



Center for Cultural
and Ethical Studies

Spiritual Quest

A Biannual Journal of
Ethics and Spirituality

Vol. 10 | No. 1 | Winter & Spring 2020

Muwasat (Empathic Assistance)*

Alireza Maktabdar



Abstract

After adopting a broad definition of *muwasat*, this paper examines a wide range of verses and hadiths at several levels. First, from an Islamic viewpoint, one may divide *muwasat* into two parts: material and spiritual. The material aspect of *muwasat* can represent the unity of God, faith, brotherhood, sacrifice, and so forth, while its spiritual aspect can involve sympathy, rational support, seeking justice, and so on. Second, we see that empathic assistance can be cultivated by deep religious convictions, close companionship with those who practice *muwasat*, socializing the miserable, and benevolence. Finally, we can recognize that *muwasat* may produce individual fruits such as closeness to God, fulfillment of prayers, and divine bounties, as well as social fruits such as social justice and equality, and the promotion of dignity and respect among deprived people.

Keywords

Muwasat, empathic assistance, justice, sacrifice, sympathy.

* Translated by Mohammad Reza Farajiyani

Introduction

All people are in need of others' assistance and help in their lives to fulfill their needs and manage their individual and social lives. In many cases, their needs are material and in some cases immaterial, though their manifestations are more in material aspects. Among human immaterial needs are justice, equity, empathy, sympathy, compassion, consolation, and other types of empathic assistance, with which humans can improve their individual and social lives. In the material dimension, some people benefit from great resources and wealth, some have average resources, and some others have very modest means. In such a situation, those who have more means and resources should not be indifferent towards other people's problems. Also, in the immaterial dimension, some people have more power, higher social status, and greater intellectual abilities, by which they can empathically support and assist others in different ways. *Muwasat* (Empathic Assistance) is among good attributes which are so much emphasized in Islam, and ignoring it is tantamount to disbelief.¹

Muwasat's Literal Meaning and Usage

The word "*muwasat*" is derived from the root 's-w or 's-y, meaning "to partner others and share one's own sustenance with them" (Ibn Manzur 1414 AH., 14:35; see also Ibn Athir, n.d., 1:50; Turayhi 1416 AH., 1:27). This root also means "to regret about something" and "healing, caring, and correcting" (Farahidi 1410 AH., 7: 332-33). Accordingly, it can be said that "*muwasat*" is used to indicate empathizing with others and also sharing one's possessions with them; therefore, generosity, benevolence, and honoring others are

1. The Prophet (s) said, "A person who gets up in the morning but does not care about Muslims' affairs is not a Muslim" (Kulayni 1362 SH, 2:163).

among the spiritual instances of muwasat. If loving others is rooted in a person's heart and having benevolence towards them becomes his constant concern, and if he sees his wealth and property belonging to God and sees people as the members of his own family, empathically assisting them will not only be easy for him but also pleasurable.

An important point regarding financial empathic assistance is that the person who shares his property with another should be in need of it himself (Turayhi 1416 AH., 1:28); otherwise, if a person shares something he does not need, his act will not be counted as muwasat (Ibn Manzur 1414 AH., 36).

Helping others has three levels: The first level is helping the needy with what one does not need; this kind of help is called "giving away," "charity," or "generosity." The second level is sharing with the needy some of the things one needs; this form of assistance is muwasat (empathic assistance). The third level is giving all of what one is in need of to others; this form of assistance, which is among the greatest virtues is called "*ithar*" (self-sacrifice).

Also, according to the meaning mentioned for muwasat, it can be understood that benevolence is also a manifestation of muwasat, because a benevolent person endeavors to benefit others and protect them, and this is a kind of empathic assistance.

A noteworthy point is that in order to acquire this valuable virtue one has to love others. A person whose heart is full of true love for others and considers their pain his own can easily sympathize with them and help them with all his power, whereas a selfish person has no compassionate feeling toward others, so he cannot empathically assist them. Kind people always ask God to give them the opportunity to assist those who are entangled in life problems. Imam al-Sadiq (a) prayed to God, "Give me the opportunity to assist [and share with] those whom You have given less sustenance from the greater sustenance with which You have provided me from Your blessing" (Hakimi 1380 SH, 4:306).

Muwasat in the Quran and Hadith

In the glorious Quran, the word “muwasat” is not used, but the concept and spirit of muwasat is frequently conveyed. One of the verses referring to muwasat is verse 134 of sura Aal-i-Imran: “... those who spend in ease and adversity, and suppress their anger, and excuse [the faults of] the people, and Allah loves the virtuous” (3:134). In this blessed verse, the Almighty God introduces the good attributes of the God-wary and explains that they assist the needy and the poor whether they are wealthy and in ease or when they are deprived and in need—contrary to greedy people and usurers who steal people’s properties in every opportunity. God-wariness purifies the souls of beneficent people of avarice and material attachments. Since this group have an influential role in Islamic communities and care for people, God loves them and grants them eternal happiness (Davarpanah 1375 SH, 7:24-25).

It may be asked how a person in need would be able to give away. The answer is clear: firstly, needy people too can give to others what they afford, and, secondly, giving is not only about wealth and property but includes knowledge and other non-material blessings. By giving away of what they afford, the needy people acquire the virtue of self-sacrifice and generosity.

In another verse, God mentions the prerequisite for acquiring the position of *birr* (piety): “You will never attain piety until you spend out of what you hold dear, and whatever you may spend of anything, Allah indeed knows it” (3:92). Some commentators have interpreted “*ihsan*” (doing good) in the verse “Be good [to others] just as Allah has been good to you” (28:77) as muwasat: “Do good in gratitude toward God and do muwasat with people” (Tabrisi 1372 SH, 7:418).

The usage of muwasat in hadiths is based on its literal root; sometimes it is used for sharing with others one’s blessings and material possessions, and sometimes it has to do with observing justice in dealing with others. With regard to their literal

meanings, “*ta’assi*” and “*muwasat*” are two important Islamic cultural instructions towards making moral, economic, and legal reforms in society. Below, we present some of the sayings and practical conduct of the Infallibles (a) in this regard.

1. Muwasat: Sharing One’s Possessions with Others

1. 1. Muwasat as the Manifestation of the Belief in the Oneness of God

In muwasat, believing in the Oneness of God is manifested in its highest levels, because the person having this attribute believes in God so firmly that he sees helping God’s servants a means of acquiring God’s contentment and heartily welcomes it. In some hadiths, muwasat is considered a sign of true faith and among the greatest acts of worship. In a hadith from the noble Prophet (s), muwasat and assisting others is considered one of the two pillars upon which religion is organized (Tamimi al-Amidi 1366 SH, 394). Also, the noble Prophet (s) considered muwasat, helping believers, and caring about their affairs among the greatest acts of worship and signs of servitude: “Whoever shares his property with a poor person and observes equity with people is a true believer” (Kulayni 1362 SH, 2:147).

1. 2. Muwasat as a Condition of Faith

Muwasat is also considered a condition of true faith, and a person who is ignorant of his religious brothers’ hunger and lack of clothes is basically unworthy of being called a believer. Imam Ali (a) said, “The Prophet (a) was asked, ‘O Prophet of God, is there any duty related to property other than zakat?’ The Prophet (s) answered, ‘Yes, doing good to a relative who has turned away [from relationship ties] and socializing with the Muslim neighbor. He who spends the night full while his neighbor is hungry does

not believe in me” (Majlisi, n.d., 71:151). The Prophet (s) also said, “God Almighty said, ‘He does not believe in Me who sleeps full while his Muslim brother is hungry” (Hakimi 1380 SH, 5:161).

1. 3. Muwasat as a Condition of Brotherhood

According to the teachings of the glorious Qur’an, Muslims are brothers (49:10) and assist each other with their properties and lives. Imam al-Sadiq (a) said, “Brothers are three [types]: one who assists another by his life, one who assists another by his property—these two are sincere in their brotherhood—and one who takes from you whatever he needs and wants you for [his] enjoyment; thus, you should not treat him as a trustworthy person” (Hakimi 1380 SH, 5:146).

Also, Imam Ali (a) considers the true brother only the one who empathically assists his brother in most difficult situations: “Your brother is the one who assists you with wages, not [the one only having] blood relationship” (Tabrisi 1380 SH, p. 52), and “Your brother is the one who assists you in hardships” (Ibid.), and “The best among your brothers is the one who assists you, and better than him is the one who suffices you” (Hakimi 1380 SH, 5:158).

Imam al-Kazim (a) asked ‘Asim, one of his companions, about the relationship between him and his brothers in faith and the extent to which they help each other. ‘Asim said, “[We help each other] to the best of our ability.” The Imam (a) said, “Does any of you go to his brother’s shop or house when in need, take his [money] bag, and take whatever [amount] he needs [from it] without being prevented?” ‘Asim said, “No.” The Imam (a) said, “Then you do not do what I like in relationship and assistance” (Majlisi, n.d., 71:231-32).

Disregarding the needs of religious brothers shows that one is not sincere in his claim of brotherhood. It is reported that a man went to the Prophet (s) with delay. The Prophet (s) asked him,

“What took you so long?” He said, “Lack of clothes!” The Prophet (s) asked, “Don’t you have a neighbor who has two clothes to lend you one?” He said, “Yes.” The Prophet (s) said, “Then, he is not your brother” (Hakimi 1380 SH, 5:146).

1. 4. Muwasat as Giving Assistance for People Believing in Other Religions

Mu‘alla b. Khunays, a companion of Imam al-Sadiq (a), reports,

On a drizzling night, [I saw] Imam al-Sadiq (a) going toward the portico of Banu Sa‘ida. I followed him. Suddenly, something dropped from [what he was carrying]. He (a) said, “In God’s name. O God, return it to us!” I went forth and greeted him. He (a) said, “Mu‘alla?” I said, “Yes, may I be made your ransom!” He (a) said, “Search with your hand and give me whatever you find.” I searched and found many pieces of bread on the ground and gave him whatever I found. Suddenly, I found a leather bag full of bread which I could not lift [due to heaviness]. I said, “May I be made your ransom! I will carry it on my head.” He (a) said, “No, I should do that more than you should, but you can come with me.” We went to Suffa and saw some people sleeping [there]. The Imam (a) silently put one or two loaves of bread beside each of them. Then, we returned. I asked him, “May I be made your ransom! Do they know the truth?” He (a) said, “If they knew, we would assist them with salt as well. (Kulayni 1362 SH, 4: 8-9)

1. 5. Muwasat as a Condition of Being a Shi‘i

In a hadith from Imam al-Baqir (a), financial assistance is considered one of the signs of true Shiites. It is reported that a person told Imam al-Baqir (a) that there were many Shiites in his town. The Imam (a)

said, “Do the rich ones [of them] care about the poor? Do the good ones forgive the wrongdoers? Do they assist each other?” That person answered, “No,” so the Imam (a) said, “They are not Shiites. Shiites are those who do so” (Hakimi 1380 SH, 5:167).

Also, Imam al-Sadiq (a) said, “Test our followers [with three things:] ... and about properties, see if they share their properties with their brothers” (Majlisi, n.d., 65:149).

1. 5. Muwasat, as a Condition of the Fulfillment of Prayers

According to Imam al-Sadiq’s (a), the prayer of a believer for another believer who has assisted him will definitely be answered: “Three prayers are not obstructed from [being answered by] God....[third:] when a believer prays for his brother in faith who assists him in our cause, and his prayer against his brother when the latter he does not assist him while he can and his brother is in dire need of it” (Majlisi, n.d., 71:72).

1. 6. Muwasat and Self-Sacrifice

In the practical conduct of the Infallibles (a), there are many examples of emphasis on muwasat and practicing it. For example, it is reported that one of the companions of the Prophet (s) married while he was in need and asked something from the Prophet (s). The Prophet (s) went to ‘A’isha’s house and asked her, “Do we have anything to assist this companion with?” ‘A’isha said, “We have a sack in which there is some flour.” The Prophet (s) gave that companion the sack of flour while they had nothing else (Khargushi, n.d., 69).

By studying the hadiths mentioned so far, the special significance of financial assistance can be understood. But what is the reason behind this great emphasis on financial assistance? Is the

importance and value of this kind of muwasat more than other types? The answer is that some types of non-financial assistance, such as assistance with life or honor, are undoubtedly more valuable, but financial muwasat is more emphasized because it is a step towards higher levels of muwasat; a person who refuses to share some of his property will never make greater sacrifices.

2. Spiritual Muwasat

Muwasat may be an effort to console those with spiritual pains and also to observe their rights equally. This meaning of muwasat has different forms: muwasat in ruling (i.e., observing social justice and dealing with all individuals in society equally), muwasat in judgment (i.e., observing judicial justice), muwasat in teaching (i.e., educational justice and dealing with all students equally), and muwasat in the family (i.e., expressing love toward the children equally) (Muhammadi Reyshahri 1388 SH, 544-45).

2. 1. Sympathy

One of the most evident examples of spiritual muwasat is sympathy and empathy with those with afflictions. Sometimes, people suffer from emotional problems and need sympathy and consolation. A believer has sympathy for these people and considers their pains his own. Believers consider themselves organs of one body: when one of the organs has a problem, the other organs come to its assistance, as the noble Prophet (s) said, “The example of believers, in loving and showing mercy toward each other, is like that of a body: if one of its parts is agitated, the other parts reciprocate with care and support” (Majlisi, n.d., 58:150).

Ibn Hashim reports, “After the prayer, the Prophet (s) went toward his house and saw women who were crying for Hamza at the door of the mosque. He (s) told them, ‘May God have mercy on

you, for you surely sympathized. May God have mercy upon the Helpers; as I know, empathic assistance has a long history among them” (Al-Salihi al-Shami, 1993, 2:203)

Imam Ali (a) was a perfect example of empathic assistance and sympathy with others. When he (a) was informed that one of his governors had gone to the party of a young man from Basra in which different foods were prepared, the Imam (a) criticized him and wrote to him,

O Ibn Hunayf, I have come to know that a young man of Basrah invited you to a feast and you leapt towards it. Foods of different colors were being chosen for you and big bowls were being given to you. I never thought that you would accept the feast of a people who turn out the beggars and invite the rich. Look at the morsels you take, leave out that about which you are in doubt and take that about which you are sure that it has been secured lawfully ... I try to keep myself engaged in piety so that on the day of great fear it will be peaceful and steady in slippery places. If I wished I could have taken the way leading towards (worldly pleasures like) pure honey, fine wheat and silk clothes but it cannot be that my passions lead me and greed take me to choosing good meals while in the Hijaz or in Yamamah there may be people who have no hope of getting bread or who do not have a full meal. Shall I lie with a satiated belly while around me there may be hungry bellies and thirsty livers? Or shall I be as the poet has said: “It is enough for you to have a disease that you lie with your belly full while around you people may be badly yearning for dried leather.” (*Nahj al-Balagha*, letter 45)

Thus, good servants of God are not indifferent toward each other’s pains, and if they see any trouble in their religious brothers’ lives,

they try to solve it to the best of their ability. In this way, they earn God's love.¹

2. 2. Intellectual Assistance

Another form of spiritual muwasat is intellectual assistance for solving doctrinal problems of believers who cannot respond to enemies' questions and doubts. In a hadith from Imam al-'Askari (a), we read, "Some of the friends of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) are in need, and assisting them is better than assisting [ordinary] needy poor people. They are weak to fight the enemies of God, who deprecate and blame them for their religion". (Tabrisi 1403 AH., 1:18).

Also, about conveying the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) to those who are not familiar with them, Imam al-Husayn (a) said, "Anyone who assumes guardianship of an orphan who has been cut off from us due to the ordeal of our concealment and assists him with our teachings ... until he is guided to the right path God, the Almighty and Great, will tell him, 'O generous assisting servant! I am superior to you in generosity. O My angels! To the number of all letters he has taught, give him thousands of thousands of palaces in Paradise, and add to that from whatever is appropriate from other blessings'" (Ibid., 1:289).

2. 3. Muwasat in the Family

Observing muwasat and justice in the family and in dealing with the children is mentioned in a beautiful hadith. Imam Ali (a) said, "The Prophet (s) saw a man who had two children. The man kissed

1. Imam al-Sadiq (a) is reported to have said, "God, the Glorious and Great, said, 'Created beings are My dependents, so the dearest of them to Me is the kindest one to them and the most striving among them for their needs'" (Kulayni 1362 SH, 2:192).

one of them and not the other one. The Prophet (s) asked him, ‘Why didn’t you treat them equally?’” (Saduq 1404 AH., 3:483).

2. 4. Muwasat in Judgement

Judgement is among other areas of muwasat. Imam Ali (a) advised those in charge of judgement to “observe equity among them [the parties to the dispute] in mentioning, looking, and sitting” (Muhammadi Reyshahri 1390 SH, 4:281). Also, in his address to Shurayh, one of his judges, Imam Ali (a) said, “[O]bserve equity among Muslims in your looking, speaking and sitting, so that your close ones do not expect (and look for) your injustice and your enemies do not be disappointed in your justice” (Ibid.).

2. 5. Muwasat in Ruling

In an Islamic society, all people have their own social rights in the eyes of the ruler, and the ruler has to look at them equally and with muwasat and not prioritize some of them over the others. In a letter to Hudhayfa b. Yaman, Imam Ali (a) wrote, “I order you to tax the lands based on truth and fairness ... distribute [the revenue] among those who deserve it equally and justly. Be humble to your people, and deal with them in your gathering equally, and observe the right of the relatives and strangers equally” (Ibid., 4:279).

2. 6. Muwasat in Teaching

Observing muwasat in education is another manifestation of this virtue. In education, this attribute is sometimes manifested in the equal treatment of learners and sometimes in teaching needed sciences. The Prophet (s) said, “The most remote people from God

are two groups: one [group are those] who associate themselves with rulers and approve of whatever they say wrongfully and [another is] a teacher of children who does not treat them equally and does not consider God[’s command] regarding orphans” (Ibid., 4:289). In such hadiths, the concepts of muwasat and *musawat* (equality) have become close to each other.

Muwasat in the Views of Muslim Thinkers

A mystic, Abu Ja’far Qa’ini, said that God has ordered the rich to assist the poor empathically in six ways:

1. Sometimes, He simply commands them to do muwasat: “Spend out of what We have provided you” (2:254); “Spend of the good things you have earned [through trade and the like]” (2:267).
2. Sometimes, He buys their muwasat with kindness: “Who is it that will lend Allah a good loan...” (2:245).
3. Sometimes, He urges them toward muwasat with the promise of a reward, “The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is that of a grain...” (2:261); “...and [that] there may be a noble reward for him” (57:11).
4. Sometimes, He raises the spirit of muwasat in them by warning: “You will never attain piety until you spend out of what you hold dear” (3:92).
5. Also, in some verses, He advises them that they should not be frightened by Satan’s false threats and not think that practicing muwasat will make them poor: “Satan frightens you of poverty...” (2:268).
6. Sometimes, He threatens the rich and warns them about the consequences of abandoning muwasat, “Let the stingy not suppose that [their grudging] what Allah has given them out of

His bounty is good for them; no, it is bad for them” (3:180).

Then he explained the fruits of muwasat with the poor as follows: muwasat results in the removal of sins, leads to God’s contentment, assists in healing patients, and takes away sadness from the faces of the poor. In addition, it will purifies the heart and soul of the one practicing muwasat and, above all, results in the acceptance of his actions by God and brings about God’s mercy (Meybodi 1371 SH, 1:719-20).

Stories about Muwasat

1. Muwasat of Imam Ali (a) with the Prophet (s) in sacrificing his life was an honor exclusive to him, and there are other instances of his muwasat: In the battle of Uhud, when other Companions left the Prophet (s), Imam Ali (a) stayed with him and protected him against the attacks. It is reported that during the battle, when the Prophet (s) was injured and the polytheists shouted, “Muhammad [s] is killed,” a group of polytheists saw the Prophet (s) fallen among the dead, so they attacked him. The Prophet (s) told Imam Ali (a), “Drive them away from me.” Imam Ali (a) attacked the enemies, scared them away, and killed their commander. Then, another group attacked, and Imam Ali (a) repelled them again and killed their chief. Then, a third group attacked the Prophet (s), and again Imam Ali (a) repelled them. Regarding this incident, the Prophet (s) said, “Gabriel (a) told me, ‘O Muhammad, this is muwasat and assistance’” (Ibn Maytham 1412 AH., 3:778-99).

2. It is reported that on a cold day in the winter, Bishr al-Hafi, a well-known mystic in the second century AH., took off his clothes and was shaking. When he was asked about the reason, he said, “I thought of the needy and the coldness they experience, but I had nothing to assist them with, so I wanted to sympathize with them in experiencing the coldness.” (Hujwiri 1383 SH, 1:131)

3. A person had one-hundred dinars before Eid and had nothing else. One of his friends wrote to him, “Eid has come, and I have nothing to spend for my children. If you have anything, send it to me.” The man put the dinars in a bag, sealed it, and sent it to his friend. Upon receiving the coins, that person received a letter from a friend of his with a very similar message as the one he had sent; so, he did not open the seal of the coins and sent it to his friend.

The first man had nothing, so he sent a letter to his friend who was actually the third man and told him his story and asked him for help; so, he sent him the bag as it was sealed. When the man received the bag, he did not open it. He rode to his friend (the third man) with the bag and asked him about what was the story of the bag he had sent to him. His friend told him, “It was Eid and I had nothing at home to spend for my children, so I sent a letter to that friend of mine and told him about my request and he sent me this bag and when I received your letter, I sent it to you.” The first man told his friend, “Let’s go together to him (the second man)!” When the three met, they divided the money to three parts and each took a share for himself (Tanukhi 1391-1393 AH, 3:10-11).

A Poem about Muwasat

Human beings are members of a whole,
In creation of one essence and soul.
If one member is afflicted with pain,
Other members uneasy will remain.
If you have no sympathy for human pain,
The name of human you cannot retain.

Developing and Improving Muwasat in Oneself

Reflecting on hadiths about muwasat shows that developing or

improving the virtue of muwasat requires the following elements:

1. Deep religious beliefs. Without a deep belief in religion, the spirit of egoism prevents muwasat and self-sacrifice; if the world is void of meaning, moral virtues, including muwasat, cannot be meaningful. For a person who believes in God as the Lord of the worlds and the Director of his life affairs, giving away property, wealth, and honor to help God's servants is not very difficult. A believer considers his acts of muwasat as steps towards God's contentment and pleasure.

2. Associating oneself with those who practice muwasat. By associating oneself with those who practice muwasat, one's character will be gradually inclined to muwasat. There are many pieces of advice about manners of associating and those who are worthy of associating oneself with. In a general instruction, Islam has advised its followers to associate themselves with the wise and the righteous and avoid associating themselves with wrongdoers. Regarding muwasat, in addition to general instructions, it is reported that Imam al-Sadiq (a) said to his companions, "Whoever has two attributes, [you should take him as a friend]; otherwise, keep away from him!" They asked him, "What are they?" The Imam (a) said, "Performing the prayer on time and maintaining it with care and muwasat" (Saduq 1362 SH, 1:47).

3. Socializing with the miserable. Many people are well-wishing toward others, but because they are not aware of others' pains and deprivation, they do not find the opportunity to sympathize with them. If these people become informed about the problems of other people, their well-wishing spirit will urge them to practice muwasat with others. So, socializing with the needy leads to developing and improving this attribute in well-wishing people. Socializing with the needy is a good practice, and the leaders of our religion, including the Prophet (s) and Infallible Imams (a), used to practice it.

4. Benevolence, philanthropy and showing kindness to others. If these three titles are considered as moral characteristics in people, then a person who has them – since he benevolently shows kindness to others – tries to use the facilities, means and benefits he has to fulfill their needs in different economic, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects; because, he does not like others to be deprived and suffer and tries to help them to the best of his ability. Thus, if the spirit of benevolence and philanthropy is strengthened in one's self, he will have better focus and emphasis on making financial, spiritual and life assistances to people.

Signs of Muwasat

1. Kindness toward Others

Kindness of Muslims toward each other is a sign of financial muwasat among them, because since showing kindness to others is one of the roots of development of muwasat in the society, if in a society, there is deep love toward each other, it can normally be expected that many different manifestations of muwasat could be seen in that society. Thus, showing kindness to others can be considered not only a way to develop muwasat but also its sign. Basically, true kindness among people can be manifested only when they share in each other's happiness and sadness, do not neglect each other's problems, and try to solve them. On the opposite, lack of kindness and mercy among people shows the lack of empathy and muwasat among them.

2. Putting oneself into Trouble for the Sake of Others

Among the signs of muwasat are using all available resources to fulfill the needs of believers and taking the trouble to do so, and

not being indifferent about their needs.

3. Contentment

People who practice muwasat are content with the minimum amount of property and wealth that fulfills their living needs, so they easily share their belongings with others and solve their problems.

Individual and Social Fruits of Muwasat

1. Individual Fruits

According to hadiths, practicing muwasat with religious brothers results in closeness to God,¹ fulfillment of prayers,² perpetuation of kindness and brotherhood (Tamimi al-Amidi 1366 SH, 417), and an increase of property and sustenance,³ and its most significant material result is the obliteration of poverty in society. Therefore, when Imam al-Baqir (a) asked Ibn Artah, “Does any of you put his hand in the pocket of his brother in faith and take as much as he needs?” and he responded in negative, the Imam (a) said, “If you did so, you would not become needy” (Majlisi, n.d., 75:185).

2. Social Fruits

One of the social fruits of muwasat is that everyone benefits from

-
1. “Seek closeness to God through muwasat with your brothers.”, (Tabrisi, 1385 AH., p. 83)
 2. “Three prayers are not obstructed from [being answered by] God....[third:] when a believer prays for his brother in faith who assists him in our cause, and his prayer against his brother when the latter he does not assist him while he can and his brother is in dire need of it” (Majlisi, n.d., 71:72).
 3. Imam Ali (a) told Kumayl b. Ziyad, “O Kumayl! Abundance is in the property of the one who pays zakat and practices muwasat with believers” (Harrani 1404 AH., 173).

it if it becomes a law. In other words, if muwasat becomes a law in a society, no one will be worried about shortages in life anymore, because he will know well that he can rely on other members of society. Observing muwasat also results in the just distribution of wealth in society if the rich in the society abandon extravagance and give away some of their wealth to the poor.

Moreover, there is great emphasis in hadiths on the muwasat of statesmen with the poor in society, which has great effects, including alleviation of poverty for the poor and deprived people, keeping away from negative consequences of poverty such as leaving religion and spirituality due to poverty, promotion of dignity among deprived people in the society by seeing empathic living of their rulers and their efforts for tackling problems of lower classes of the society and understanding their situation, removing the greed of the rich and their misuse of their position by living emphatically with the majority of the society and safety of the rulers from the menaces of power due to muwasat with lower classes of the society and associating and showing empathy with them. Prophet Solomon (a), who was at the height of worldly power and wealth, always associated himself with the poor and was proud of that; he said, “I am a poor person among the poor” (Daylami 1412 AH., 1:118).

Conclusion

Based on what was mentioned about muwasat, it seems that establishing a morally perfect society is not possible without the prevalence of muwasat in it. As long as the members of a society are indifferent toward each other's needs and pains, it cannot be expected that the society advances towards its perfection. It is quite evident that perfection encompasses both material and spiritual perfections. There is no doubt that the glory of a nation is achieved when people practice muwasat. Different forms of

muwasat can influence the development of societies and their endurance. According to many thinkers, Islam was empowered by two things: one was the bravery of Imam Ali (a) as the best example of muwasat by life, and the other was the financial aid of Lady Khadija as the best example of muwasat by wealth. These and similar acts of muwasat by early Muslims led to the promotion of Islam in different corners of the world. They believed that whatever they had belonged to God, so they spent their property in the way of their Lord.

References

- *The Glorious Qur'an*. Translated by Ali Quli Qarai.
- Abu Ali Muhsin b. Ali b. Muhammad b. Abufahm, (1391-1393 AH), *Nishwar al-muhadarah wa akhbar al-mudhakarah*. Beirut: Dar Sadr.
- Al-Hujwiri, Ali b. Uthman. (1383 SH.) *Kashf al-mahjub*. Tehran: Soroush.
- Al-Salihi al-Shami, Muhammad b. Yusuf. (1993). *Subul al-huda wa al-rashad fi sirat khayr al-'ibad*. Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-'Ilmiyya.
- Bahrani, Maytham b. Ali b. Maytham, (1404 AH), *Sharh Nahj al-balagha*, np., Daftar Nashr al-Kitab.
- ———, (1412 AH), *Sharh Nahj al-balagha*, translated by Mohammad Sadeq 'Aref, Mashhad, Islamic Research Foundation of Astane Quds Razavi.
- Davarpanah, Abulfadl, (1375 sh), *Anwar al-'irfan fi tafsir al-Qur'an*, Tehran: Sadr Publications.
- Daylami, Hasan b. Abu al-Hasan al-. (1412 AH.) *Irshad al-gholub*. Qom: Sharif Radi.

- Farahidi, Khalil b. Ahmad al-. (1410 AH.) *Kitab al-'ayn*. Qom: Hejrat.
- Hakimi, Muhammad and Mahmud and Ahmad. (1380 SH.) *Al-Hayat*. Translated by Ahmad Aram. Tehran: Daftar Nashr-e Farhang-e Islami.
- Harrani, Abu Muhammad Hasan b. Ali b. Shu'ba al-. (1404 AH.) *Tuhaf al-'uqul*, Qom: Mu'ssaisat al-Nashr al-Islami li Jama'at al-Mudarrisin.
- Husayni Hamadani, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn, (1404 AH), *Anwar derakhshan*, Tehran: Lotfi Bookshop.
- Ibn Athir Jazari, Mubarak b. Muhammad, (nd.), *al-Nihayat fi gharib al-hadith wa al-athar*, Qom: Mu'assisa Matbu'ati Isma'ilian.
- Ibn Manzur, Muhammad b. Mukram. (1414 AH.) *Lisan al-'Arab*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr.
- Khargushi, Abu Sa'id al-. (n.d.) *Sharaf al-Nabi* (s). Edited by Muhammad Roshan. Babak Publications.
- Kulayni, Muhammad b. Ya'qub al-. (1362 SH.) *Al-Kafi*. Tehran: Islamiyya.
- Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir. (n.d.) *Bihar al-anwar*. Tehran: Islamiyya.
- Muhammadi-Reyshahri, Muhammad. (1388 SH.) *Gozideh-ye hekmatnameh-ye Piyambar A'zam* (s). Qom: Dar al-Hadith.
- ———, (1390 SH.) *Daneshnameh Qur'an va hadith*, Qom, Dar al-Hadith Publications.
- Saduq, Muhammad b. Ali al-. (1362 SH.) *Al-Khisal*. Qom: Jami'a Mudarrisin.
- ———, (1404 AH) *Man la yahduruh al-faqih*. Qom: Jami'a Mudarrisin Publications.
- Sayyid Radi, Abu al-Hasan, Muhammad b. Husayn, (1414 AH), *Nahj al-balagha*. Edited by Subhi Salih., Qom, Hejrat.
- Shaykh Mufid, Muhammad b. Muhammad Nu'man, (1413 AH), *al-Irshad fi ma'rifa hujaj Allah 'ala al-'ibad*, Qom: Congress on Sheykh Mufid.

- Tabrisi, ‘Ali b. Hasan al-. (1385 AH.) *Mishkat al-anwar*. Najaf: Haydariyyah.
- Tabrisi, Ahmad b. Ali al-. (1403 AH.) *Al-Ihtijaj ‘ala ahl al-lijaj*, Mashhad: Murtada Publications.
- Tabrisi, Fadl b. Hasan b. Fadl, al-. (1380 SH.) *Nathr al-la’ali*, Ttranslated by Hamidreza Sheykhi., Mashhad: Astan Qods Razavi.
- ———, (1372 SH.) *Majma’ al-bayan fi tafsir al-Qur’an*. Tehran: Naser Khosro.
- Tamimi al-Amidi, ‘Abd al-Wahid al-. (1366 SH.) *Tasnif Ghurar al-hikam wa durar al-kilam*. Qom: Daftar Tablighat Islami.
- Turayhi, Fakhr al-Din al-, (1416 AH.) *Majma’ al-bahrayn*. Tehran: Murtazavi Publications.