



# **Imam Ali (AS)'s Educational Efforts to Reform and Guide the *Nākithīn* as a Group of Internal Opponents of the Islamic Government**

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## **Abstract**

Given that established governments in human societies have always faced internal opposition, the appropriate strategy for Islamic rulers is to emulate the practical conduct of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (AS) in dealing with and confronting opponents. From the perspective of Imam Ali (AS), as a model of justice in the world, employing moral education, even when dealing with opponents of the Islamic government, is an important issue. Based on this, he endeavored to

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reform and guide opposing political and social groups to the best of his ability. The present study aims to examine a portion of his statements to internal opponents of the Islamic government, analyzing them using content analysis to uncover and identify the details of Imam's educational behaviors. The results indicated that Imam Ali's educational efforts to reform and guide internal opponents can be categorized under five strategic actions: public awareness, correcting religious beliefs and ideological perspectives, tolerance and Leniency, reprimand and threat, and finally, punishment commensurate with the circumstances. Among these, the Imam's efforts towards public awareness and correcting the religious and ideological beliefs of opponents are of paramount importance. To attract and guide opponents, he individually and specifically addressed their misconceptions, explaining the correct and true interpretation of verses from the Holy Quran and the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

**Keywords:** Imam Ali (AS), *Nākithīn*, Internal Opponents of the Islamic Government, Moral Education, Content Analysis.

## Introduction

Since governments in human societies have always faced opponents who, in a hostile and armed manner, seek to overthrow the government and oppose not only political actors but also the general principles and foundations of the system's legitimacy (Haghpanah, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 85), the manner in which Islamic rulers deal with opponents is considered an important issue. Therefore, emulating the

conduct of the impeccable Imams (AS), particularly understanding the conduct of Amir al-Mu'minin (AS) as a model of justice in the world, is considered important for modeling in Islamic societies.

In other words, in Imam Ali's discourse with groups opposing the Ali's government, the "Educational-ethical Conduct" is so prominent and outstanding that in some works related to the Imam's conduct in dealing with opponents, this educational-ethical aspect of the Imam's behavior is often considered and studied. In another research entitled "Behavioral Study of Imam Ali (AS) with the First Internal Opponents of the Islamic Government," a general report on the totality of his actions with the *Nākithīn* group and the people of Jamal is presented (Shirdel et al., 2016 AD/1396 SH: 45-70). However, this research attempts, with an educational approach, to specifically explain and examine Imam Ali's reformative actions against the internal opponents of the Islamic government in a detailed and case-by-case manner.

Among the major opponents of the Ali government (cf. Ibn Shahr Āshūb, 1959 AD/1379 AH: 1, 109; Ḥurr 'Āmilī, 2004 AD/1425 AH: 1, 357), the "*Nākithīn*" group, known as the "People of Jamal" and composed of prominent figures such as *Talḥa*, *Zubayr*, *'Āyisha*, and some Quraysh notables, according to Imam Ali's statement, "When I rose to power, a group reneged," (Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 3: 49) were the first group of internal opponents of the Ali government who, at the beginning of the just rule of Amir al-Mu'minin (AS), took action to oppose the Imam, instigating the "Battle of Jamal" and causing a civil war among Muslims.

The main issue in this research is to explain and extract the

educational model of Imam Ali in confronting internal opponents to reform and guide them. To achieve this, the "Content Analysis" method has been used, and the statistical population of the research focuses on the totality of the Imam's words and speeches in confronting the "People of Jamal." This is to avoid relying on historical reports and the statements of historians, so that a comprehensive model of the Imam's educational-ethical conduct can be presented.

## **1. Research Method**

This research uses content analysis, a common term for a number of different techniques used to analyze text (Veismoradi et al., 2013: 400). Content analysis is a general name for in-depth or intrinsic analysis methods in which the qualitative content of the data is interpreted, analyzed, and explained (Mehrdad et al., 2015 AD/1395 SH: 6). In fact, the path of qualitative content analysis begins with the text and extends towards extracting categories and then presenting conceptual models and patterns.

That is, in most qualitative approaches, inductive logic prevails (Elo and Kyngas, 2007: 107). As Smith argues, the main function of research using the "Content Analysis" method is to identify important theoretical themes from among the content variables (Smith, 1992: 400).

The necessity of choosing the "Content Analysis" method in this research is, firstly, its textual nature, that is, the direct examination of the text by the researcher (Newman, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 2, 179) and the avoidance of incorporating extra-textual reasons in the analysis

process (ibid: 176). This is because content analysis is a message-oriented research; that is, it focuses on measuring and assessing the message (content) (Mohammadimehr, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 37). Among the other advantages of this method is its strength based on fundamental rules such as validity, reliability, and systematicity (Homan, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 80). This has led to a significant increase in the use of this method by researchers in Islamic studies for analyzing religious texts.

This research uses the technique of "Thematic Content Analysis," in which, instead of using pre-determined scales and categories, the themes of the messages are assessed (Oliveira et al., 2016: 74).

## 2. Research Findings

First, by consulting reliable historical and narrative sources, all the narrations of Imam Ali (AS) concerning the Battle of Jamal, from the time of the general allegiance to the Imam, i.e., the second half of Dhul Hijjah 35 AH (Balādhurī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 2, 205; Ibn Athīr, 1965 AD/1385 AH: 3, 194), until after the Battle of Jamal and the Imam's departure from Basra for Kufa, i.e., the beginning of Rajab 36 AH (Ṭabarī, 1967 AD/1387 AH: 4, 544; Dīnawarī, 1989 AD/1368 SH: 152), were carefully identified and extracted. In total, 54 narrations were categorized into the forms of speeches, letters, and dialogues.

After systematically studying the aforementioned narrations, their content was segmented based on the unit of "Theme" and distributed in Excel spreadsheets. Then, by reflecting on each of the analytical units, the components related to it were recorded in the content

analysis table. Also, an independent identification code was entered for each main theme. Due to the large volume of the content analysis tables, one example of the Imam's statements regarding this group is included here:

**Table 1: Imam's statements regarding the words of the *Nākithīn* on their way to Mecca**

ROW	Content	Main Theme	Code ID
1	When Zubayr and Ṭalḥa left Medina and went to Mecca, they met no one without saying:	Narrator's Explanation	R-2-1-1
2	We are not bound by any oath of allegiance to Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib.	The Nākithīn's Denial of Allegiance	N-2-1-1
3	Our allegiance to him was unwilling and forced.	The Nākithīn's Claim of Coercion in the Allegiance	N-2-1-2
4	Their words reached the Commander of the Faithful and he said:	Narrator's Explanation	R-2-1-2
5	May God remove them from His mercy.	Curse upon the Nākithīn	A-2-1-1
6	By God, I am certain that they will soon kill themselves in the worst possible way, and they will bring with them someone they visited on the most unlucky day.	Knowledge of the Nākithīn's Fate	A-2-1-2
7	By God, they do not intend to perform Ḥajj.	Declaration of the Nākithīn's Deceit	A-2-1-3
8	They came to me with the faces of liars and returned with the faces of oath-breakers and covenant-breakers.	Assurance of the Nākithīn's Treachery	A-2-1-4
9	By God, from today onwards, they will not come except with a fierce army in which they will kill themselves.	Assurance of the Nākithīn's Warmongering	A-2-1-5
10	May God remove them further and further from His mercy.	Curse upon the Nākithīn	A-2-1-6

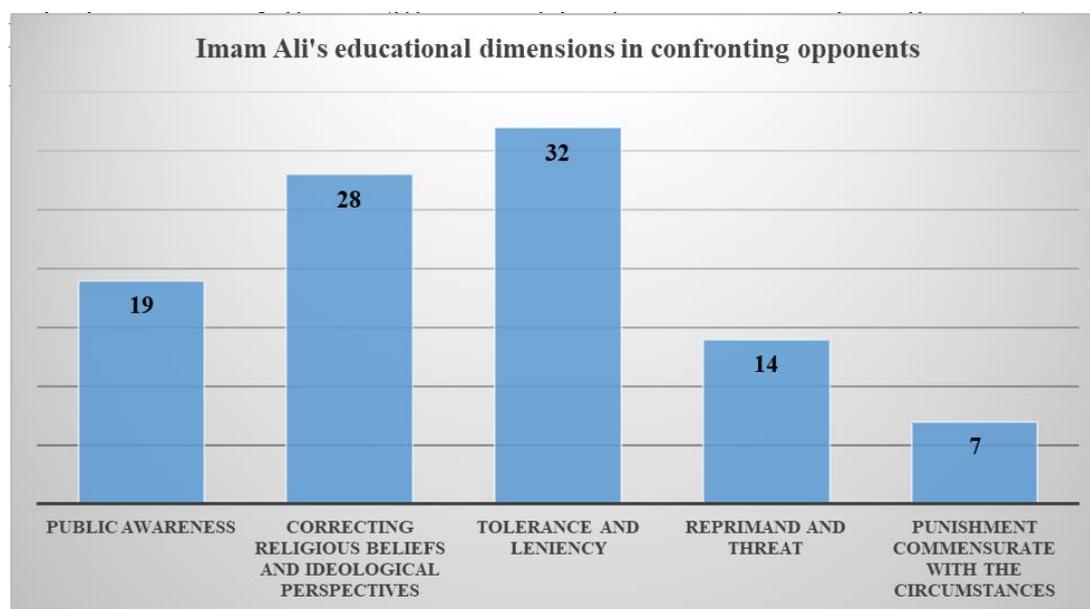
In these tables, the main theme refers to the explicit and clear message of the text, which is considered the primary theme and core data of the content for further analysis. The identifier refers to the letter number and extracted code number from the text so that during the research process, we can quickly find their address while measuring the frequency of sentences.

As stated in the problem statement of the article, this article only extracts the educational approach of Imam Ali (AS) because the special attention of the Holy Prophet to the issue of ethics in dealing with opponents, and guidance and correction of misguided and hostile leaders in confronting them, has been very important and widespread; such that he even emphasizes the necessity of observing ethics on the battlefield. Also, even after the war, despite the glorious victory of the Holy Prophet over the people of Jamal, he forgave and consoled all the survivors and prisoners of Jamal with magnanimity and expressed regret and sorrow for the dead of Jamal (cf. Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 413-414).

### **3. Imam Ali's (AS) Model of Moral Education for Guiding and Correcting Opponents**

Imam Ali (AS) consistently sought to educate and guide the *Nākithīn* (those who violated the pledge of allegiance) and to reconstruct their belief system during the Battle of Jamal. In this regard, he sometimes exercised forbearance and offered counsel, while at other times, he employed a more serious approach, rebuking, reprimanding, and even cursing them, emphasizing God's displeasure and the consequences they faced. This strategy also encompassed other Muslims, whom he urged to learn a lesson from the events of the Battle of Jamal.

Based on a qualitative analysis of Imam Ali's (AS) statements concerning the participants of the Battle of Jamal and research findings, the most frequent dimensions of Imam Ali's (AS) educational and ethical approach towards the *Nākithīn*, in order of



### 3-1. Endeavors for Public Awareness

Given that the theme of "Guiding and correcting the *Nākithīn*" is the most frequent sub-category in the analysis of Imam Ali's (AS) educational and ethical approach towards the participants of the Battle of Jamal, it can be considered his foremost concern as the leader and guardian of Jamal community. This is because he bore the weighty responsibility of guiding and correcting all Muslims, especially those who had gone astray, such as the participants of the Battle of Jamal. They had deviated from the right path by opposing Ali's legitimate rule, violating the Imam's right, a right considered a divine right, to the allegiance of all Muslims to the divinely appointed ruler of the Islamic community. Consequently, the Imam exerted every effort to invite the *Nākithīn* to the truth and persuade them to repent and

abandon their opposition to the Islamic government.

Based on this, in his sermon on the eve of the battle against the *Nākithīn* (those who violated the pledge), the Imam addressed the fighters, saying: "They (*Nākithīn*) have strayed from guidance into misguidance, and we call them to God's pleasure, while they call us to God's wrath. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us and you to guide them back to the truth." (Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: P, 331) On the other hand, during a conversation with *Ibn Rafā'a* on the way to Basra, in response to his question about how the Imam would deal with the *Nākithīn*, the Imam stated that his most important plan was to reform matters and guide the *Nākithīn*, and he expressed hope for their repentance (cf. Ṭabarī, 1967 AD/1387 AH: 4, 479; Ibn Athīr, 1965 AD/1385 AH: 3, 224).

### 3-1-1. Exhortation of Opponents to Observe Piety

One aspect of the Imam's guidance towards the participants of the Battle of Jamal was his advice to them to observe piety and repent. As such, in his letter to *Ṭalḥa* and *Zubayr*, the Imam emphasized the necessity of their returning from their opposition to him and performing immediate repentance, warning them against the humiliating punishment of the hereafter (Nahj al-Balāgha, Letter 54: 445-446). Similarly, in a letter to *Āyisha*, he advised her to observe piety and maintain seclusion (Ibn A'tham, 1990 AD/1411 AH: 2, 465; Ibn Qutayba, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 1, 90; Ibn Shahr Āshūb, 1959 AD/1379 AH: 3, 152).

In fact, from the Imam's perspective, the path of repentance was

always open to the misguided and those who opposed the rightful government, and the possibility of repentance was always available. For this reason, in his sermon upon leaving *Dhī Qār* for Basra, he said: "I call them to the path of truth and present them with evidence and proof. So if they repent and accept, the path of repentance is open, the truth is acceptable, and God will not punish them." (Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: B, 1, 252) Similarly, during discussions with the leaders of the Battle of Jamal on the eve of the battle, the Imam admonished and reproached *Ṭalḥa*, emphasizing the need for his swift repentance (Ibn Qutayba, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 1, 95). Consequently, even after the Battle of Jamal, he urged the survivors among its participants to avoid repeating their sin and to perform sincere repentance (Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: P, 408).

### 3-1-2. Correctly Identifying Right and Wrong

One example of Imam Ali's guidance during the Battle of Jamal was his emphasis on the "Necessity of correctly identifying right and wrong." The importance of "Delineating the positions of right and wrong" was such that one of his enlightening discussions during the battle, in response to a question from *Hārith ibn Hūṭ*, was dedicated to explaining the priority of "Knowing right and wrong" over "Knowing the people of right and wrong." The incident unfolded as follows: "*Hārith* approached the Imam and said, "Do you think I consider the companions of Jamal (*Ṭalḥa*, *Zubayr*, and *ʿĀyisha*) to be people of falsehood? (Never!)" The Imam replied, "O! *Hārith*, the matter has truly been obscured for you. Certainly, right and wrong are not

identified by the status of individuals. Rather, know the right to know the people of right, and know the wrong to know the people of wrong." (Nahj al-Balāgha, Wisdom 262: 521; Balādhurī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 2, 274)

### **3-1-3. Drawing Attention to History and Learning Lessons from It**

In addition to the above points, which mostly pertained to the companions of Jamal, the Imam, during the events of the Battle of Jamal, paid special attention to guiding the Muslims in general and invited them to learn lessons from the *Fitna* (trial/tribulation) of Jamal. For instance, in a sermon delivered after learning of the *Khawārij*'s (rebels') movement from Mecca towards Basra, he issued a warning about their fate, stating: "Will the people learn a lesson from their conduct, and will they reflect on the actions of these individuals?" (Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: B, 1, 247)

Among the noteworthy points that the Imam emphasized in his correspondence after the battle was his effort to guide the survivors of the companions of Jamal and the Muslims in general; as evidenced by a common expression in letters he wrote to the people of Medina and Kufa, he cited the key Quranic verse: "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves." (al-Ra'd/11) (Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: P, 395) This verse, in addition to narrating a divine tradition regarding the importance of human will and decision in determining destiny and achieving desirable conditions, carries the important message that other people should also learn a lesson from the fate of the companions of Jamal

and understand that choosing the path of guidance or misguidance depends on their own will and actions.

### 3-1-4. Exhorting the Opponents

It is noteworthy that even with the aim of attracting and insisting on guiding the people of the Battle of Jamal, Imam Ali (AS) utilized the tradition of granting respite. Before engaging in dialogue with the leaders of the Battle of Jamal on the verge of war, and to prevent a potential war between Muslims and avoid a preemptive strike by the righteous fighters, he placed special emphasis on the necessity of fully conveying the truth to the *Nākithīn*. He ordered one of his companions to call out loudly: "No one should throw a spear or stone. No one is permitted to wound anyone with a lance, except when I have fully conveyed the truth to them." (Ibn Qutaybah, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 1, 91) Therefore, the Imam repeatedly gave the people of the Battle of Jamal respite and, by sending righteous and well-meaning representatives, fully conveyed the truth to them and emphasized the necessity of calling the *Nākithīn* to the teachings of the Quran. At the beginning of the Battle of Jamal, when the Imam's army moved towards the enemy, he stopped and warned the people against starting the war before fully conveying the truth to the *Nākithīn*. Then he summoned Abdullah ibn Abbas and gave him a Quran, saying: "Go with this Quran to *Talḥa*, *Zubayr*, and *Āyisha* and call them to its rulings." (Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 336)

The Imam's insistence on granting respite and guiding the *Nākithīn*

was such that even when Ibn Abbas returned from the leaders of the Battle of Jamal and announced that the negotiations had been fruitless and requested that the Imam issue the order to attack to repel their evil, he was met with the Imam's insistence on repeating the conveying of the truth to the *Nākihīn*. The Imam said several times: "Who will take this Quran from me and present it to them and call them to the rulings of the Quran?" Finally, he gave the Quran to a volunteering youth and said: "Go to the people of the Battle of Jamal and present the Quran to them and call them to its rulings." (cf. *ibid*: 339)

Therefore, it can be said that the Imam spared no effort in guiding and attracting opponents such as the people of the Battle of Jamal. As he stated in a message to the soldiers of the Battle of Jamal at the beginning of the war: "So if you wish, return... and if you wish, join me." (*ibid*: 365)

### **3-2. Attempting to Correct Religious Understandings and Beliefs**

The topic of "Correcting religious understanding" is among the most frequent sub-themes in the educational and ethical conduct of Imam Ali (AS) towards the opponents at the Battle of Jamal. This is because, in addition to praising God and sending blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) at the beginning of most of his sermons and letters concerning the opponents at Jamal, he repeatedly affirmed the oneness of God, emphasizing aspects of practical monotheism such as the necessity of submission to God's command, reliance on and seeking refuge in God, fulfilling God's rights, obedience to God and His Messenger, and following the Quran and Sunnah. On the

other hand, he asserted the universal message of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the salvation offered by Islamic law, the inevitability of divine punishment, the certainty of death, and the eventual insight of his opponents after death. The Imam consistently supported his statements with verses from the Quran.

Among the narrations replete with the Imam's teachings on matters of faith concerning the opponents at Jamal is a sermon he delivered after learning of their dissatisfaction with the just distribution of the public treasury at the beginning of his rule. This sermon, considered one of Imam Ali's (AS) most effective speeches in prioritizing the ethical education of opponents like those at Jamal, demonstrates the breadth of the Imam's understanding in explaining the principles of the faith. He was well aware that the Quraysh notables and companions of the Prophet (PBUH), due to their accustomed luxurious lives and materialistic inclinations during the reigns of the previous caliphs, had suffered a deficiency in their faith and religious principles. Therefore, in his first extensive speeches to the Muslims, he focused on explaining religious teachings. In fact, he believed that the most effective way to succeed in implementing fundamental reforms in the Ali's government and ensuring the acceptance of these changes by the Muslim community was to strengthen the Muslims' faith and inspire them with spiritual motivation.

Therefore, following his first revolutionary act, the equitable distribution of the public treasury, he extensively explained matters of faith to ensure the effectiveness of his actions: "O! People, the best of people are those most obedient to God's commands, the one who most

diligently worships God, follow the path of the Prophet of God (PBUH), and keep alive the Quran of God."

No one among God's creation has any superiority except through obedience to God and His Prophet, and adherence to His Book and the Sunnah of His Prophet... God says in His Book: "If you love God, then follow me [the Prophet of God (PBUH)] so that God will love you and forgive your sins..." Then He said: "Know that, truly, we will enforce the laws of the Quran and grant the benefits of Islam to anyone who turns towards our Qibla... and testifies that there is no god but God, and that Muhammad (PBUH) is His servant and Prophet." Therefore, after strengthening the audience's faith, it is time to conclude and utilize these firm religious teachings to warn Muslims against worldly desires and the necessity of their attention to the hereafter. Thus, in the end, He says: "Know that, truly, this world that you desire and are enamored with... is not your true home, nor the dwelling for which you were created and invited. Know that the world will not remain for you, and you will not abide in it forever. Let not its material things deceive you." (cf. Ḥarrānī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 183-185; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 7, 40)

It is noteworthy that although, in the view of some scholars, the "People of Jamal" are not considered among the ideological opponents of the Ali's rule, the Imam's emphasis on explaining religious teachings, in addition to indicating the Imam's attention to the beliefs of his opponents and correcting their religious understanding, also reveals the deviation in the beliefs of the *Khawārij*. In reality, their norm-breaking actions stemmed from a lack of firm belief in the

divine teachings regarding the acknowledgment of the divine caliphate of Amir al-Mu'minin (AS) and the necessity of following the leader of the Muslims, as well as a lack of insight into the consequences of their actions. As a result, explaining these kinds of religious teachings is a high priority in the Imam's speeches.

### 3-3. The Effort for Tolerance and Leniency

"Tolerance" linguistically opposes force and violence and is equivalent to "Leniency," meaning to be gentle and kind and to treat with compassion (Farāhīdī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 5, 149; Ibn Fāris, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 2, 418; Ibn Manẓūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 10, 118). A more precise explanation would be that "Tolerance (*Mudārā*)" is semantically close to "Leniency (*Rifq*)," as tolerance refers to gentleness, kindness, good social interaction with people, and bearing their hardships and annoyances.

A distinction can be made between "Tolerance" and "Leniency," as tolerance implies enduring the harm inflicted by others, while leniency does not (Narāqī, n.d.: 1, 341). Tolerance, however, is different from leniency. A tolerant person never abandons adherence to truth in order to persuade or win over an opponent, nor does he deviate towards falsehood. In this sense, tolerance means paying the minimum cost to repel and win over an enemy, enduring their injustice and oppression as long as there is hope for their guidance and reform (Rouhi Barandaq et al., 2016 AD/1396 SH: 32).

### **3-3-1. The Necessity of Gentleness and Kindness Towards Opponents Before Their Armed Action**

Among the prominent manifestations of the Imam's compassion and tolerance towards the *Nakithīn* is their presence in Medina. They came under the pretext of complaining about their dire financial situation. After the Imam's compassionate offer of personal financial assistance was rejected, they demanded access to the public treasury, which was met with strong opposition and rejection from the Imam. In fact, the Imam made his agreement contingent upon the consent of the general Muslim population. Nevertheless, Amir al-Mu'minin (AS) showed them compassion, saying, "But I will tolerate you and explain your excuses to the people." (Mufid, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 165) Another prominent example of the Imam's tolerance towards the *Nakithīn* before their rebellion is their request for permission to go to Mecca for *Hajj*. The Imam, after securing a renewal of their pledge, granted their request. This action was challenged by *Ibn 'Abbās*, who questioned why the Imam, knowing of the Jamal leaders' potential sabotage and plotting to prepare for military action against the Ali's government, allowed them to leave without punishment or imprisonment to prevent their harm. The Imam's response to *Ibn 'Abbās* was: "O! *Ibn 'Abbās*, do you suggest that I initiate oppression and evil before doing well? And that I punish based on suspicion and accusation, and hold someone accountable before their crime is committed? Never! By God, I will never deviate from the covenant that God has taken from me to judge justly and speak decisively. O!

*Ibn ‘Abbās!* I permitted them, knowing what they would do. But I exercise caution in this matter and seek God's help." (ibid: 167) This demonstrates the utmost tolerance and compassion of the leader of the Muslims towards the internal opponents of the Ali's government.

As the Imam explicitly stated in a sermon concerning the necessity of following the righteous government, delivered upon learning of the movement of the people of the Battle of Jamal towards Basra, the Imam's patience in the face of the opposition and plots of the *Nākithīn* lasted as long as no harm befell the unity of the Islamic society and system (Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 169). Similarly, in his letter to *‘Uthmān ibn Hunayf*, he emphasizes that if the leaders of the Battle of Jamal renew their allegiance, they should be treated with tolerance and kindness (Eskāfī, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 60). Also, on the outskirts of Basra, the Imam addressed the fighters of the righteous front, advising them on the necessity of self-control towards the *Nākithīn* and patience with them, saying: "O! People, control yourselves. Refrain from harming these people, for they are your brothers. Be patient with what befalls you." (Ṭabarī, 1967 AD/1387 AH: 4, 496) A noteworthy point in the Imam's statement is the necessity of respecting the people of the Battle of Jamal, due to their being counted among the Muslim brothers. In his letter to the governor and people of Kufa, written after the conquest of Basra, he refers to the status of the people of the Battle of Jamal in the Islamic nation with a similar expression, saying: "We confronted that group from our nation who broke their covenant with us." (Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 403)

### 3-3-2. The Necessity of Observing Islamic Ethics in War

Among the important aspects of the ethical conduct and moral upbringing of Amir al-Mu'minin (AS) in the Battle of Jamal is the Imam's ethical advice on the battlefield, which includes observing ethical principles towards the survivors of the enemy army. In fact, the most important issue considered by the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) in battlefields was ethical conduct and refraining from violating the sanctity of women and the weak.

Imam Ali (AS) advised his troops at the beginning of the Battle of Jamal: "O! People... do not violate the sanctity of any home, do not attack any woman, and do not mutilate any slain." (Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 342) The issue of observing ethics in war, from the Imam's perspective, was of such importance that even in his letter to the governor and people of Kufa, written after the Battle of Jamal, he addressed this matter while analyzing the events (ibid: 403).

For example, Imam Ali's compassion towards the participants of the Battle of Jamal is evident in his expression of regret over the deaths of its leaders; after the Battle of Jamal and the killing of *Ṭalḥa* and *Zubayr*, the Amir al-Mu'minin (AS) passed among the slain. Upon seeing the Quraysh notables among the dead, he addressed them, saying: "Indeed, you met an unfortunate end, and I seek refuge in God from an evil and unfortunate death." (Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: B, 1, 254) Then, upon reaching *Ṭalḥa*'s corpse, he said: "*Abū Muḥammad* (*Ṭalḥa*) lies here, how desolate! By God, I did not wish to see the Quraysh slain under the stars!" (Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 219)

Similarly, when *Ibn Jarmūz*, *Zubayr's* killer, presented *Zubayr's* head and sword before the Imam, the Imam drew *Zubayr's* sword from its sheath and expressed his sorrow (Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 389).

In reality, the Imam strove to morally guide the *Nākithīn*, preventing such a deplorable end for them. For *Ṭalḥa*, *Zubayr*, and other Quraysh notables, had they abandoned their enmity towards the Imam, they would undoubtedly have deserved a good end due to their companionship with the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and their bravery in Islam. However, they chose their own path of destruction.

### **3-3-3. A General Pardon for Opponents Before Armed Conflict**

Another example of Imam Ali's (AS) peaceful approach towards the participants of the Battle of Jamal is his declaration of a general pardon for them, as well as for the prisoners and survivors. The significance of this lies in the fact that, as the legitimate ruler of the Islamic community, the Imam had the right to hold this group of rebellious opponents accountable and punish them.

However, with utmost grace and compassion, he pardoned their mistakes. For example, after a sermon in which the Imam, after the conquest of Basra, condemned the people of Basra, some of the Basra people that present there, in a supplicating tone, requested forgiveness. The Imam replied, "I forgive you all." (Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 408) It is noteworthy that the Imam mentioned the general pardon granted to the companions and survivors of the Battle of Jamal in similar terms in letters he wrote to the people of Medina and Kufa after the battle (Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 395).

Even with the repeated treachery and sabotage of the *Nākihīn*, the Imam constantly and lovingly prayed to God Almighty for the forgiveness of the companions of the Battle of Jamal. Among the instances of Imam Ali's supplication for forgiveness for the companions of the Battle of Jamal can be found at the end of a sermon he delivered after learning of the opposition's dissatisfaction with the equitable distribution of the public treasury at the beginning of his rule (Ḥarrānī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 185; Ibn Abil Ḥadīd, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 7, 40), as well as in his address to the people of Basra after the Battle of Jamal (Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 402).

A noteworthy aspect of Amir al-Mu'minin's (AS) leniency towards the survivors of the Battle of Jamal concerns the Imam's respectful treatment of 'Āyisha both on the battlefield and after the battle. For instance, among the Imam's important instructions at the outset of the battle was the necessity of preserving 'Āyisha's modesty and honor. He instructed his brother, *Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr*, saying: "O! *Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr*! If 'Āyisha falls to the ground, cover her and take care of her affairs." (ibid: 344) At the end of the battle and after the defeat of the army of Jamal, the Imam inquired about her safety, asking his brother: "See if she has been wounded?" And after ensuring 'Āyisha's safety, he again instructed his brother to transfer her to the (safe) house of the *Khuzā'ī* sons of the Caliphs. In fact, despite 'Āyisha being one of the main accused in the Battle of Jamal and the most influential figure in the military coup against the Ali's government, the Imam, due to her lineage to the Prophet Muhammad **101**

(PBUH), treated her with respect and leniency. Consequently, after the complete suppression of the Battle of Jamal, he provided the necessary arrangements, including a mount, provisions, a guard, and travel supplies for 'Āyisha's journey from Basra to Medina. On the day of her departure, he was present with the people of Basra to see her off (cf. Ṭabarī, 1967 AD/1387 AH: 4, 544).

### **3-4. Attempt at Reprimand and Threat**

One of the most significant themes in Imam Ali's (AS) educational approach towards the combatants of Jamal is the "curse and rebuke of the *Nākithīn*." When the Imam observed that despite his efforts to guide and reform the *Nākithīn*, they persisted in their rebellious and hostile actions against him, completely disregarding his rightful position as the leader and guardian of Muslims, he employed condemnation and rebuke of the *Nākithīn*, leaving their punishment to God Almighty, to demonstrate the severity of his anger towards their deviation from Islamic governance.

Content analysis tables show that the Imam used the form of a curse in 21 instances, almost all of which occurred after the *Nākithīn*'s rebellion. In contrast, supplication was used only in 6 instances in the Imam's statements concerning the combatants of Jamal. A crucial point regarding the qualitative analysis of the "Curse" theme is that in most cases, the Imam's aim was not simply to curse the combatants of Jamal, but rather to achieve another purpose. While expressing a curse, he also explained its reason, conveying messages such as highlighting the injustice, treachery, and hostility of the *Nākithīn*.

**102** Therefore, the curses in the Imam's speeches can be considered not

merely emotional expressions, but rather rational reactions accompanied by explanations.

For instance, at the end of his enlightening sermon on the illegitimacy of the *Nākithīn*'s political movement, delivered after *Ṭalḥa* and *Zubayr* left Medina, the Imam used a curse to emphasize the widespread treachery of the *Nākithīn* against the Muslim community (Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 155).

In fact, sometimes this curse and rebuke stemmed from the severity of the injustice they committed in violating the rights of the Imam and the Muslim community. As such, the Imam used a curse in his sermon calling on the people of Medina to confront the *Nākithīn*. Similarly, in his correspondence with *ʿUthmān ibn Ḥunayf* regarding how to deal with the *Nākithīn*, the Imam speaks of God's displeasure with their actions and the severe divine punishment awaiting them (Eskāfī, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 60).

Then, after their escape from the Battle of Jamal, while conversing with them, he [Imam Ali] declared, concerning the heinous actions of the combatants of the Battle of Jamal against the governor and the people of Basra, and also against the Islamic government: "O! God, render their intentions ineffective, prevent them from achieving their aims, and punish them for their deeds." (Ṭabarī, 1967 AD/1387 AH: 4, 481)

Among the instances where the Imam cursed each of the leaders of the *Khawārij* specifically is a sermon he delivered in response to the *Khawārij*'s declaration of war on the eve of the Battle of Jamal. In this sermon, several times, while expressing his dissatisfaction and intense anger towards the *Khawārij*, he explicitly cursed them: "May **103**

their mothers mourn for them. No one has ever frightened me from battle or instilled fear of the sword in me... Amazing is *Talḥa*... the same one who pledged allegiance to me many times, then broke his oath. O! Lord, seize him and grant him no respite. Be aware that *Zubayr* severed my kinship ties and broke his allegiance to me and declared war against me... O! God, according to Your will, suffice me from his evil." (Ṭūsī, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 169)

### 3-5. Efforts to Punish and Sanction in Accordance with Social Circumstances

Even when rebuking and reprimanding the combatants of the Battle of Jamal, Imam Ali (AS) did not act emotionally. Rather, the condemnations in the Imam's words were purposeful and enlightening, and to punish the *Khawārij*, he emphasized the main cause that led to their rebuke. This method of the Imam in reprimanding his opponents is an important lesson in moral education, namely that rebuke and punishment are effective when accompanied by a statement of their cause. Thus, the Imam himself, while delivering a sermon in response to the *Khawārij*'s declaration of war in Basra, explicitly stated that he was rebuking and reprimanding the *Khawārij*, and the reason for this was their breach of covenant and oppression (ibid: 169).

Similarly, while conversing with the survivors of the Battle of Jamal, he rebuked them for waging war: "Woe to you, O! Group of Quraysh! Why did you fight with me? Did I judge unjustly among you?" (Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 413)

In reality, Imam Ali's rebukes and warnings often stemmed from benevolence and compassion for the fate of the combatants at the

Battle of Jamal. They were never intended to damage their character or social standing. A prime example of the Imam's benevolent reproach is his dialogue with *Zubayr* on the eve of the Battle of Jamal. Due to his kinship with *Zubayr* and his knowledge of *Zubayr's* gentle nature and devotion to the *Ahl al-Bayt*, the Imam felt a greater concern for his fate, fearing that despite his unparalleled efforts in Islam, he might ultimately fall victim to divine punishment and, in a sense, suffer disgrace and eternal torment (cf. *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Letter 54; Ibn Qutaybah, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 1, 95). Therefore, upon meeting him, he compassionately inquired about his presence in the enemy ranks and reproached him for his unfounded claim of avenging *‘Uthmān*. He then, recalling a prophetic narration warning *Zubayr* against enmity towards the Prophet, strove to guide and reform him (Ibn Qutaybah, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 1, 92).

## Conclusion

This article endeavors to uncover and elucidate Imam Ali's (AS) educational and ethical approach towards internal opponents and dissenters within the Islamic government, aiming to discover his educational model for dealing with such individuals. Therefore, in the first step, using content analysis, the Imam's statements and writings concerning these individuals, particularly the *Nākithīn* and the combatants at Jamal, were examined and analyzed.

In the second step, focusing on the actions Imam Ali (AS) undertook to guide and reform his opponents, an attempt was made to **105**

extract his educational model in dealing with such individuals throughout history. The importance and necessity of this issue lie in understanding that, from Imam Ali's (AS) perspective, employing ethical education, even when dealing with opponents of the Islamic government, is of paramount importance.

The final research findings indicate that Imam Ali's (AS) educational efforts to reform and guide internal opponents can be categorized under the following five strategic actions:

- Public awareness;
- Correction of religious beliefs and ideological perspectives;
- Tolerance and leniency;
- Reprimand and threat;
- Punishment and penalty.

Public awareness, as intended here, refers to the opponents' consistent exhortation to piety, the correct presentation of right and wrong, drawing attention to history and learning lessons from it, and ultimately, establishing irrefutable proof. In the section on correcting the opponents' religious and ideological perspectives, the Imam's significant efforts to rectify their misinterpretations of the verses of the Quran and the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are evident. He strived to explain their true and correct interpretation.

It is noteworthy that in the initial stages, before the opponents' armed actions against the Islamic government, the Imam adopted a policy of tolerance and patience, emphasizing the necessity of kind treatment towards opponents, preserving their dignity, and refraining

from insulting them. However, with the commencement of military actions and internal unrest, he initially resorted to reprimand and threat, and finally, due to their disruption of the peace of the Islamic society and opposition to the rightful government, he initiated the final stage: punishment and retribution. Even in this phase, a crucial point is the Imam's emphasis on the necessity of adhering to ethical conduct in war, determining the punishment of opponents in accordance with the societal conditions.

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