

Goals and Policies of Shia Imams in Protection and Promotion of the Holy Quran

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Abstract

Shia Imams had various strategies in protecting and promotion of religion. One of these strategies is protection and promotion of the Holy Quran. The Imams' activities in this context are based on clear goals and policies. This paper reviews and determines their goals and policies in specified strategy. It is assumed that the Imams had a target path which starts with introducing of Quran and then teaching it, implementing it, and earning prosperity through Quran. In line with these goals, they made the policies and explained as: noticing the non-distorted Quran, noticing the customs of reciting Quran, noticing the customs of interpretation of Quran, and noticing the damages in dealing with Quran are part of these policies. The research method in this paper is descriptive and analyzing the contents.

Keywords: Shia Imams, Goals, Policy Making, Promotion of Quran.

Statement of the Problem

Religion is one of the focal cultural elements of any nation which makes cultural set of a nation as the most important indexes. Religion can have an influence on its dependable society and lead it toward its goal. The Islamic religion, as the last and eternal religion, has factors which leads all people toward its monotheistic goals. The prophet points out two important factors of Quran and his supporters which form and continue the real Islamic culture (Ibn Babvieh, 2019, p. 137) and after prophet, the supporters would lead the society towards the prosperity and keeps the people from wrong doings. Therefore, this assumption is strengthened that the supporters paid attention to both protection of God's words in various aspects and also were eager to spreading and promoting God's book among the society, because their aim was the same as prophet's goal in guiding people towards prosperity and saving them from straying. Therefore, in line with people's prosperity, the supporters tried to protect and promote God's book with specific goals and tried to implement appropriate policies.

This paper tries to study and analyze the role of Shia Imams in their life time about history of Islamic civilization and culture and try to answer whether they had any goals in protecting Quran? And secondly, what policies did they take to achieve their goals?

The importance of this paper is the fact that first of all it will help us to reveal some hidden history of Islamic civilization specifically, the role of Imams in Islamic culture and secondly, the analysis of this subject can be an applicable and suitable model for today's society, specifically in creating a new Islamic civilization based on Quran culture which can lead towards cultural progress. The present paper, which is historical descriptive and is done by collecting data, studies and analyzes Shia Imams' goals and their policies in protecting and promotion of Quran.

1- The Objectives

The objectives are the results which are desired to be achieved in a specified time (amirhosein, 2011). The Shia Imams had some continuous and related objectives to protect and promote Quran in society which is given below:

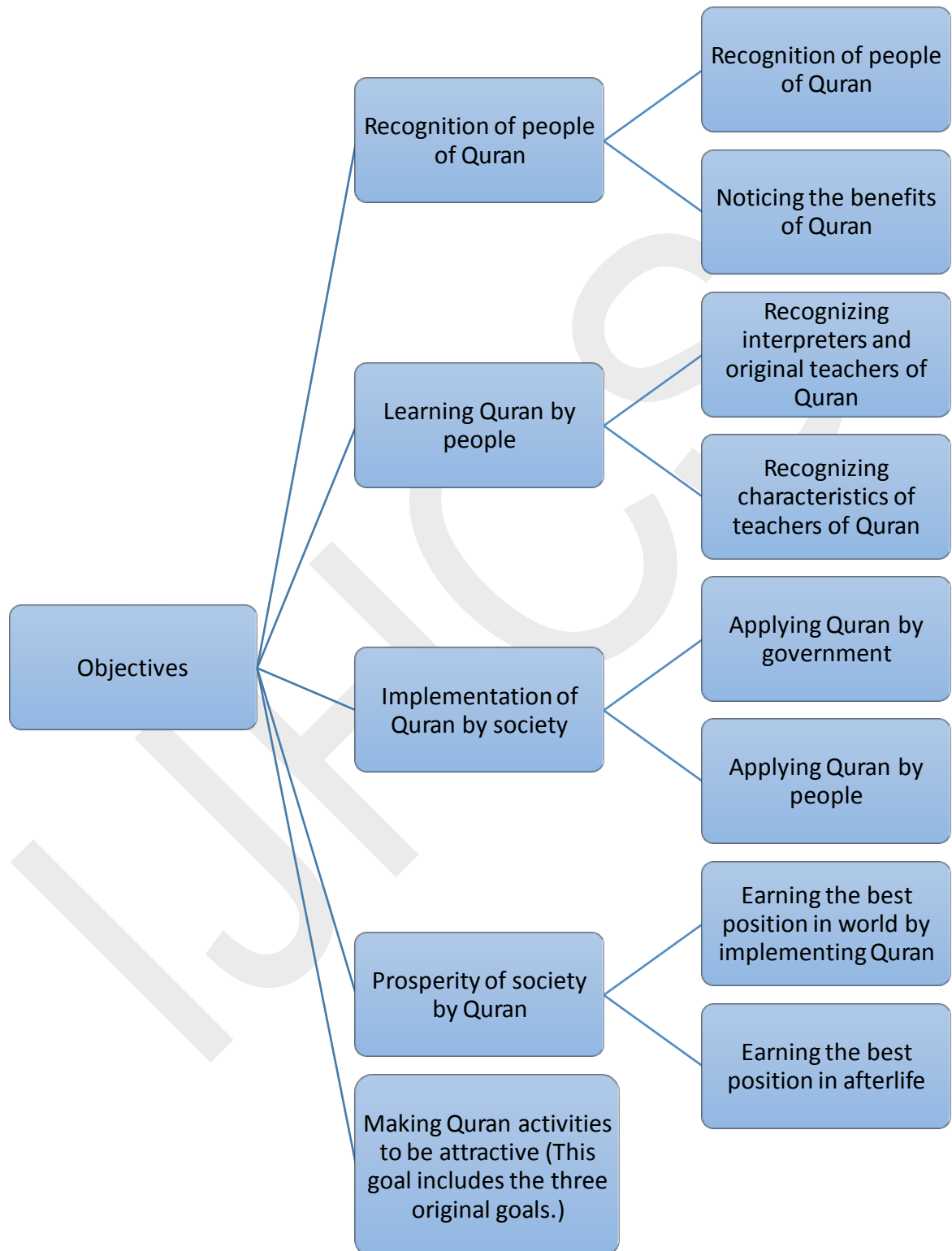


Table 1. Objectives of the Shia Imams to protect and promote Quran

1-1) Recognition of Quran by Common People

The Imams' desired point was for the common people to have a correct understanding of Quran and its benefits in order to use it in the best possible way.

Amir Al Mua'menin said in one of his speeches that: "God the Almighty sent a guiding book, specified the goods and evil in it; thus choose the good path so that you will be guided and avoid the evil in order to get in the right path" (Sharif Al-Razi, 2000, p. 167).

Imams have ordered all to refer to Quran and obliged to follow it. *Amir Al Mua'menin* in one of his speeches in a place called *Rabazeh* described a status for Quran which includes the followings:

- Offering problems to the Quran
- Displaying values and anti values
- Quran has the ultimate saying
- Quran is the Imam (Tabari, 2009, p. 479)

When we see that *Imam Ali* specifies 42 characteristics in only one of his speeches (Sharif Al-Razi, 2000, p. 198) and *Imam Sajjad* refers to 30 characteristics in one of his prayers (Ali Ibn Al-Husain, no date, p.42) about Quran, then we can clearly realize their effort to reach their goal and understand that how important was to recognize Islamic society through Quran for Imams.

Imams strengthened the recognition of common people about Quran's characteristics for the benefit of people. Therefore, Imams specified Quran's characteristics in every occasion and in different situations for the people. For example, *Imam Sajjad* mentions an important parts of these characteristics in his Quran recitation prayer (Ali Ibn Al-Husain, no date, p.42).

In addition, Imams mentioned the physical benefits of Quran and explained those to the people. *Imam Reza* quotes from *Imam Ali* that: "three things increase the memory and repels mucus: reciting Quran, honey, and milk" (Barghi, 1950, p. 38).

1-2) Learning Quran by People

Another goal of Imams was learning Quran by all Muslims in Islamic society or to be in learning process. The author of *Algharat* writes: "*Imam Ali* used to say a lot in his speeches that: ... Learn Quran and act accordingly ... " (Ibn Babvieh, 2019, vol. 2, p. 436). These repeating orders show the importance of this goal. In line with this goal, Imams followed up some minor goals:

1-2-1) Recognition of Real Commentators and Teachers of Quran

Amir Al-Mua'menin (the commander of the believers) says: "I swear that I know why and where any verses of Quran have been descended" (Ibn Babviah, 1919, vol. 2, p. 99). In addition, he wants all people to ask him about the holy book of Quran (Asqalany, 1994, vol. 4, p. 467). Therefore, he creates an environment in Islamic society that all people recognize the true teacher and realize that he is the source of learning of Quran. In any case, *Ahlul Bayt* (household) of Prophet are better aware of what was descended than any other person. Therefore, Imam *Sadegh* says the following about the commentators: "descendants of Muhammad are the true commentators" (Qomi, 1988, vol. 2, p. 451).

1-2-2) Recognition of Characteristics of Scholars and Teachers of Quran

Another goal of Imams is for the people to recognize the characteristics which the commentators must have. Imam Ali said in his important speech after the end of *Nahravan* war and returning to the city of *Kufah*: "Indeed, no one has the knowledge of Quran unless he has felt it; they are the people who are not opposed the truth and do not argue about it" (Ya'qubi, no date, vol. 2, p.193). Even though these characteristics refer to families of prophet, it shows that anyone who has knowledge of Quran must possess some characteristics and observe specific criteria so that his understanding of Quran is pure and correct.

1-3) Applying Quran by People

Accomplishing this task occurs with following Quran by both people and government:

1-3-1) Applying Quran by Government

Applying Quran by government is so important that all Imams used to shake hand with government if they promised to apply Quran in conjunction with obeying prophet's tradition. The Imams used to order the government authorities to obey and apply Quran's guidelines (Sharif Al-Razi, 2000, p. 69); and they also observed these orders themselves as well. *Rabiyeh Ben Abi Shadad* came to Imam Ali to show his respect, and then Imam Ali said: swear to obey Quran and the tradition of prophet. *Rabiyeh* said: I swear to tradition of *Abubakr* and Omar. Imam Ali said: Woe to you if *Abubakr* and Omar acted against Quran and prophet's tradition, they were never right (Tabari, 2009, vol. 5, p. 76), Imam Hassan also mentioned the same thing at the time of shaking hands (Tabari, 2009, vol. 5, p. 158).

1-3-2) Applying Quran by People

In Imam point of view, individuals and Islamic society must be appliers of Quran and mere obedient of it. The importance of this fact is such that Imams always prayed to God and asked him to help them to obey Quran and avoid the forbidden and observe the laws of Quran (Koleyni, 1987, vol.2, p.574). They asked God to give them the power to apply and obey Quran in all times.

1-4) Making Quran Activities to Be Attractive

This important goal is being considered in two aspects:

1-4-1) Using the Attractions of the Text and Appearance of Quran

Imam *Sadegh*, considering the recitation and memorization of Quran, prays to God as: “O, God, please make the recitation and memorization of Quran to be our favorite”. Recitations of Quran that have been cited by Imams had been the cause of interest of people to Quran. Imam *Sadegh* has described the recitation of Fourth Imam as: “*Ali Ibn Hussain* was the best recital of Quran and people passing by his house would stop and listen to his recitation; also *Abu Ja’far* was the best recital of his time.

1-4-2) Using the Attractions of Quran Contexts

All of Imams’ speeches concerning the unbeatable attributes of Quran such as medicine to all pains and spring of hearts which is mentioned a lot in Imams’ sayings show the attention of Imams to this matter. Those leaders manifested the valuable blessing of Quran to people so that they get attracted to learning it.

1-5) Society’s Prosperity through Quran

This goal, which is the ultimate goal of Imams, is pursued by through two other factors:

1-5-1) Earning a Better Position in This World by Implementing Quran

This had always been the goal of Imams to get the position of Islamic society near to the top ranks in different aspects by using and implementing Quran. *Amir Al-Mua’menin* mentions one characteristic of Quran: “Anyone who implements and uses Quran, he would speed up” (Sharif Al-Razi, 2000, p. 156). The civilization which is constructed based on Quran will not be destroyed. Therefore, The Imam says that: “Quran is like a house that its columns will never be destroyed” (Sharif Al-Razi, 2000, p. 133).

Also, according to prayer no. 42 in *Sahifeh Sajjadih* of Fourth Imam, with realization of Quran in life, excellence and dignity in any field is for those who use Quran, and lag and humility is for those who do not.

1-5-2) Earning a Better Position in the World Hereafter by Implementing Quran

To reach the ultimate goal requires the earning of pre mentioned objectives. Imam *Sadegh* says: “Indeed, Quran is both prohibitory and commanding. A commander who leads to heaven and a prohibitory that prevents from hell”. (Koleyni, 1987, vol.2, p. 601). Imam *Sajjad* in one of his prayers of reciting Quran, after requesting several things, says: “....so that Quran be our leader towards heaven” (Ali Ibn Al-Husain, no date, p. 42).

2) Politics

Politics are plans and tricks; and in strategy management is a set of rules and regulations which helps and guides managers to make decisions (amirhosein, 2011). In the subject being discussed, politics can be within the main goal of reaching Quran or part of each goal mentioned above. Politics can be divided into several sections:

2-1) Paying Attention to Avoiding the Distortion of Quran

One part of Imams' politics in line with protection and promotion of the Holy Quran is related to protection of Quran from any deletion, addition, distortion, and changes. However, some people accused Shia of distorting Quran, but Imams and elders in Shia believe that Quran is protected from distortion.

Imams believe that the entire Quran is from God and no vain can be in it. *Ali-ebn-Salem* says: I asked Imam *Sadegh*: O son of the prophet, what do you say about Quran? Imam replied: "Quran is God's words, God's speech, God's book, God's revelation, and is descended from God and is impermeable" (Dinvari, 1989, p. 224).

In addition, Imams believe that Quran is the criteria in measuring the truth and legitimacy of all aspects of life. Imam *Sadegh* said: "everything is referred to the Holy book and the tradition of prophet, and if it is not compatible with it, then it is considered as nonsense" (Koleyni, 1987, vol. 1, p. 69). Also from the Imams' speeches, it is understood that they believe the words and verses of Quran is original and have not been distorted. Imam *Bagher* mentions in his letter to *Saad-al-kheir* that: "... they kept the words of Quran untouched, but distorted the meanings of them...." (Koleyni, 1987, vol. 8, p. 53).

2-2) Paying Attention to Customs and Manners of Recitation of Quran

Imams have placed specific requirements when Quran is being recited in order to protect the God's revelation and to principally promote it:

2-2-1) Emphasis on Being Clean When Reciting

Amir Al Mua'menin says about this rule that: "when God's servant does not recite Quran until he has ablution" (Belazeri, 1996, vol.2, p. 627), also washing mouth is recommended by Imams when reciting (Ibn Babvieh, 2019, vol. 2, p. 558).

2-2-2) Emphasis on Respecting the Beginning of Recitation Customs

The first tip in this rule is to recite from the text. Imam *Sadegh* said: "Anyone who recites the book by looking at the verses, he would benefit from his eyes and also God will have mercy on his parents even they are unbelievers" (Koleyni, 1987, vol. 2, p. 613), also Imam said to *Eshagh ibn Ammar* that looking at verses is like praying".

Another rule is taking refuge to God in the beginning of recitation as it is mentioned in both Quran and in Imams' recommendations. *Somayeh* says: I asked Imam *Sadegh* about how to take refuge to God when reciting? And he replied: "you simply say: I take refuge to God from cursed Satan" (Ayyashi, 1960, vol. 2, p. 270).

2-2-3) Emphasis on Reading Quran in a Good Manner When Reciting

This rule is written both in Quran and in recommendations from Imams and they have defined its meaning as well. Imam *Sadegh* says that Imam Ali said: "When reading Quran, express it well and do not read it in hurry like poems and do not spread it like sand, but make

your hard heart to be in fear and do not try to finish the verses soon” (Koleyni, 1987, vol. 2, p. 614).

Also *Amir-al-Mua'menin* specifies the characteristics of the righteous as: “They are people who stand on their foot at nights and recite Quran in a good manner” (Sharif Al-Razi, 2000, p. 193).

The speed of reciting is another matter which has been mentioned in narratives. *Abu Basir* asked Imam *Sadegh*: I ransom for you, Can I recite the whole Quran in one night in month of Ramadan? Imam said: no. he asked again: in two nights? Imam said: no. he asked again: in three nights? Imam said: no. then Imam replied: “*Abu Muhammad*; Quran should not be read fast, but should be read slowly and in good manner” (Koleyni, 1987, vol. 2, p. 617).

In other narratives, Imams mention some other rules regarding recitation of Quran.

2-2-4) Emphasis on Having Pleasant Voice When Reciting

In this regards, Imam *Sadegh* quotes from prophet as: “Everything has an ornament and Quran’s ornament is a pleasant voice” (Koleyni, 1987, vol. 2, p. 615), and this matter was noted by Imams as well. *Ali Ibn Mohammad Noupheili* says: I talked about pleasant voice in presence of Imam *Kadhim*, and then Imam said: “Indeed, *Ali Ibn Hossein* was reciting Quran and the passing by people became senseless by his voice”.

2-2-5) Emphasis on Sorrow and Fear When Reciting

In this regards, Imam *Sadegh* says: “Indeed, Quran was descended with sorrow; therefore, recite it with sorrow” (Koleyni, 1987, vol. 2, p. 614).

Also Imam *Ali* explains the recitation of Quran by the pious as: “The pious stand up at nights and recite Quran in good manner, they somber themselves by reading Quran and get the medicine of their pain by it” (Sharif Al-Razi, 2000, p. 193), this description which specifies the ideal way of reciting Quran shows that the recitation should be such that creates sorrow in person reading it.

2-2-6) Emphasis on Meditation and Thinking When Reciting Quran

This rule, which is first mentioned in Quran, has been emphasized by Imams. Imam *Sadegh*, when reciting Quran, used to ask God: “O God do not let my recitation to be without any meditation, but make me to think about it when I am reading it.” (Mofid, 1992, p. 141); this subject is so important that causes the people to realize the true position of Imams. Imam *Sadegh* told *Mofazal*: “If our Shia followers thought about Quran, then they would never doubt about our virtue” (Haeri Yazdi, 2001, vol. 2, p. 225).

2-2-7 Emphasis on Paying Attention to the Quantity of Reciting Quran

In regards to the amount of recitation, as it is specified in Quran to read a lot, Imams have also recommended to read Quran a lot. *Amir Al Mua'menin* advised his followers the night before the battle with people of *Shaam* that: “.... Read Quran a lot....” (Rajabi, 2004, p. 179).

In regards to the minimum amount of reading Quran, Imam Sadegh said: "Quran is God's treaty with people. Thus, it is preferred for a Muslim to think about this treaty and read at least fifty verses every day" (Koleyni, 1987, vol. 2, p. 609).

On the other hand, the maximum amount of reading is also mentioned. *Mohammad Ibn Abdollah* says: I asked Imam *Sadegh*: Can I read the whole book of Quran in one night? Imam replied: I would not like you to read it in less than a month time (Koleyni, 1987, vol. 2, p. 617).

Of course, we know that in both manners of Imams and scholars, more than this amount has been recited; this amount and advises are personal and it differs according to the person recommending it.

2-2-8 Emphasis on Paying Attention to the Requirements of People Who Recite Quran

Imam *Bagher* in advising people who recite Quran quotes from prophet who said: "O people who recite Quran, Obey God in what has been said in his book, because I am responsible and so are you. I am responsible for introducing my prophecy and you are responsible for what is written in Quran and the tradition" (Koleyni, 1987, vol. 2, p. 606).

In respect to specific responsibility, Imams have described the criteria. Imam *Sadegh* said: "... the person who recites Quran needs to have three things: humble heart, free body, and empty position...." (Ja'far Ibn Muhammad, 1979, p. 28).

In other narratives, the people who recite Quran are described as well. Sixth Imam said: they are divided into three groups: some recite Quran in order to earn money from governors and be superior over the common people and he is of dwellers of hell. Second, some recite Quran and protect the words of it but spoils the limits of it, and he is also the dweller of hell. Third are the ones who recite Quran but hide it. They obey the orders and believe in verses, implement the commands, they respect the halal and forbidden foods. God will save this kind of people from temptation and heaven is for him and can plead for anyone (Belazeri, 1996, vol. 1, p. 143).

2-3) Recognizing the Customs of Interpretation of Quran

Imams, as interpreters of God revelation, have described the requirements of interpreters:

2-3-1) Necessity of Attention and Reliance on Imams' knowledge in Interpretation of Quran

Imam Hossein said in his letter to people of Basreh: "Then, do not argue about Quran without knowledge and do not speak about it. Indeed, I heard from my ancestor, Prophet Mohammad, who said: Anyone who talks about Quran without any knowledge, he would certainly be a dweller of hell" (Dinvari, 1989, pg. 90).

The bearings of interpretation of Quran are the descendants of prophet and their recommendations which are the real knowledgeable people. Imam Bagher said: "no one other than descendants of prophet can claim that he knows all apparent and inside parts of Quran" (Koleyni, 1987, vol.1, p. 228).

Imam Reza said about one of the aspects of Imams that: “.... And only they are the ones who can quote from prophet and understand Quran...” (Barghi, 1950, vol.1, p. 55); *Amir Al Mua'menin* also said: “this is the God’s book which is silent and I am the speaker of God’s book” (Hor Amoei, 1995, vol. 27, p. 34).

2-3-2 Necessity of Attention to Arabic Grammar Interpretation of Quran

An important base in understanding Quran thoroughly is to know the Arabic grammar well. Imam *Sadegh* said: “Learn Arabic language which is the language in which God has spoken to his people” (Belazeri, 1996, vol. 1, p. 258).

2-3-3 Necessity of Attention to the Style of Verses in Quran

“Style is the main structure of a set of words, sentences, or verses and affects the meaning of them” (Saqafi, 1989, p. 92). It can be observed through the speeches of Imams that they have also paid attention to the style in their interpretations.

Ebad Basri confronted Imam *Sajjad* when traveling to Mecca. He asked Imam objectively: O, *Ali Ibn Hussain*, have you left the war and come to perform Haj which is a lot easier? And then he recited the verse number 112 of *Towbeh*. Imam replied: Complete the entire verse; that is to continue to read it. Then Ebad continues with verse number 113. At that time, Imam told him: “when I found people who have the characteristics mentioned in this verse, then the war would be much better than going to Haj” (Koleyni, 1987, vol. 5, p. 22).

2-3-4 Necessity of Attention to the Cause of Revelation of Verses in Quran

Imams have considered this rule in their interpretation of Quran. Even though noticing the cause of revelation is not related to its universality, it makes the reader to understand Quran better and more accurate.

Imam *Bagher* in expressing the cause of revelation of verse no. 200 of *Baghareh* says: “At the time of ignorance in Arab Peninsula, after the ceremonies of Haj, people would gather there and started reminding the honors of their ancestors and mention their mercy. God replies in this verse to honor him instead of reminding the achievements of the ancestors.” (Tabarsi, 1983, vol. 2, p. 529).

2-3-5 Necessity of Attention to the Prediction of Verses in Quran

The holy book of Quran refers to prediction and specifies that its knowledge is with God and the elected people in science. Prediction of verses of Quran is different than their interpretations. *Hakam Ibn Einieh* says: I asked Imam *Bagher* about verse no. 42 of *Ale A'mran* which mentions purity two times while only one act has been occurred. Imam answered: O *Hakam*, this verse has an interpretation and a prediction. I said: Please elaborate on that. Imam replied: “God first brought him from prophet’s descendants” (Ayyashi, 1960, vol. 1, p. 173).

2-4) Recognizing the Damages When Interacting With Quran

In defining the damages when interacting with Quran, we can point out several sections:

2-4-1) Avoiding Cutting off with Quran

Imams believe that separation from Quran makes it to be forgotten in the Islamic society. *Amir Al Mua'menin* in the event of Hakamiat said: "... and forgetting Quran is the same as separation from it..." (Sharif Al-Razi, 2000, p. 127).

It is interesting that Imams believe one of the reasons of declining the power of Muslim governors is separation from Quran and forgetting it. Imam Sadeh said: "the power will never be returned to Al-e-Abobakr, Omar, Bani-Omayeh, and children of Talhe and Zobeir, because they forgot the holy book of Quran, cancelled the tradition, and forgot the rulings" (Koleyni, 1987, vol. 2, p. 600).

In addition, Imams have also pointed out the otherworldly damages of this action. Imam Sadeh said: "Three things will complain to God in his presence: damaged Mosque which no one prays in it; a scientist who is among ignorant people; and abandoned Quran with dust on it and is not being read" (Koleyni, 1987, vol. 2, p. 613). It is obvious that leaving recitation of Quran is one of the roots of this problem. Imam Reza said: "people are ordered to read Quran so that it would not be forgotten and disrespected" (Ibn Babvieh, 1983, vol.1, p. 310).

2-4-2) Avoiding to Abandon Thinking about Quran

The importance of this plague is well sensed when every benefits reached from Quran is destroyed by it. Imam Bagher quotes from *Amir Al Mua'menin* that said: "... be aware that there is no benefit in reciting Quran which no thinking is done on it..." (Majlesi, 1982, vol. 2, p. 48).

2-4-3) Avoiding to Incorrectly Understand Quran

This plague is caused sometimes because of lack of knowledge about the source of Quran. After the event of Hakamiat, Kherit-ebn-Rashed, together with thirty others, came to *Amir Al Mua'menin* and said: O Ali, from now, I will never obey you and will never pray behind you and I will leave you tomorrow, because you agreed to Hakamiat and were not strong enough about the rightfulness....! Ali replied: "Come closer and let me teach you more about Quran and speak to you about tradition and explain to you things about rightfulness which I know better than you, so that you will know what you do not know now" (Tabari, 2009, vol. 5, p. 113).

Also this plague sometimes occurs because of lack of attention on to the principals of understanding and interpretations of Quran. *Amir Al Mua'menin* advised *Ibn Abbas* and told him: "Do not argue with *Khavarej* by using Quran, because Quran can be understood in different ways; you say something of Quran and they say a different thing; but you can argue with them by using the tradition of prophet and they can never resist it" (Sharif Al-Razi, 2000, p. 77).

2-4-4) Avoiding Incorrectly Implementation of Quran's Rulings

Imam *Sadegh* refers to these plagues in his prayers and says: "O God I seek refuge to you from keeping Quran and not knowing how to implement its orders, and from distortion in its orders and failure to obey" (Koleyni, 1987, vol. 2, p. 574).

Conclusion

It can be seen from what it was said before that Imams had specific goals in their mind about the strategy of protection and promotion of Quran; and these goals are purposefully set and without realization of either one of first or last ones, the ultimate goals would not be achieved.

This procedure starts from realization and understanding of status and benefits of Quran, and will be followed by learning and applying it and it will ultimately lead to the prosperity in life and afterlife. Of course, in regards to the first three goals, some target with title that makes Quranic activities to be attractive is pursued in order to reinforce the previous goals.

In addition, Imams have considered some politics in regards to those goals. These politics can ensure the achievement of pre mentioned goals by recognizing the dos and don'ts in the path. Imams have induced complete trust and assurance among Muslims by recognizing the lack of any changes in Quran verses. Also, Imams have chosen smooth movement without any plagues towards the above mentioned goals by recognizing recitation customs, interpretations, and damages in interactions with Quran.

In this way by looking at those goals and taking suitable and defined policies in today's societies, Quran has circulated in Islamic society in the best manner and its text and its deep meanings has been protected from various damages. Therefore, goals and politics of Imams were not only the cause of protection and promotion of Quran in Imams' presence time, but also all Islamic societies, with noticing those politics can implement the desired viewpoints of Imams in their own societies.

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