“The family’s economy according to Imam Ali’s attitude (PBUH)”

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Abstract

The economics is a science that discusses about production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of goods and materials. The economic issues for family also concern with the above-said items in relation to family. Earning of legitimate income (halal) and management of costs are two basic parameters in family economy. In this article, the related topics to production in family and the normative principles and techniques based on Imam Ali (PBUH) have been examined. As usual, in the low level and material approach, the best and foremost economic conditions of family are mentioned as earning of more income and further and more diversified consumption along with happiness and fineness but according transcendental approach from Imam Ali (PBUH), this objective is not more production and further consumption, welfare, and luxury, but production serves to material and spiritual comfort and welfare and consumption along with moderation and avoidance from extravagance and prodigality as well as paying attention to religious duties such as payment of Khums, Zakat, and charity. According to Imam Ali’s (PBUH) attitude, rather than business and effort that is required for production and earning of legitimate income, some other non-material factors may play essential role in rising sustenance including thanksgiving, early rising, seeking God’s forgiveness, well-morality, food giving, alms, and trust in God as well. Also rather than moderation that is assumed as the foremost principle based on Imam’s attitude (PBUH), providence, charity, and payment of religious dues are also important regarding management of consumption.

Keywords: Family’s economy, Imam Ali (PBUH), Production, Management of consumption
Introduction

The economics is a science that discusses about production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of goods and materials. The economic topics of family regarding above items are also related to the family. How and what thing does a family produce? How is revenue and sustenance of a family produced and provided? How is income distributed and consumed in family and what are the related preferences?

Earning of legal income (halal) and management of costs are deemed as two basic items in family’s economy.

If we assume high efficiency at the minimum cost along with fair distribution and observance of rules and regulations as criteria for economic achievement, doubtlessly Imam Ali (PBUH) has been located on the peak of such achievement. He starts his economic activities from zero point. But after some period of time he acquired to income at high level that was adequate for providing expenses for hundreds of family by his many efforts and common sense. Earning of such an income is only assumed as one feather for his achievement and this concept will be completed only when this procedure is observed along with presentation of the most just and humanitarian distribution of income by Imam.

The magnificence of economic prosperity of Imam Ali (PBUH) is mainly related to this area that it has been acquired according to humanistic basis completely different from what it mentioned in today world. From his perspective, human is God’s servant and successor on earth and his/her real prosperity will not be provided by utilization acquisition of more profit and income, but it is required for acquisition of God’s consent. The god’s satisfaction is the basic rule in Imam’s behavior (PBUH). Any act that is followed by God’s satisfaction is deemed as rational for Imam although it is accompanied to more pain and difficulty.

With respect to the given definition for economy based on which this science is composed of main sectors of production, distribution, and consumption, we explore initially the relevant topics to production in family and then principles and techniques of distribution and production according Imam Ali’s (PBUH) attitude.

1- Family and production:

At the low-level and materialistic attitude, earning of more income and further and more diversified consumption and use along with pleasure and fineness are usually deemed as the best and foremost economic conditions for family, but from highly perspective of Imam Ali (PBUH), this objective is not more production and further consumption and welfare and luxury, instead it is production to serve for material and spiritual comfort and tranquility and consumption along with moderation and avoidance from extravagance and prodigality as well as addressing religious duties such as payment of Khums, Zakat, and charity.
1-1- **Piety:**

Subject of piety (زهد) has been implied in Islamic texts, particularly in moral-mystic topics but unfortunately due to wrong interpretation of some persons this concept has been defined as synonymous with seclusion from the world and sufficing with ignorable materialistic affairs!

In Oration No 81 of Nahjolbalagheh book, Imam Ali (PBUH) proposed a comprehensive and beautiful definition of piety and expressed: ‘*Oh, people, piety is shortening of wishes and thanksgiving for bounties to God, and avoidance from the sins and prohibited acts.*’ (ایب الِبط الضُبدة لصش الاهلْ ّالشکش ػٌذ الٌؼن، ّ الخْسع ػٌذ الوذبسم)

The description that is mentioned by Imam (PBUH) about piety is presented versus the wrong hermeneutics about piety and many persons might never have perceived meaning of piety and they assume their own as pious and they imagine piety is only wearing of plain clothes or non-entry in important social issues and seclusion and isolation from community and alienation to economic activities while none of which denotes piety. The reality of piety is placed versus inclination (desire) and it is lack of attachment to this world and its symbols although someone may have a lot of available facilities.¹

1-2- **Business and effort:**

From attitude of Imam Ali (PBUH), business and effort and earning of income are not only criticized but they are pleasant and necessary activities and they are one of the positive characteristics of the male and in contrast unemployment and laziness have been extremely blamed and the wealth and properties are criticized only they are converted into the final goal for human. Imam Ali (PBUH) was so interested in agriculture and working on land that he was called *Abu Torab* (Father of soil).² Behavior of Imam represents this fact that how one can cultivate this world from a way rather than Mammonism.

He divides daily plan of a God-believer into three parts: One part for dealing with prayer, the second part is devoted to making effort to improvement sustenance, and third part is also related to legitimate pleasure.³

The wealth and property, if acquired from proper and legitimate way (halal), is deemed as one of divine bounties and if this gift is appreciated and employed for legal purpose and for the sake of god’s consent as well it will be accompanied by goodness in this world and doomsday for human.

‘*Prosperous sustenance is assumed as pleasant bounties.*’⁴

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⁴ من هنی النعم سعیة الارزاق. (من هنی النعم سعیة الارزاق)
Making effort and endeavor and proper management and innovation are required for earning of adequate income. Otherwise, no one can expect that the sustenance and income are realized from abnormal way. Although human is provided from where s/he has not expected (من حيث لا يحتسب) but this is not a certain rule and principle and it is based on working and effort in this regard.

The sustenance of anyone depends on quantity of his/her intention (reliant on endeavor) (رزق المرء على قدر نيته).

1-3- Greed and avarice:

There is a point here that is difference of working and effort made for earning of legal income from greed and avarice. From attitude of Imam Ali (PBUH), greed is not only led to rising of sustenance, but also it makes human inferior and mean (الحرص لا يزيد في الرزق، و (لكن يخذ القدر).

Greed human never becomes satisfied (verily there is pain in greed: ان في الحرص لعنة) and as s/he succeeds in earning of income and rising sustenance and revenue, s/he will never be convinced and only feels sense of poverty.

‘The greed is symptom of poverty and need’ (الحرص علامة الفقر) and as the greedy person is wealthier s/he is poor.

1-4- Effective factors in rising sustenance:

Although working and endeavor are necessary for earning of income and the foremost factor in rising sustenance and revenue, according to Imam Ali’s perspective (PBUH), there are also some other intervening factors in increase of sustenance where we will deal with some cases of them in the following.

1-4-1- Thanksgiving:

‘And when your Lord made it known: If you are grateful, I would certainly give to you more, and if you are ungrateful, My chastisement is truly severe’(Ibrahim Sura 14: 7)

4 - Ansari Qomi, Mohammad Ali, Translation of book of (غرر الحكم و دير الكلم), Tehran (anonymous), 8th Ed, dateless, 2/727
5 - Ansari Qomi, Mohammad Ali, Translation of book of (غرر الحكم و دير الكلم), Tehran (anonymous), 8th Ed, dateless, 1/423
6 - Nazemzadeh Qomi, Seyed Asghar, Effects of wisdom, Qom, Islamic researches office publication center, 2nd Ed, 1996, 159
7 - Ansari Qomi, Mohammad Ali, Translation of book of (غرر الحكم و دير الكلم), Tehran (anonymous), 8th Ed, dateless, 1/215
8 - Rasooli Mahallati, Seyed Hashem, Translation of book of (غرر الحكم و دير الكلم), Tehran, Islamic culture publication office, 2nd Ed, 1999, 1/230
9 - و اذ تكوكن ريم لتكن شكركم لازيدكم و أنت كفركم عن أبي لشديد (سوره ابراهيم 14: 7)
One of the efficient factors in rising of human’s sustenance is thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is the right of God for bounties and doing it causes rising in sustenance and negligence about thanksgiving is led to missing of bounties. 

1-4-2- Early rising:

Based on Islamic teachings, being awaken at early morning, especially from morning call-prayer to sunrise (twilight), may increase sustenance. Also Imam Ali (PBUH) implies in this regard:

‘Look for work at early morning because the blessing and prosperity lies in early morning’ (بیرکوا فلاتیرکا فی المبکار).

1-4-3- Asking for God’s forgiveness (عسفاَر تَرْزَقی) :

*[10] I said, Ask forgiveness of your Lord, surely He is the most Forgiving; *[11] He will send down upon you the cloud, pouring down abundance of rain; *[12] And help you with wealth and sons, and make for you gardens, and make for you rivers* (سْسٍ الْحَمَّامِ، ۷۱:۱۰/۱۲).

Quitting sins and asking for God’s forgiveness may create openness in businesses and rising of sustenance and income. As Imam Ali (PBUH) express: ‘Ask for God’s forgiveness so that you are given sustenance’ (عسفاَر تَرْزَقی).

He expresses his surprise about those who are disappointed from God’s mercy and assumes asking for God’s forgiveness as the key for their saving:

‘I am surprised from someone who has been disappointed (from divine mercy) while s/he has means for saving and that is asking for god’s forgiveness’ (عسفاَر تَرْزَقی).

1-4-4- Well-morality:

The well-morality causes rising sustenance (بِحَسن الْخَلَاقِ تَرْزَق اَلْزَرَقی). This issue may be examined from two aspects. One is that the Almighty God increase sustenance for well-

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10 - Mohammadi Moghadam, Ghorbanali, Navayee Yahya Zadeh, Translation of Nahjolbalagheh commentary (Ibn Meisam), Mashhad, Astan Quds Institute Islamic researches foundation, 1st Ed, 1996, 5-616
11 - Rasooli Mahallati, Seyed Hashem, Translation of book of غُرَّ الحَمَّامِ وَ دِرْرُ الْكَلَِمِ, Tehran, Islamic culture publication office, 2nd Ed, 1999, 1/167
12 - Rasooli Mahallati, Seyed Hashem, Translation of book of غُرَّ الحَمَّامِ وَ دِرْرُ الْكَلَِمِ, Tehran, Islamic culture publication office, 2nd Ed, 1999, 2/251
14 - Rasooli Mahallati, Seyed Hashem, Translation of book of غُرَّ الحَمَّامِ وَ دِرْرُ الْكَلَِمِ, Tehran, Islamic culture publication office, 2nd Ed, 1999, 2/252
15 - Nazemzadeh Qomi, Seyed Asghar, Effects of wisdom, Qom, Islamic researches office publication center, 2nd Ed, 1996, 22
moral persons and the other aspect is that due the well-morality of such persons, people help them at time of misery of their sustenance.\(^{16}\) According statement of Imam Ali (PBUH) as well-morality causes rising sustenance, ill- morality is also led to reducing sustenance (One who is ill- moral his/her sustenance is constrained: ‘من ساء خلقه ضاق ‘زوقه’.\(^{17}\)

1-4-5- Giving food:

Giving food to God-believers and entertaining of the relatives and friends causes rising sustenance. Imam Ali (PBUH) assumed entertainment of guests and giving food to them as pleasure for the magnanimous people (‘ئدة الكرام في اطعام ’.\(^{18}\) The point which should be noticed is that here Imam intends differently regarding giving food and entertainment of guests from giving alms (that is also one of the best ways for rising sustenance) and giving food does not necessarily include the poor people, but it is designated to only entertainment for the relatives thanked for the divine bounties. ‘One to whom God has granted wealth and property should contribute to his/ her relatives and entertain them.’ (من اتاه الله مال فليصل به القرابة و ليحسن منه الضباق).\(^{19}\)

1-4-6- Giving alms: (صدقه)

Arabic term ‘صدقه’ (alms) is derived from root ‘صدق’ that means honesty. What given to the needy people based on honesty and sincerity is called ‘صدقه’ (alms). Review on utterances of Imam Ali (PBUH) implies that according his attitude, giving alms is one of the best ways for rising sustenance. ‘Set down sustenance from sky by giving alms’ (استنزوا الرزق بالصدقه).\(^{20}\)

Giving alms is not only specified to wealthy persons. The poor people should also notice this issue and thereby increase their sustenance. ‘Whenever you became extremely miser, deal with God through giving alms’ (اذاء املقت ففاجروا) (أتم بالصدقه).\(^{21}\)

\(^{16}\) - Khansari, Jamaeddin Mohammad, Illustration of book ( Guerr al-hukum wa drar al-kalam), Tehran, publication of Tehran University, 4\(^{th}\) Ed, 1987, 223/3

\(^{17}\) - Nazemzadeh Qomi, Seyed Asghar, Effects of wisdom, Qom, Islamic researches office publication center, 2\(^{nd}\) Ed, 1996, 23

\(^{18}\) - Nazemzadeh Qomi, Seyed Asghar, Effects of wisdom, Qom, Islamic researches office publication center, 2\(^{nd}\) Ed, 1996, 506

\(^{19}\) - Nazemzadeh Qomi, Seyed Asghar, Effects of wisdom, Qom, Islamic researches office publication center, 2\(^{nd}\) Ed, 1996, 363

\(^{20}\) - Ansari Qomi, Mohammad Ali, Translation of book of ( Guerr al-hukum wa drar al-kalam), Tehran (anonymous), 8\(^{th}\) Ed, dateless, 1/131

\(^{21}\) - Nazemzadeh Qomi, Seyed Asghar, Effects of wisdom, Qom, Islamic researches office publication center, 2\(^{nd}\) Ed, 1996, 347
1-4-7- trust in God: (توکل)

Trust in god means the human assumes Almighty God as his/her advocate and sponsor. The redemption and prosperity will not be possible regardless of trust in God and there will not be any goodness and blessing in their life. It should be noticed that subject of trust in God does not mean the human to quit trying and making effort but trust in God is a cordial and metaphysical status in which s/he considers the given sustenance from God.

‘One who trusts in the Glorifying God, God will suffices and makes him/her needless’ (من تولکل عیشانه کفی و استغنى).\(^{22}\)

‘One who trusts in God doubtful cases will be clarified to him/ her and the costs of life become adequate and will be secured from consequences’ (من تولکل عیشانه اضبئج لَ الشبِبث و کفی الوئًْبث و اهي الخبؼبث).\(^{23}\)

2- Family and consumption:

The second part of family economy is the subject of consumption management. We implied according to attitude of Imam Ali (PBUH), further consumption and welfare and luxury are not assumed as goal for more production, but material and spiritual comfort and tranquility, consumption along with moderation and avoidance from extravagance and prodigality and also noticing religious duties such as payment of Khums and Zakat and charity are some of basic issues in subject of consumption management.

One can consider the foremost cases of family consumption based on their order-preferences as follows:

- Nutrition
- Clothing
- Housing
- Healthcare and treatment
- Education
- Transportation
- Legal recreations and amusements
- Charity

\(^{22}\) - Ansari Qomi, Mohammad Ali, Translation of book of (غرر الحكم و درر الكلام), Tehran (anonymous), 8\(^{th}\) Ed, dateless, 2/655

\(^{23}\) - Rasooli Mahallati, Seyed Hashem, Translation of book of (غرر الحكم و درر الكلام), Tehran, Islamic culture publication office, 2\(^{nd}\) Ed, 1999, 2/575
- Payment of religious funds (Khums and Zakat)

- Saving and investment

Analysis on Imam Ali’s (PBUH) economic conduct indicates that he has always considered the above-said cases in subject of management of consumption. Although the quality of exploitation has been for him at minimum level, he did not prescribe this issue to others and the distinct example of this case is visible in Oration No 209 of Nahjolbalagheh. Ala Ibn Ziad as one of Imam’s friends told to Imam: I complain from my brother Asem Ibn Ziad to you. He has worn a plain robe and secluded from the world. Imam (PBUH) ordered to bring him and then told him: Oh, you are enemy of your life and Satan has wondered you. Do not you have mercy for your wife and children and you think that God has blessed His bounties for you but He would not like you to use them?! You are so little versus God that He treats you in this way. Asem replied: Oh Master of God-believers then why do you wear this coarse dress and eat unpleasant food? Imam said: Woe upon you! I am not like you. God has required it for rightful leaders to match their own with the poor and disable people so that poverty and misery not put pressure on them and not lead them to disobedience and transgression.

The other case from which Imam Ali (PBUH) has prevented people in their consumption is parsimony and stinginess. The parsimony is the pest of wealth and asset. From his perspective, the poorest people are who live with difficulty despite possessing wealth and property and leaves away wealth for others. The following Hadith is also about blameful critique of this unfavorable attribute:

‘What a stingy person consumes his/ her face-saving (due to parsimony) is greater than the goods and commodities s/he stores (by parsimony) and what he eliminates from his/ her religion is several times higher than property and wealth s/he stores for oneself’

Imam Ali (PBUH) assumes observance of some of principles and rules about management of consumption where we will deal with these principles in the following:

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24 - Hosseini, Seyed Reza, Economic conduct of Imam Ali (PBUH), Qom, young thought club, 1st Ed, 2004
25 - Dashti, Mohammad, Translation of Nahjolbalagheh of Imam Ali (PBUH)m Qom, Mashhoor Publication Institute, 1st Ed, 2000, 431
27 - Rasooli Mahallati, Seyed Hashem, Translation of book of غشس الذکن و دسس الکلن, Tehran, Islamic culture publication office, 2nd Ed, 1999, 1/144
28 - Rasooli Mahallati, Seyed Hashem, Translation of book of غشس الذکن و دسس الکلن, Tehran, Islamic culture publication office, 2nd Ed, 1999, 1/143
2-1- **Moderation and balanced life:**

The principle of moderation and observance of moderation is one the basic principles in management of family consumption. This principle requires for paying attention to subject of frugality and avoidance from extravagance. It can be said moderation is placed at middle point among stinginess and extravagance. Imam Ali (PBUH) assumes frugality as the ultimate point of moderation.\(^{29}\) The moderation; on the one hand, acts as factor of continuity for wealth and well-to-do; and on the other hand, it treats poverty and faults.\(^{30}\)

2-2- **Providence for sustenance and avoidance from extravagance:**

One can consider subject of providence typically as subordinate of moderation. It is inferred from statements of Imam Ali (PBUH) that the moderation is mainly subject to time of misery and providence upon wide sustenance. Providence in a business denotes doing that task by thinking and taking its consequence into consideration.

‘The good providence increases small property and bad measure eliminates the great property’ (حسن التدبير ينمي قليل المال وسوء التدبير يضفي كثيره).\(^{31}\)

‘Good providence along with adequate amount will be more sufficient for you than a lot of wealth with prodigality’ (حسن التدبير مع الكافب اكفي لك من الكثير مع الأسراف).\(^{32}\)

2-3- **Charity:** (انفاق)

It may be found from analysis of Imam Ali’s (PBUH) utterances that the difference among charity and giving alms is in that giving alms is always specified to human’s status whether at misery time and or during prosperity of sustenance and as it already mentioned, giving alms is one of factors for alleviation of poverty and rising sustenance. But charity is deemed as generosity at period of wealthy with prosperous sustenance. As Imam Ali says ‘Give charity when you are granted sustenance’ (إذا رزقت فانفق).\(^{33}\) Imam Ali (PBUH) supposes lack of charity lest of poverty as suspicion to God and said:

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30 - Nazemzadeh Qomi, Seyed Asghar, Effects of wisdom, Qom, Islamic researches office publication center, 2nd Ed, 1996, 48
31 Khansari, Jamaaleddin Mohammad, Illustration of book of (غرر الحكم و درر الكلم), Publication of Tehran University, 4th Ed, 19873/387
32 - Nazemzadeh Qomi, Seyed Asghar, Effects of wisdom, Qom, Islamic researches office publication center, 2nd Ed, 1996, 508
33 - Ansari Qomi, Mohammad Ali, Translation of book of (غرر الحكم و درر الكلم), Tehran (anonymous), 8th Ed, dateless, 1/310
‘Being stingy about the available object (and not giving charity for the sake of God) is deemed as suspicion versus God.’ (البخل بال موجود سواء الظن بالمعورد) 34

2-4- Payment of religious duties:

Payment of religious fees and duties is one of the other cases that should be addressed in management of consumption. The religious duties including Khums and Zakat are God’s shares in sustenance of humans and non-payment of them causes stopping sustenance. Imam Ali (PBUH) assumes six factors as bases for the religion one of them is payment of Zakat. 35 He considers payment of Zakat as insurance of properties 36 and its non-payment as the ugliest form of parsimony. 37 Therefore, we should always consider payment of religious duties in consumption plans.

3- Conclusion:

- Unlike materialistic attitude toward business and production in which more profit is assumed exclusively as product of financial factors, from perspective of Imam Ali (PBUH) rather than business and effort, the non-materialistic factors may directly impact on rising sustenance and improvement in family economy including thanksgiving, early rising, asking for God’s forgiveness, well-morality, giving food, giving alms, and trust in God.

- Regarding subject of wealth creation and earning of legal income (halal) Imam Ali (PBUH) assumes no constraint and he has personally and apparently acted in this field, but he does not deem it duly in absolute and unrestricted possession for a person regarding properties that belong to him/her and what have been legally acquired. In addition to avoidance from extravagance in consumption, charity and payment of religious duties are also considered as basic principles in respective of management of consumption.

- The difference among charity and alms is in this point that giving alms is included in human’s activities whether at time of misery and or period of prosperity of sustenance and it is one of the factors for elimination of poverty and rising sustenance while charity is deemed as generosity at time of wealthy and prosperous sustenance.

34 - Ansari Qomi, Mohammad Ali, Translation of book of (غشس الذکن ّ دسس الکلن), Tehran (anonymous), 8th Ed, dateless, 1/44
35 - Rasooli Mahallati, Seyed Hashem, Translation of book of (غشس الذکن ّ دسس الکلن), Tehran, Islamic culture publication office, 2nd Ed, 1999, 1/419
36 - Rasooli Mahallati, Seyed Hashem, Translation of book of (غشس الذکن ّ دسس الکلن), Tehran, Islamic culture publication office, 2nd Ed, 1999, 1/486
37 - Ansari Qomi, Mohammad Ali, Translation of book of (غشس الذکن ّ دسس الکلن), Tehran (anonymous), 8th Ed, dateless, 1/90
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