



Analysis and Critique of Imamate and Community Leadership in the Thought of Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The enduring discourse on Imamate and leadership in Islam has underexplored myaaaaapeppceive Th aiiic analyze how bln Aaab and uu blakhhh though expanded guardianship (Vilayah) from spiritual to political authority, intellectually underpinning hle Safavdddynattiyiiii ii .

Method: Using historical, comparative, and analytical methods within the History of Thought framework, the study conducts an intra-xxxua anyy of uu blakhhh wokk oo evaluate mystical interpretations of Imamate and their socio-political implications.

Findings: Mysticism presents three frameworks for reconciling religious law (Sharia) and spiritual reality (Haqiqa): Reality without Law (transcending legal constraints), Reality within Law (spirituality confined to jurisprudence), Law within Reality (jurisprudence subordinated to mystical truth).

bln Aaab eanpppeiiii on of jithlad nndeppendent ggg eeaonnng and iihad rrrugg later systematized by Nurbakhsh, crystallized the third framework. This redefined guardia hhip a both nme and ou authoiyy eeavaing exoccccejjiihad to “ee veooory ttthlad” and poiiii onnng hle mram a hamonee of hle “sssee iihad” pphycce uuugg))) and “geajjjjj j ad” ppriiua rrrugg....

Conclusion: Nurbakhsh categorizes Imamate nmo “ee a Imamae’ aann embodynng all dda nd “ee vvvw Imama”” ppaiia manfcaaaion of Mo Sh mram,, ccknng compehenvve quaiifaaton pe “Myaaaaauppppudence,” fall unde “ee vvvw mrama”””Th ctttqe of conveniona Sh naaaive gggtimzæ Sufi-inspired political mode exemplifddd by hle Safavdd fuoon of piiitua and mmpoa powe,, demonstrating how mystical reinterpretations enabled enduring theological-political innovations.

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Introduction

The issue of Imamate and community leadership is the most enduring and debated intellectual topic among Muslims (Shahrastani, 1985 1364 SH: 1, 24), from the era of the noble Prophet of Islam to the present day. It encompasses a wide range of disciplines, including jurisprudence (Fiqh), philosophy, theology, mysticism, history, and more, with scholars from each field addressing it according to their respective intellectual frameworks.

Within this discourse, the perspective of mysticism on Imamate and community leadership has received less attention. This is despite the fact that many social movements and uprisings after the 6th century AH occurred within a mystical context, led by mystics, Babas, and shaykhs of various orders (Salasel). Indeed, the first national government in Iran after the advent of Islam was established based on a mystical approach to Imamate and leadership.

A major reason for this oversight is the neglect of the evolution of the relationship between religious law and reality in mystical thought and perspectives. It is as if everyone has assumed that the domain of the mystical path is the inner dimension of religion, and the mystic's role is solely to engage with the sacred and spiritual, thereby remaining connected to God but detached from creation and society (Tabataba'i, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 206-211). However, an examination of the lived history of mystics, their orders, and their mystical viewpoints reveals three distinct perspectives on the relationship between Law and Reality:

- Reality without law in this view, attaining reality is considered to mean transcending the law and becoming independent of it. This is either because law is seen as the lower station and reality as the higher (a vertical relationship) (Hajviri, 1996 AD/1375 SH: 499), or because immersion in divine ecstasy and inner intoxicants leads to a deep slumber that causes an absence from the sensory world, thereby lifting the obligation of religious duties (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 69 L), or some of its preliminaries like ablution, from the mannerfarer (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 8 R).
- Reality within the framework of law; according to this viewpoint, the mannerfarer considers himself in need of the Law and adherence to it at all stages of the spiritual journey. Any negligence towards the Law is seen as a deviation from the path and a failure to reach reality. Thus, the mystic essentially subscribes to a form of "Juridical Mysticism," as many mystics, despite being shaykhs of a spiritual path, followed one or more schools of jurisprudence in matters of law (Dara Shokouh, 12th cent. AH: 10 R, 19 L, et al.; Najjar, n.d.: 90). Some, like Junayd al-Bagddā 777 HH) add I rr a ...

638 AH), wore both the cloak of mysticism and the mantle of jurisprudence (Qushayri, 1911 AD/1290 SH: 430; Jahangiri, 2015 AD/1395 SH: 543).

- Law within the framework of reality. From this perspective, the mystics are the ones who truly know the "Reality of things as they are." The footing of the people of philosophy, theology, jurisprudence, hadith, and other Islamic sciences is considered wooden, and their ultimate effort is acquisition, whereas the mystic's foundation is presence and witnessing, and his ultimate station is annihilation of the self and subsistence in God. At this stage, the mystic is a manifestation of the divine names and attributes and a "World-revealing cup" of the realities of the universe. Therefore, understanding the reality of the law and the right to spiritually guide the people belongs to the perfected saints, who are simultaneously mujtahids in law, strivers on the path, and have attained reality (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 107 R). It is based on this outlook that the presence of mystics in all individual and social spheres becomes tangible, especially after the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate. The emergence of Ibn Arabi (d. 638 AH) and the widespread acceptance of his ideas, coupled with the expanded influence of mystics resulting from the social transformations of the Mongol era—such as the lack of political legitimacy, social instability, and widespread tolerance—created a unique environment for the propagation of mystical ideas and views among the spiritual orders and their masters (Bashir, 2001: 88).

By re-envisioning the Law and applying unveiling, witnessing, dream interpretation, and astrology alongside other conventional sources in the formal sciences, they produced a mystical interpretation of those sciences and their issues, which was previously rare and sometimes entirely unprecedented. One mystic who re-envisioned and analyzed Law within the framework of the mystical path was Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh (d. 869 AH), a Shaykh of the Kubrawiyya order and the leader of one of the socio-political revolutions of the 9th century AH. This issue had a precedent among earlier Kubrawi Shaykhs, and its comprehensive initiator in the fields of Law was al-Dawla Simnani (d. 736 AH). For this reason, Nurbakhsh pays special attention to the views and opinions of Simnani in his works (Nurbakhsh, 1003 AH: 107 L).

Studying the views of Nurbakhsh (d. 869 AH) on the concept and status of Imamate and leadership, and the characteristics and duties of the community's Imam, makes the results of

this mystical approach accessible to researchers. It also clearly demonstrates the evolution of Ibn Arabi's ideas as reflected in the works of one of his main proponents in the 9th century—who considered his own ideas to be an elaboration of Ibn Arabi's thoughts (Nurbakhsh, 1262 AH: 127 R). Ultimately, it provides a basis for understanding the role of the teachings of this mystical perspective in shaping the developments after the Mongol conquest of Islamic societies, the emergence of numerous social uprisings led by mystics, and its influence on the formation of political and social traditions within Iranian society, particularly the structure of subsequent political powers from the Safavids to the present day.

1. The Concept of Mystical Jurisprudence

Although works and sayings on matters of jurisprudence and theology have been left by earlier mystics, they generally cannot be formulated within the conventional structures of these disciplines as they existed in the formal sciences. They are typically nothing more than esoteric interpretations of religious rituals and beliefs. Even the exegetical and ethical works of mystics, who fit into the conventional formats of these two sciences and gave rise to the branches of mystical exegesis and mystical ethics, are often of this nature. Works such as *Iḥyāʾ Uḥmāl-Tīe Re Reiiġ cccœ a ī ii yā Saʿāaa Tīe ccceemy o aa)))))))))by aaaa mma aaa zal HH a aaaa al-Faaaaay by al-. aāā rrrrr r HH,, ca ee ciiii eere annn g rrr attett* to present a mystical account of jurisprudential issues in the conventional style of the formal sciences.

On this basis, Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh should be regarded as the first mystic to have authored a complete course on the principles of faith and a complete course on jurisprudence in 53 chapters, following the customary method of theologians and jurists, but based on unveiling and witnessing and their authority in understanding correct beliefs and deriving jurisprudential rulings. This can be termed "Mystical Theology" (as distinct from theological mysticism) and "Mystical Jurisprudence" (as distinct from juridical mysticism, which is a manner within the framework of law). According to this perspective, everything, even the law, is represented and defined within the context of a mystical worldview.

2. The Relationship of Imamate with Prophethood

Guardianship or Vilayah is the essential core and marrow of mysticism, to the extent that it has been said: "The foundation and basis of the path of Sufism and gnosis rests entirely on Vilayah and its affirmation," (Hajviri, 1996 AD/1375 SH: 265) and "The axis of Sufism and the path revolves around the spiritual master." (Mihani, 1988 AD/1367 SH: 46)

Lnrgtttt aaily aaaaya aaa "Srrrrr rr" a ii a aa (aa aayah tt aaa "ttttttt t" or "Rule." (Raghib Isfahani, 2007 AD/1428 AH: 547) These two have also been considered to convey a single reality, which is the assumption of command, supervision, and guidance (Hajviri, 1996 AD/1375 SH: 266).

In the terminology of mystics before Ibn Arabi (d. 638 AH), Vilayah typically meant the proximity and closeness that a servant finds to God. As a result of this closeness and the annihilation of one's desires and wants in the desires of God Almighty, one is honored with the station of supervision and guidance. This definition is more concerned with the inner dimension (spiritual guardianship) than the outer dimension of Vilayah. However, mystics like Hajviri (d. 470 AH), after providing an inner definition of Vilayah, turned their attention to the issue of authority in mysticism and enumerated three important characteristics and functions for the possessors of this type of guardianship:

- 1) Impeccability and protecting servants from sins;
- 2) Vicegerency and supervision over others and control in human affairs;
- 3) Love, based on the verse "He loves them, and they love Him," (Qur'an 5:54) by which God has specified His saints for His friendship (Hajviri, 1996 AD/1375 SH: 266-7).

This expression of Vilayah and the station of the master and saint gives manner in the school of Ibn Arabi and Nurbakhsh to the "Muhammadan Reality" and the "Perfect Man," acquiring a broader meaning than before.

From this perspective, the fixed archetype of the all-comprehensive divine name is considered the essential and inner reality of the Seal of the Prophets (PBUH), as he himself stated: "I was a prophet while Adam was between water and clay." (Ibn Shahrashub, n.d.: 1, 214) In this saying, the Prophet (PBUH) is referring to his essential reality, which is the fixed archetype of the all-comprehensive name of God and which precedes the matter of creation. For this reason, that reality which possesses the quality of being a locus of manifestation for the all-comprehensive divine name is termed the "Muhammadan Reality." Therefore, the Muhammadan Reality does not specifically refer to the noble Prophet of Islam (PBUH) but is

a transcendent reality and an effect that is equivalent to the First Intellect of the philosophers (Ibn Arabi, n.d.: 1, 94). This reality is a pre-eternal and post-eternal matter, as it resides in the divine realm. It is a universal reality that is at the same time concrete and possessing of levels. Thus, it is not a mental or conceptual matter (Ibn Arabi, n.d.: 1, 94). Accordingly, the first determination that became determined from the Undetermined was the Greatest Spirit and the Universal Intellect, which is the Muhammadan Light. That light is the vicegerent of God, the absolute Imam, and the purpose of the cosmos; just as grace and support flow from Allah to all universal and particular names, so too do grace and support flow from the Muhammadan Reality to all other existent beings (Lahiji, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 272).

However, the external manifestation of the Muhammadan Reality comprises the levels of prophethood, messengership, and universal guardianship. In terms of the level of prophethood and messengership, it manifests in every age in the form of one of the divine prophets. This evolutionary progression in the manifestation of that reality continued until the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), with whom that reality has a complete correspondence and is, in principle, his inner reality (Ibn Arabi, n.d.: 1, 144). In terms of the level of guardianship, it manifests in the form of saints, and this manifestation will endure and continue until the Day of Resurrection.

2.1. Analysis and Critique

Some are of the view that in explaining the relationship between guardianship and prophethood, mystics have given preference to guardianship, meaning that the station of sainthood—even that of a non-infallible saint—takes precedence over the station of prophethood (Qummi, 1956 AD/1336 SH: 164; Majlisi, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 51-2). However, this view does not seem correct, because mystics have made a detailed distinction between prophethood, messengership, and guardianship. In this formulation, prophethood is the intermediary and isthmus between guardianship and messengership, because prophethood consists of receiving news of divine realities (the essence, names, and attributes of God) and knowledge of the rulings of law through revelation. This reception of news takes two forms:

- A) Receiving news of the gnosis of the essence, attributes, and names. This is the station of Vilayah (guardianship), whether it appears from a prophet or a saint. This form of receiving news is called "Inner prophethood," "Derivative prophethood," or "Absolute prophethood." (Lahiji, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 232) Inner prophethood is not subject to

termination and will endure until the Day of Resurrection, because divine revelation and divine sending-down are not subject to cessation (Ibn Arabi, n.d.: 3, 285).

In every era, a saint is standing; until the Resurrection, the trial is lasting (Roomi, 1997 AD/1376 SH: Book II, 214)

- B) Combining the reception of news of the gnosis of the essence, attributes, and names with the propagation of the rulings of Law, inculcating ethics, teaching wisdom, and undertaking political leadership. This is specific to messengership and is called "Outer prophethood" or "Legislative prophethood." (Lahiji, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 232) In outer prophethood, messengership is a temporal attribute (≠divine) and a created state of the prophet, not his station. Therefore, unlike prophethood and guardianship, it is subject to cessation and vanishes with the end of the era of legislation (Ibn Arabi, n.d.: 2, 256-7).

From this perspective, Vilayah is more general than prophethood and messengership; and prophethood is more general than messengership but more specific than Vilayah (Lahiji, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 232). Therefore, Vilayah is the inner dimension of prophethood and messengership. This is because there is no prophet or messenger who has not first been honored with the station of Vilayah. Then, according to the vastness of his Vilayah, he receives prophethood and messengership. From this standpoint, the prophetic station of the prophets has two aspects relative to their station of guardianship:

- 1) **Inner and Ontological Aspect:** Their station of guardianship is superior to their station of prophethood and messengership.
- 2) **Aspect of Attaining Stations:** The station of messengership is the highest rank, the station of prophethood is the next, and the station of guardianship is subsequent to those two (Kashani, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 344).

On this basis, the prophethood and messengership of a prophet hold superiority over the guardianship of a non-prophet. Despite the majesty of the station of guardianship, it is derived from prophethood, and the sign of the validity of a saint's guardianship is his following of the all-inclusive Muhammadan Reality manifests in this elemental world in the form of both prophets and saints. Its manifestation as prophets is for teaching rulings and guiding servants, and its

manifestation as saints is for making people aware of the secrets of God Almighty (Jahangiri, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 497).

Consequently, Vilayah is the continuation of prophethood. Through inner prophethood, it is the inheritor and guardian of the reality and essence of the monotheistic sciences that were conveyed and explained by outer prophethood. For this very reason, recognizing the saints after the sealing of prophethood has been deemed a duty and obligation for all (Nurbakhsh, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 69).

3. The Position of Imamate and Community Leadership

In the intellectual system of the mystics, the spiritual guidance of the members of society is an affair that is not possible except through a saint. Therefore, the spiritual guidance of the community has long been an established matter for the masters of the path. "To undertake the spiritual journey without a guide who has traversed the path and seen its manners is a mistake... The saying, "He who has no shaykh, his shaykh is Satan," is a point of consensus among all spiritual masters" (Nurbakhsh, 13th century ..

Do not travel the path alone, without a guide,

And do not enter this sea with blind eyes. (Attar Nishapuri, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 307)

This form of guardianship, which mystics have long ascribed to themselves, in reality, possesses a "God-to-creation" identity. This means that from the perspective of the mannerfarer, it requires acquisition and the traversing of spiritual stations, and from the perspective of God, it is the bestowal of effulgence. Therefore, such guardianship is in a sense an acquired matter and is accessible to all who can set foot on the path of manner and traverse its stations, ultimately becoming the spiritual leader of others by receiving the cloak (the designation of a shaykh) and establishing their chain of transmission. In contrast, the exoteric affairs of society rested upon the shoulders of kings, rulers, and scholars of the religious law (Law).

However, the rethinking of the concept of independent legal reasoning and the concept of struggle by mystics such as Ibn Arabi, and its detailed representation in the thought of Nurbakhsh, paved the manner for the expansion of the scope of Vilayah from inner guardianship to outer guardianship.

4. ~~ee nnnknCCCCCepffffttthld~~

From the perspective of Ibn Arabi's mysticism, the vicegerents of God on earth are the prophets (Kashani, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 408). Among the prophets, the Seal of the Prophets (PBUH) is distinguished by his comprehensiveness, uniting prophethood, messengership, vicegerency, sovereignty, knowledge, and wisdom (Kashani, 1383 SH: 406). It was this very characteristic of the Prophet (PBUH) that caused his community, through the permissibility of

Itt Peeeeeē cmmntttt y eee ee a ceēaii a ee reiig aahle,,
atttttt t ff jjiiāā ceeeeēē eeeraii iiiii ii cceee eee La hheēerrre, eee
view of Ibn Arabi and Nurbakhsh is one of adherence to itt nneēaaaaannng eee
Muhammadan law, not a transgression beyond the Prophet's law or the attainment of a station
parallel to the Prophet, as has been noted in various statements: "And we have only said this
so that no deluded person may imagine that I and those like me are claiming prophethood. No,
by God, nothing remains but inheritance and journeying upon the path of Muhammad, the
Messenger of God, specifically." (Ibn Arabi, n.d.: 3, 456).

Therefore, from the perspective of the proponents of mystical and revelatory jurisprudence, tttt t eettttttt ttttt t ttt:

A) EeeeeerTTTtttmmmtted ttthhd

Book, the Sunnah, and consensus—derives the ruling of the law (Kashani, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 408; Ibn Arabi, n.d.: 2, 162). He is considered correct in his derivation of the legal ruling correct ruling. Such a matter itself gives rise to a type of legislation that is called "Contingent law." (Ibn Arabi, n.d.: 3, 400). On this basis, the error of the mujtahid is not a transgression against the ruling of God, but rather a matter of its non-correspondence with the preceding ruling (the ruling of the Prophet). Thus, he only benefits from the reward of the effort of received two rewards (Ibn Arabi, n.d.: 3, 142).

B) Eeeeeeeeeeeerrrrrrrrhhhd

a jjiiāā iii c rrrr ce o eeejjj "" " nnnmm hle aame a ccccc of the ruling of the Messenger of God (PBUH). That is, both take from God, with the difference that the mujtahid is a follower of the Prophet's ruling in his own ruling. This means his connection to the divine source is for the purpose of unveiling the very essence

Peeeeē nnnmm Hecce tt aa bee sa:: "Wtt jjiiāā exett effo nn acquiring the inner preparedness by which one accepts this special descent, which in the time of prophethood and messengership is only accepted by a prophet and a messenger." (Ibn Arabi, n.d.: 3, 270) Therefore, the mujtahid in this sense is free from error, because he witnesses the real and objective ruling of the prophetic law (Kashani, 2004 AD/1383 Srrrrrrrrrr rr tttttttt ttt eiiiiiii iiāiyya L..

For this reason, the revelatory mujtahid, in the language of revelation, is the "Vicegerent of God" and in the language of the exoteric, the "Vicegerent of the Messenger of God." (Kashani, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 408-10) The true inheritors of the divine prophets are such mujtahids: "The scholars of God, of God's rulings, and of the path of arrival to God, because he (PBUH) said, "The scholars are the heirs of the prophets," not the ignorant prattlers, the formalists, those whose tongues resemble the scholars." (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 76 L). Therefore, the word scholars, when used absolutely, refer to the pious scholar, who is the gnostic of God (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 233 R). The exoteric mujtahids are, in reality, the judges of religious law in jurisprudential matters (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 188 L). However, the ultimate reference and resolver of disputes in the community after the Prophet is the pious scholar: "And that he should not be audacious in matters upon which the Islamic community does not agree and in matters whose reality he does not know with certainty, but rather he should refer in its verification to a pious, active, and eternal scholar, who is endowed with laudable morals and free from blameworthy morals." (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 114 L)

4.1. Analysis and Critique

The proposition that the revelatory mujtahid takes from God within the scope of the Muhammadan Law, and that his legal judgment in fact unveils the Prophet's view, necessitates that the revelation of the mujtahid does not contradict definitive texts, namely the Book and the definitive Sunnah. However, Ibn Arabi considers contradiction with a hadith

whose chain of transmission is sound not as a contradiction of a text, but as a matter of ascertaining through revelation (kashf) that it was not stated by the Prophet (Kashani, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 410).

Accepting such a status for kashf, in addition to removing the revelatory mujtahid from being a follower of the Prophet, has three major problems:

A) Disregarding the Nature of Kashf

The foundation of kashf for the mujtahid is an acquired matter (Kashani, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 405), and this necessitates that it be personal, hierarchical according to the stages of the spiritual path (Nurbakhsh, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 100), and intermittent rather than constant. Ibn Arabi himself, in various statements, speaks with uncertainty and doubt about the authenticity of hadiths when citing them: "And if the report transmitted concerning Salman Farsi is authentic, then he has this rank." (Ibn Arabi, n.d.: 1, 196) This is a confirmation of the aforementioned characteristics of kashf, for if it were an impersonal, constant, and permanent matter, what room would there be for doubt in the certainty of the transmission of reports? In contrast, the Prophet's Sunnah, whose certainty of transmission is established through soundness of the chain, widespread transmission, multiple lines of transmission, and other validation methods in the science of hadith, has a factuality that is public, constant, accessible, and not acquired.

B) The Demolition and Disintegration of the Transmitted Sciences

upon the principles and methodology of the transmitted sciences. The absolute authority of Kashf and its ascendancy and precedence over an authentic report necessitates the invalidation of these sciences and their academic credibility. Moreover, the extension of such awwwwwwwwwcmnaattt eeuuu''anaadrrrr 'acccccccces, whereas the mystics have not lllll ll aa fff ebbbiggggg cettattt y rrr 'a a aave eeeeeally ceeeeeee eeeee eeeeeeeceennrg a..... aaaiii tteiiiiiiiiiii iiiiiiiiii iiiiiiiiii iii acccccccece..

C) The Prophet as Interpreter

The fact that the Prophet is the interpreter and that his words are integral to the correct understanding of the Islamic religion, be the criterion for the soundness and authority of kashf, not that kashf be the criterion for establishing the definitive Sunnah.

5. The Prophet as Interpreter

I have necessary characteristics for leadership in each, it paves the manner for the convergence of both in a single individual—an individual who can in reality be comprehensive of both jihads and the leader of both the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of religion.

On this basis, the most entitled individuals for the leadership of the community are the revelatory mystics and the esoteric men who, like the Prophet, are both champions in the field

of two types, the greater and the lesser, and both are the craft of men... So he who is a man in both the exoteric and esoteric, it is his craft... for he [the Prophet] said, "I have two crafts; whoever loves them has loved me, and whoever detests them has detested me: poverty and greater and the lesser." (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 106 L)

Therefore, after the prophets, the most entitled individuals for the Imamate and leadership of the community are the saints: "The most entitled to the Imamate are the prophets, then the saints, then the scholars." (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 42 R; Nurbakhsh, 2017 AD/1397 SH: 70)

This is because the divine saints are the pious scholars and the most perfect exemplars of the Perfect Man after the Prophet (Ibn Arabi, n.d.: 3, 270; Nurbakhsh, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 96). However, since they have different states, and the difference in the classes of saints at any given time is according to their ranks (Nurbakhsh, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 100), the most worthy individuals among the divine saints for the leadership of the community are those who are simultaneously revelatory mujtahids in the law, strivers on the path, and knowers of the reality." The Imam ought to be a mujtahid in the law, a striver on the manner, and one who has attained the reality with the knowledge of certainty, the eye of certainty, and the reality of certainty." (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 107 R)

Such an individual from among the saints, who is the most complete of the men's men in every age and the comprehensive locus of manifestation, is called the heir of the Chosen One

(Mustafa), the Imam of the Saints, the Greatest Succor, the Pole of the World, the manifestation of the whole, and the guide of the paths (Nurbakhsh, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 103).

5.1. Analysis and Critique

Ibn Arabi, by explaining the concept of the Pole, examines it within the structure of the Prophet's vicegerency (the revelatory mujtahid). In his view, the Pole sometimes possesses both exoteric and esoteric vicegerency simultaneously, and sometimes possesses only esoteric vicegerency. Ultimately, he draws attention to the fact that most Poles are not commissioned with exoteric vicegerency: "But the Poles in the technical sense... there is only one of them at any time, and he is also the Succor (al-ghawth)... and he is the master of the group in his time. Among them are those who have manifest rule and for whom exoteric vicegerency is permissible, just as esoteric vicegerency from the standpoint of the station was permissible,
ccc a Ba Uāa Uūmān Aā a al-aa aa agggg hēm are those who have
errrrr rrrccēgerēcyy ppeccccally a haee oo ll e exrrrr ccch as aaaa āā
al-Ra l-Saā a aa z al-Ba tttt P ee eeee
exoteric." (Ibn Arabi, n.d.: 2, 6)

However, Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh addresses this issue with a focus on the lesser and greaee iiāā a decciiee I a aaader a iiiii ss ceeeee eevvvē ff both the exoteric and the esoteric. Contrary to the view of Ibn Arabi that most Poles are not commissioned with exoteric vicegerency (Ibn Arabi, n.d.: 2, 6), he believes that with the existence of an Imam who is comprehensive of law, manner, and reality, others will not have the worthiness for the Imamate and leadership of the community except with his permission: "The Imamate of the inferior is not permissible except by the will of the superior." (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 43 L)

Furthermore, citing the precedent of the prophets and saints before him, he considers the combination of formal and spiritual sovereignty to be worthy of the Poles of every age and a cause for success and otherworldly felicity: "The ignorant of the age imagine that sovereignty and dominion are contrary to piety and purity, and this false notion stems from extreme foolishness. This is because the greatest of prophets, such as Enoch, Joseph, David, Solomon, Moses, and the Chosen One, and the most perfect of saints, such as al-Ş.... al-Fā ū al-rrr ay., and al-uu aaāā engae rrrlll eeeeeigt y I rrr aa eeeeeigt y ee re contrary to spiritual sovereignty, the greatest of prophets and the most perfect of saints would

not have engaged in it. Since they undertook sovereignty and the administration of dominion, worthy kings and princes should have high aspirations and combine formal sovereignty with spiritual sovereignty by strengthening the Law and cultivating the manner, gnosis, and reality, so that on the market day of the great resurrection, they may be successful and honored." (Nurbakhsh, 2017 AD/1397 SH: 95)

Nurbakhsh criticizes the exoteric scholars who have named jurisprudence, teaching, and giving fatwas in contentious disputes and theological debates "Knowledge," and have made the absurdities of logic and the ravings of philosophy a means to fame and status, while turning a manner from the realities of religion (Nurbakhsh, 1397 SH: 264). He accuses them of having sold their religion for the world in their association with oppressors and princes, and of having cast useless disputes and corrupt fanaticism among the community of the Messenger Nāaa e HH rrr iyya 77 R Teeeööe he ezzzzzz z eeceiii ty ff eee existence of a ruler, Imam, and leader whose nature is kneaded with virtuous morals and who is removed from reprehensible morals... who spreads the carpet of law with true justice among the community, who does not mix certainties with the agreed-upon conjectures of the ignorant and the divisive disputes of sects and religions, who permits nothing but truthfulness, and who appoints none but the truthful over the community of Muhammad, so that the lamp of the Law is not extinguished and the foundation of religion does not falter (Nurbakhsh, 13th cent. AH: āāāāāāya ..

On this basis, Nurbakhsh considers the purpose for the necessity of the saints of God taking control of the community's Imamate not to be the love of status, but to liberate society from the ideas of the formalist scholars and corrupt, oppressive rulers, and to bring society to the prophetic utopia. "Indeed, I shall remove contention from among this community, firstly in the branches [of law] and I shall clarify the Muhammadan law as it was in his time, without addition or subtraction, and secondly in the principles of religion." (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 2 R).

In effect, he considers his mystical jurisprudence and theology to be responsible for realizing the prophetic utopia. Accordingly, neither the philosophers with their philosophical utopia, nor the jurists with their jurisprudential utopia, have the capacity for the vicegerency of the Prophet and the prophet-like leadership of society. It is only the mystic who has striven in the eee geeate ʿīāā a eeeeeeeee caaaact"iiii i aaæ tee eeeeāāā can, by virtue of possessing designation in the manner and having the characteristics of the

leaders of the law, both be the spiritual guide for the individuals of society and elevate and perfect the affairs of their lives. This is because only by placing such a comprehensive Imam at the head of society can the Prophetic Virtuous City be revived and "the universal purpose of the mission of the prophets and the companionship of the saints, which is finding the straight path and attaining the proximity of the mercy of the All-Merciful," be realized (Nurbakhsh, 2017 AD/1397 SH: 256).

6. Characteristics of the Community's Imam

Despite the many differences among Muslim thinkers regarding the various issues of Imamate, the absolute majority of them have had a uniform definition and understanding of the concept of Imamate, to the extent that some researchers have considered it a matter of consensus (Fayyaz Lahiji, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 462). Among them, some have defined Imamate in a manner that includes both the prophet and the saint: "Imamate is a general presidency in religion and the world for a person from among persons""(Razi, 2015 AD/1436 AH: 4, 321; Taftazani, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 5, 232) Others, by adding "By manner of succeeding the Prophet," have limited its semantic scope to the saint: "The truth is that Imamate consists of the vicegerency of a person from among persons for the Messenger in establishing the laws of the Law and protecting the domain of the religious community." (Amidi, 2002 AD/1423 AH: 5, 121; Iji, n.d.: 395)

However, what is understood from the viewpoint of the absolute majority of scholars in defining Imamate is that the intended meaning of Imamate is not merely a political affair and social leadership that is in opposition to or indifferent to religious teachings, but rather it is the "General presidency of Muslims in the affairs of the world and religion by manner of vicegerency and deputyship from the Prophet." (Fayyaz Lahiji, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 461-2)

From the perspective of mystical jurisprudence, in addition to the Imam's simultaneous possession of exoteric and esoteric vicegerency, numerous characteristics have been described for each of these functions.

In his works, Nurbakhsh has presented various and somewhat different classifications of the characteristics of Imamate and their number. However, in all the manuscripts, the characteristics of Imamate are presented in three groups: conditions, formal and spiritual attributes, and pillars (Nurbakhsh, 12th cent. AH: 23 L).

A) Conditions of Imamate

Masculinity, freedom, sanity, courage, being Muslim, justice, piety, being of Qurayshi descent, and having reached puberty are considered conditions of Imamate (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 46 R; Nurbakhsh, 12th cent. AH: 23-4).

6.1. Analysis and Critique

Masculinity excludes women; freedom excludes slaves; sanity excludes the insane and the foolish; courage excludes the coward; being Muslim excludes the non-Muslim; justice excludes the corrupt; piety excludes the non-believer; Qurayshi descent excludes the non-Qurayshi; and puberty excludes pre-pubescents from the scope of Imamate. From Nurbakhsh's perspective, religious obligation does not apply to the pre-pubescent. "Obligation only pertains to the one who has reached puberty." (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 70 R) He states the age of puberty and the start of obligation for boys as 12 to 15 years, and for girls as 9 to 15 years (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 187-8). However, he considers the age of puberty from the station of Imamate, as they reached Imamate before puberty, just as some of the he himself in another of his works has considered the criterion for the maturity of the "Men of God" to be their spiritual intellect and their gnosis of the realities of monotheism (Nurbakhsh, 1397 SH: 251). However, it must be noted that he stated these characteristics for the Imamate descent implies assuming the authenticity of the reports transmitted on this matter. The statement of this characteristic excludes many of the shaykhs of mysticism, including the shaykhs of Nurbakhsh's own chain, from the scope of exoteric and esoteric guardianship, because in all cases of Imamate, Nurbakhsh has included the condition of being Qurayshi or Fatimid. However, it seems he himself was aware of this problem and, to solve it, considered the non-Qurayshi and non-Fatimid shaykhs of the path to be the children of the esoteric and spiritual loins of the Prophet, and in a manner, subscribed to an esoteric Siyadat (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 108 L).

B) Formal and Spiritual Attributes

Knowledge, piety, generosity, and being of Fatimid descent are the formal and spiritual characteristics of Imamate (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 73; Nurbakhsh, 12th cent. AH: 234).

6.2. Analysis and Critique

In explaining "Being of Fatimid descent," Nurbakhsh has written: "The Sayyids, and they are the Bani Hashem, and in this time of ours none are found among them except the Bani Ali,

Ba Jaffa add Ba aaaa .." (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 77 R) In another place, he
 aa ciiii eeee Say Saafff ee hle eecedda I aa aa a I
 aaaa y a all Ba aa eee aattty is forbidden (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent.
 HH R wwweee caarrrr iiāā ee eeeee mmaaaaaatttt ta yyid-hood
 in mystical jurisprudence that can resolve the ambiguities surrounding the claim of sayyid-
 hood by many shaykhs and Sufi orders. In Nurbakhsh's view, possessing Qurayshi and
 Faiiii iieeage a cnnttt rrr eeeate iiāā wwweve he ex I nn
 greaee iiāā eee aaee iii cttttt tttt teeee eeccnnry gaaaaaaiii p,
 because through the path of the sperm of the heart and of reality, he is a Sayyid and among
 the progeny of the Prophet (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 108 L).

C) Pillars of Imamate

Perfect knowledge, perfect guardianship, legitimate authority, and a vast dominion are considered the pillars of Imamate (Nurbakhsh, 12th cent. AH: 23 R).

6.3. Analysis and Critique

Nurbakhsh does not provide an explanation for these conditions after mentioning them; however, by examining his works, one can arrive at his intended meaning for each of them. The aaa nrrg eeffec eeeee eee aai" eeeerrrr r jjiiāā add connection to the prophetic source of reception, receiving the real and objective rulings, alongside the completion of the spiritual path and the ability to guide disciples. "A gnostic, a monotheist, a verifier of the realities of things by direct vision, not one content with eavesdropping." (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 107 R) "A mujtahid in the law, a striver on the manner, and one who has attained the reality with the knowledge of certainty, the eye of

certainty, and the reality of certainty, certain in its principles and branches, its universals and particulars." (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 107 R) The meaning of perfect guardianship is considered expertise in the sciences of law, manner, and reality, alongside the completion of the stages of the spiritual journey: "A guiding saint, perfect and perfecting, deeply versed in the sciences of the law, the manner, and the reality, combining the branches of guardianship such as the cardiac states, the unseen lights, the angelic unveilings, the unveilings of the realm of power, and the divine self-disclosures, annihilated in God, subsisting by God, a locus of manifestation for all His attributes and names, like the Adam of His saints, he was light upon light." (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 46 R)

Of course, in another place, Nurbakhsh, in addition to these conditions, has considered the perfect guardianship (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 51 L).

of the general public, such as giving news of the unseen world by divine notification (Nurbakhsh, 1397 SH: 103). "The saints of God... if you wish to know them, then know them by as news from the unseen, because none knows the unseen except God. So if someone gives news from the unseen, know that it is from God, so he is a saint of God." (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 76 L) The designation of authority and leadership is one of the characteristics of the Imam. Nurbakhsh, after stating that the Imam of the Saints is in reality the comprehensive locus of manifestation of the exoteric and the esoteric, relies on Kashf to establish the designation for the guardianship of the comprehensive locus of manifestation from the perspective of spiritual comprehensiveness, and seeks aid from transmission from the perspective of the formal and the establishment of the chain: "As for its spiritual comprehensiveness, in this age, from east to west, a formal and spiritual search was conducted, and the unveilings, cardiac states, and realities were not found complete in anyone except a manifestor from the chain of the Second Ali, Sayyid Ali Hamadani. As for its formal comprehensiveness, regarding the "Rope of God" where He commanded, "And hold firmly to the rope of God all together," the soundest of the commentators' sayings are four:

1. The rope of God is the Word of God;
2. The rope of God is the scholars of the law;
3. The rope of God is the Shaykhs of the manner;

4. The rope of God is the progeny of the Messenger of God, as the Prophet said: "I am leaving among you two weighty things: the Book of God and my progeny. If you hold fast to them... they are two ropes that will not be severed until the Day of Resurrection." Meaning, "I leave among you two precious things, the Book of God and my children."... Since the soundest sayings of the people of exegesis and interpretation are four and they were present in the noble person of the Second Ali, without a doubt he is the rope of God, and his chain is stronger than all the chains of the saints." (Nurbakhsh, 2017 AD/1397 SH: 108)

In another place, he has stated explicitly, "The rope of God in reality refers to the chain of the perfect shaykhs, and for the people of faith and all Muslims, holding fast to the rope of God is obligatory and necessary by the ruling of the explicit text, "And hold firmly to the rope of God all together." (Nurbakhsh, 2017 AD/1397 SH: 220) He has also considered the exemplar of the "Most trustworthy handhold" to be the chain of Shaykhs (Nurbakhsh, 2017 AD/1397 SH: 222). The meaning of a vast and expansive dominion is the breadth of the Imam's sphere of authority and power. There is no clear statement in his works as to whether Nurbakhsh's intended meaning of "vast dominion" is limited only to the physical world, or whether it also includes the five realms (the divine essence, the realm of power, the angelic realm, the physical world, and the realm of dominion). But given his view that the saints are the heirs of the prophets, the unveilings transmitted from him, and the explanations given under the characteristic of perfect guardianship, the probability seems strong that his intended meaning of vast dominion includes the five realms and all of existence. On the other hand, the condition of a vast dominion, whether it be all five realms or just the physical world, confronts Nurbakhsh's view that the only exemplar who possessed all the attributes of Imamate was Ali (AS) with a problem, because Ali (AS) for a part of his life—during the caliphate of the caliphs before him—did not possess the characteristic of a vast dominion.

7. Real Imamate and Relative Imamate

Nurbakhsh ultimately divides the Imamate of the community into two types: real Imamate and relative Imamate. He considers the saint who possesses all the characteristics of Imamate to be the holder of "Real Imamate," and a saint who possesses some of these characteristics he considers an Imam to the extent of his possession of those attributes, calling his Imamate "Relative Imamate." (Nurbakhsh, 12th cent. AH: 23 L)

7.1. Analysis and Critique

This view of Nurbakhsh incorporates the chain of shaykhs, in the form of relative Imamate, into Imamate in its theological and jurisprudential sense. This is the first time that the shaykh of the manner, in addition to his spiritual station, also acquires a jurisprudential and theological dimension, to the extent that belief in the saints of the manner, like belief in the prophets of the law, is considered obligatory for all (Nurbakhsh, 12th cent. AH: 21 L). From Nurbakhsh's perspective, the sum of the attributes of Imamate, up to his time, had not been relative Imamate type. of the start of their Imamate would, on this basis, have relative Imamate.

FeceAA (AS), to be accessible by manner of being a locus of manifestation—"Annihilated in God, subsisting by God, a locus of manifestation for all His attributes and names, like the Adam of His saints, he was light upon light." (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 46 R)—and alongside the fact own time, not for all time, it seems that the position of real Imamate, in Nurbakhsh's view, is a tt only exemplar. In other words: just as in the Muhammadan Reality the matter was not exclusive to the noble Prophet BBHssssssssstttt tt AAwwRRReality.

8. Duties of the Community's Imam

In Nurbakhsh's view, the Imam of the community supervises and leads a set of general duties within the context of society, and in the chapters of jurisprudence, he also has duties on his shoulders as appropriate. However, most of the Imam's duties within the context of the chapters of jurisprudence are carried out through the governors of the cities, the judges of religious law, and the deputies and representatives of the Imam. For this reason, the most fundamental duty of the community's Imam is to guide everyone toward the realization of the prophetic ideal society. In this manner, the comprehensive Imam, by witnessing the realities of the world as they are, paying attention to the two elements of time and place (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 52 R), and correctly understanding the interests of Islam and the Muslims (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 110 L), can, by suppressing innovations (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent.

AH: 127 R) and eliminating disputes (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 2 R), provide the means for strengthening the religion and the growth of the Islamic community (Nurbakhsh, 2017 AD/1397 SH: 95), keep the Islamic rites alive (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 20 L), and fortify the foundations of Islam (Nurbakhsh, 2017 AD/1397 SH: 264). He can provide the context for the elevation of receptive souls (Nurbakhsh, 2017 AD/1397 SH: 95) and, through that, honor the Islamic community with its flourishing in the Prophetic Virtuous City, which is the utopia and ultimate goal of religion (Nurbakhsh, 11th cent. AH: 127 R).

It is based on such a view of society that he considered the entire historical mission of the prophets and saints to be summarized in one thing: commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong. "It is one of the greatest principles of religion, because the call of the prophets is a species under its genus, and the guidance of a species of it; rather, its genus encompasses all affairs, whether good or evil." (Nurbakhsh, 2018: 159)

Nurbakhsh organized the book *al-Fiqh al-wwva* Chapter of Purity and ends with the Chapter of Exclusion from Inheritance. In this book, he has stated numerous duties for the community's Imam, the governors of the cities, the judges of religious law, and the cultivators of souls and saints, which are of great importance from the perspective of mystical jurisprudence. Among these, the most important duties of the Imam within the context of the chapters of mystical jurisprudence are arranged and examined in three sections: "Acts of worship, contracts and unilateral declarations, and rulings."

Worships

Acts of worship fighting against those who combat the rites of Islam; establishing the Friday war, and the public treasury, and receiving the poll tax (Jizyah); delivering the sermon for the call against the Imam; distributing spoils; managing conquered lands; issuing a general amnesty.

Guardianship in contracts

Guardianship in contracts; dealing with hoarding and usury; managing uncultivated lands.

III ~~nnAAAAAmn~~)

Implementing prescribed punishments and discretionary punishments, and issuing and implementing legal verdicts; guardianship in retaliation and blood money.

Conclusion

An examination of the lived history of mystics and their mystical viewpoints reveals three perspectives on the relationship between religious law (Law) and spiritual reality:

- A) Reality without law;
- B) Reality within the framework of law;
- C) Law within the framework of reality.

eee eēiii gggggg cnnce jjiiāā a cccce iiāā by myiiics ccc a I Aaa,, and its detailed representation in the thoughts and works of Nurbakhsh, gives rise to the third perspective, which paved the manner for the expansion of the scope of Vilayah from inner guardianship to outer guardianship.

Furthermore, by legitimizing and applying unveiling and witnessing alongside other conventional sources in the formal sciences, they produced a mystical interpretation of those sciences and their issues, which was previously rare and sometimes entirely unprecedented.

In this respect, the works of Nurbakhsh acquire a particular importance. He should be regarded as the first mystic to have authored a complete course on the principles of faith and a complete course on jurisprudence in 53 chapters, following the customary method of theologians and jurists, but based on unveiling and witnessing and their authority in understanding correct beliefs and deriving jurisprudential rulings. This can be termed "myiiica ooooooy" aaalām- rrrāā a tttt ggggggga myiiici a "Myiical Jurisprudence" (as distinct from juridical mysticism, which is manner within the framework of law).

According to this view, Vilayah is the continuation of prophethood and, within the context of inner prophethood, is the inheritor and guardian of the reality and essence of the monotheistic sciences that were conveyed and explained by outer prophethood. For this very reason, recognizing the saints after the sealing of prophethood has been deemed a duty and obligation for all. After the prophets, the most entitled individuals for Imamate and leadership are the saints, because the divine saints are the pious scholars and the most perfect exemplars of the Perfect Man after the Prophet. Therefore, the most worthy individuals among the divine saints

for the leadership of the community are those who are simultaneously revelatory mujtahids in the Law, strivers on the manner, and knowers of the reality.

Furthermore, citing the precedent of the prophets and saints before them, they considered the combination of formal and spiritual sovereignty to be worthy of the Poles of every age and a cause for success and otherworldly felicity.

On this basis, Nurbakhsh considers the purpose for the necessity of the saints of God taking control of the community's Imamate not to be the love of status, but to liberate society from the ideas of the formalist scholars and corrupt, oppressive rulers, and to bring society to the prophetic utopia.

From this perspective, in addition to the Imam's simultaneous possession of exoteric and esoteric vicegerency, numerous characteristics have been described for each of these functions.

Masculinity, freedom, sanity, courage, being Muslim, justice, piety, being of Qurayshi descent, and having reached puberty are considered conditions of Imamate.

Knowledge, piety, generosity, and being of Fatimid descent are the formal and spiritual characteristics of Imamate.

Perfect knowledge, perfect guardianship, legitimate authority, and a vast dominion are considered the pillars of Imamate.

Nurbakhsh ultimately divides the Imamate of the community into two types: real Imamate and relative Imamate. He considers the saint who possesses all the characteristics of Imamate to be the holder of "Real Imamate," and a saint who possesses some of these characteristics he considers an Imam to the extent of his possession of those attributes, calling his Imamate "Relative Imamate." The conditions, stated conditions, are placed in the category of relative Imamate.

This view of Nurbakhsh incorporates the chain of shaykhs, in the form of relative Imamate, into Imamate in its theological and jurisprudential sense. This is the first time that the shaykh of the manner, in addition to his spiritual station, also acquires a jurisprudential and theological dimension, to the extent that belief in the saints of the manner, like belief in the prophets of the law, is considered obligatory for all.

Furthermore, the position of real Imamate, in Nurbakhsh's view, is a station that, although it is its perfect exemplar, he is not its only exemplar. In other words: just as in the

Muhammadan Reality the matter was not exclusive to the Seal of the Prophets (PBUH), so
 iiiii iiiittttt AAwwRRiiity.

The Imam of the community supervises and leads a set of general duties within the context of society, and in the chapters of jurisprudence, he also has duties on his shoulders as appropriate. However, most of the Imam's duties within the context of the chapters of jurisprudence are carried out through the governors of the cities, the judges of religious law, and the deputies and representatives of the Imam. For this reason, the most fundamental duty of the community's Imam is to guide everyone toward the realization of the prophetic ideal society.

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