over the reward of denial will also depend on its degrees. Until you have not spoken, you have locked the words in yourself, and when you have spoken, you have locked yourself in words and made yourself a prisoner of it. Thus, count your tongue and keep it as a treasure.

<sup>7</sup> جَاشَتْ جَيْشَ الْمَرْجَلِ وَ قَامَتْ الْفِتْنَةُ عَلَى الْقُطْبِ فَأَسْرَعُوا إِلَى أَمِيرِكُمْ وَ بَادَرُوا جِهَادَ عَدُوِّكُمْ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

As if you treasure your wisdom, a simple word can steal a blessing and open a calamity.

### 2.1.5. Piety

Piety, awareness, wisdom, and clear vision go hand in hand very strongly. Piety heals heart illnesses, enlightens the heart, purifies the soul of impurities, illuminates the darkness of the eyes, brings comfort and tranquility in the shadow of God, and dispels the darkness of man.

Imam Ali mentioned piety and its connection with insight in Nahj al-Balagha. He stated: *“The basis of the occurrence of evils and sedition are those desires which are acted upon and the orders that are innovated. They are against the Book of Allah. People co-operate with each other about them even though it is against the Religion of Allah. If wrong had been pure and unmixed, it would not be hidden from those who are in search of it. Furthermore, if the right had been pure without admixture of wrong, those who bear hatred towards it would have been silenced. What is, however, is that something is taken from here and something from there, and the two are mixed! Satan overpowers his friends at this stage, and they alone escape for whom 'virtue has been apportioned by Allah from before.”*

Accordingly, Imam Ali argued that only individuals who have engaged in acts of piety could distinguish between good and wrong when those two things are present together. In other words, the right seekers are aware and purified in front of God, and by God's grace, they are safe and far away from the conspiracies of sedition seekers who mix right and wrong.

Imam Ali stated: *“Now then, I advise you to fear Allah, Who created you for the first time; is your return, with Him lies the success of your aims, at Him terminate (all) your desires, towards Him runs your path of right, and He is the aim of your fears (for seeking protection). Certainly, fear of Allah is the medicine for the sickness of your hearts, sight for the blindness of your spirits, the cure for the ailments of your bodies, the rectifier of the evils of your breasts, the purifier of the pollution of your minds, the light of the darkness of your eyes, the consolation for fear of your heart and the brightness for the gloom of your ignorance. So make obedience to God a cover of your soul, not an outward cover, and be obedient with your soul, not with your body, so that it is mixed with the members and accessories of your body, and make (it) rule over all your affairs”* (Sobhi Saleh, 1999, translation of the verse: 284).

Regarding Martyr Motahari's assertion that humans must obey God, worship Him, and step on the path of divine devotion, Nahj al-Balagha's conception of worship is mystical. Instead, Imam Ali's teachings and his mystical worship, along with the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet's Sunnah, serve as the source and inspiration for mystical conceptions of worship and obedience in the Islamic world. The ardent and passionate ties between man and God are one of the great and many faces of

Islamic literature. It is extremely remarkable and amazing how many subtle speeches, prayers, allegories, and ironies have been presented in this area, whether in prose or verse. As a result, the knowledge and worship of God help the soul to reach higher levels of perfection. They also help to rid it of unattractive characteristics that prevent it from grasping facts, as well as carelessness and ignorance that prevent it from benefiting from insight.

A person without spiritual guidance is like a corpse devoid of the blessing of life; once he succeeds in believing and finds fulfillment in his Lord, he is like someone who has been revived by God and has been given a light to enable him to travel wherever he pleases.

### 2.1.6. Not being Worldly

Being non-worldly is one of the other aspects and areas of insight highlighted by Imam Ali. He encapsulated the world's breathtaking beauty in a few succinct sentences.

In a sermon delivered in the city of Kufa, Imam Ali said: *“In what way shall I describe this world whose beginning is grief and whose end is destruction? The lawful actions performed here have to be accounted for, while for the forbidden ones, there is punishment. Whoever is rich here faces mischief and whoever is poor gets grief. One who hankers after it does not get it. If one keeps away from it, then it advances toward him. If one sees through it, it will bestow his sight, but if one has his eye on it, then it would blind him”* (Sobhi Saleh, 1994: 106)

The Holy Qur'an says: *“We certainly created man in suffering”* (Balad/4).

According to the Qur'an, God created man in pain and misery. It is as if sorrow and suffering are like a human's home and nest, where a person lives from day one! Even the most successful lives are not without anguish and misery, and everyone is trapped somehow (Jafari, 1994, Vol. 17: 98).

Imam Ali describes the world in such a beautiful way. A world where even its halal is counted, let alone the haram. There are so many capitalists whose wealth only closed their eyes, and it caused their eyes of the truth to fade away from them. On the other hand, many poor people have had such wealth throughout their lives, while the Qur'an says: *“The life of this world is nothing but the wares of delusion.”* (Hadid/20).

Imam Ali stated something surprising. A point that impressed most of the commentators of Nahj al-Balagha and made him intoxicated with the wine of his purification. He stated: *If one sees through it (this world), it will bestow his sight, but if one has his eye on it, then it would blind him* (Sobhi Saleh, 1994: 106)

The nature of the world is that it apparently has “immediate good” and immediate benefit, and when it comes to a person, it penetrates so much that it sometimes forms a part of his soul. Because this world is beautiful and verdurous in the eyes and sweet and delicious, for this reason, getting rid of its love is not

easy. However, we should not forget that all people are travelers who have temporarily stayed in this world. Aware and awake travelers prepare their luggage in such places, providing the best and most useful luggage for themselves. This divine commandment inspires them: “*And take provision, for indeed the best provision is Godwariness. So be wary of Me, O you who possess intellects!*” (Baqarah/197)

They prepare this divine richness, which is piety, as a result, and they never slip into a state of negligence (Makaram Shirazi, 1996: 508)

Imam Ali gave an effective order here to keep safe from the dangers of the world, and that is contentment with ‘Kafaf’ and ‘Afaf’ (sufficiency and chastity).

The meaning of ‘Kafaf’ and ‘Afaf’ is that a person should be satisfied with what he needs in this world, abandon extravagance, and disregard haram items. Given that most human suffering is caused by greed and the desire for more, in this situation, he will experience tranquility in this world and have a lighter burden in the afterlife. (ibid.)

According to those above, it should be noted that those who view the world as a tool for walking in human perfections and seeking guidance from lessons gain insight. However, if their perspective is materialistic and they cling to the world as their ultimate goal, the same world that can be the source of their insight will envelop them in a veil that prevents them from ever understanding the truths of the world.

In this sermon and others like it, the world's condemnation is discussed and founded on worldliness. It is the approach taken by individuals who sacrifice all morals in favor of material gain. A respectable life and the acceptable use of God's gifts are never prohibited in Islam, but they do so when they put their soul and Faith into the world.

#### **2.1.7. Meditation in the Qur'an**

In Alavi's thought, one factor which increases insight is reciting the Qur'an and meditating on its verses. Imam Ali stated: “*The Book of Allah is that through which you see, speak, and hear*” (Sobhi Saleh, 1996:211).

Imam Ali stated on the issue of meditation in the Qur'an: “Meditate on the verses of the Qur'an and take advice from them because they are the most expressive advice” (Makaram Shirazi, 2008: 524).

Insight is the light that God shines in the heart of the believer, and the Qur'an, which is the light of guidance, spreads that light to those who will be enlightened by it. As Imam Ali said: “*It is a light for those who want to get light from it.*” (Sobhi Saleh, 1996: 336).

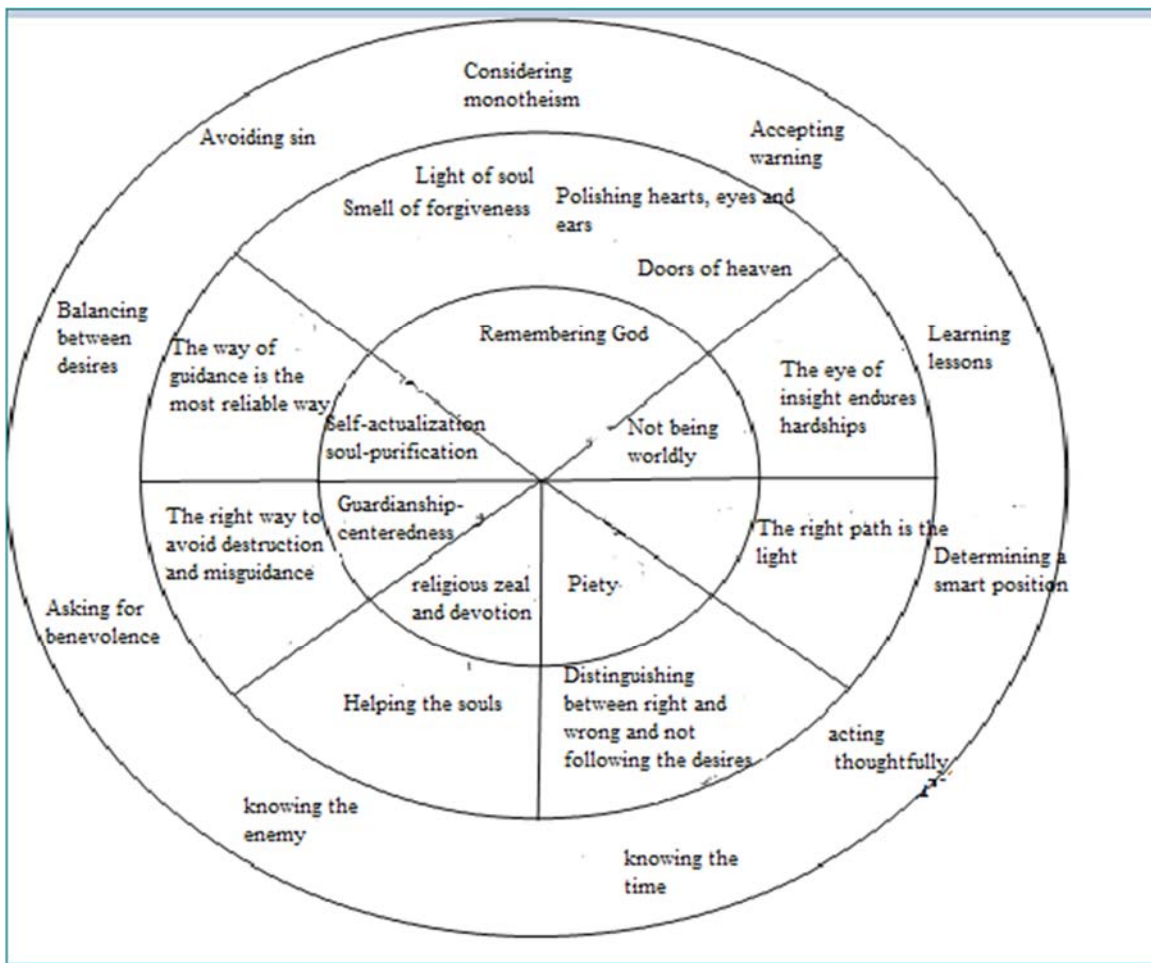
Human emotions and our senses—both external and internal—intellect and wisdom- do not reach the essence of who we are. The reason for this is obvious: while we are unlimited and infinite in every way, our minds are limited in every way, and the unlimited is never included in the limited. On the other hand, the world is so full of evidence of His holy existence that it is impossible to conceal Him. Everyone carries traces of Him, and His essence is hidden inside them (Makaram Shirazi, 1996: 44)

To detect his flawless nature in divine works, rationality and thinking principles are crucial to this methodology. We discover meaning and content through paying attention to historical events and viewing works from the past; otherwise, the body of thought is just a collection of soulless ideas that people pass by aimlessly without giving them any significance.

### **3. Findings**

Regarding the relationship between religious insight and the presented factors, including remembering God, self-actualization and soul-purification, guardianship-centeredness, religious zeal and devotion, piety, not being worldly, and meditation in the Quran, which have been presented based on the sermons, wisdom, and letters of Nahj al-Balagha, the studied factors have been determined in the following figure.

Figure 1. A Framework for Analyzing Dimensions and Components of Religious Insight in Nahj al-Balagha



As shown in the figure above, according to the results of this study, the dimensions and components of 'religious insight' are remembering God, self-actualization and soul-purification, guardianship-centeredness, religious zeal and piety, not being worldly, meditation in the Quran, which was introduced in detail. They may lead to moving a flow in the soul, which includes the light of the heart, confidence, recognition, and avoiding the destruction of error.

The human soul has a strong bond with its creator, according to the natural knowledge of God, and Nahj al-Balagha is a clear warning, just as God offers His servants a clear, fruitful, and comprehensive warning of the end of the world and its transition. An insightful person would see this as a clear warning and apply the lesson. Anyone who thinks after hearing gains knowledge from lessons and discovers fresh insights with each glance is said to be perceptive. Insightful people tend to shift their positions, act calmly, and turn away from the path of sedition toward the truth. An insightful and discerning person adapts the current issues of society and the political problems of the day to the general principles and rules and avoids doubt and sedition. It is emphasized in Islam that an insightful person knows his Lord and his enemies and opposes them.

Almighty God places insight, which is light, in the hearts of believers. However, the result of being exposed to this divine grace has factors and roots that must be taken into account, and they include: remembering God, meditation in the Quran, divine piety, learning lessons, not being worldly, reflecting and thinking, etc.

### Conclusion

This study aimed to apply the themes obtained from reading sermons, wisdom, and letters of Imam Ali about 'religious insight' into the framework obtained from religious insight. As mentioned, religious insight from the perspective of Imam Ali has certain educational factors and effects. It can be said that the determination of the factors above, including remembering God, self-actualization, soul-purification, guardianship-centeredness, religious zeal and piety, not being worldly, and meditation in the Quran, can have indicators and effects which have been separately considered. Besides, this study is significant since it includes the most innovative aspect and indicators of religious insight, which act as a compass and a marker. They can have educational effects such as considering monotheism, avoiding sin, accepting warnings, learning lessons, balancing desires, determining a smart position, acting thoughtfully and knowing the enemy and the time. Thus,

everybody must monitor and controls these indicators by himself.

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None.

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None

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