

Re-reading Hafiz Rajab Bursi's Perspective on the Imam's Knowledge Through a Study of "Mashareq Anwar Al-Yaqin"

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إعادة قراءة رأي (حافظ رجب برسي) في نطاق علم الإمام بالقاء نظرة على
(مشارك أنوار اليقين)

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طالب دكتوراه في التفسير التطبيقي ، جامعة يزد ، إيران
زكية زارع (الكاتبة المسئولة)

طالبة دكتوراه في التفسير التطبيقي ، جامعة يزد ، إيران
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طالب دكتوراه في القرآن والحديث ، جامعة الدراسات الإسلامية ، قم ، إيران
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Abstract:-

An important issue raised during the Holy Prophet's (pbuh) mission was the issue of Imamate. After prophecy was substituted by Imamate over time, some characteristics were presented for an Imam in Islamic societies. Shiites have introduced special characteristics for an Islamic Imam based on verses and hadiths, one of which is "the Imam's scope of knowledge". Shiite scholars have published various works in this field, such as "Mashreq Anwar al-Yaqin fi Haqiqat Asrar Amir al-Mominin" written by Sheikh Hafiz Rajab Bursi. The present article aims to re-read the issues related to Imam Ali's knowledge using a descriptive-analytical approach, and to explore the extent of exaggeration in Hafiz Bursi's language in his book Mashreq al-Anwar. After studying the lexical and idiomatic concept and definition of exaggeration provided by earlier and recent scholars, the results showed that, contrary to common beliefs, Mashreq al-Anwar does not consist of any sort of exaggeration.

Key words: Hafiz Rajab Bursi, Mashreq Anwar Al-Yaqeen, Imam's knowledge, Exaggeration.

المخلص:-

من القضايا المهمة التي نقلها الرسول الكريم ﷺ أثناء بعثته قضية الإمامة. بعد نقل خط النبوة إلى الإمامة بمرور الوقت، تم إدخال خصائص الإمام في المجتمعات الإسلامية. وللشيعة، بصفتهم طائفة متمسك بهذا المبدأ الأساسي، المبني على الآيات والأحاديث، خصائص خاصة للإمام، من بينها "نطاق علم الإمام". كتب علماء وعلماء الشيعة في هذا المجال مؤلفات، من بينها "المشرق أنور اليقين في حقيقة أسرار أمير المؤمنين" للشيخ حافظ رجب بورسي. يهدف هذا المقال إلى إعادة قراءة موضوع معرفة الإمام بطريقة وصفية تحليلية بعد مراجعة موجزة لسيرة بورسي وأعماله، واستكشاف مدى المبالغة حول حافظ بورسي وكتابه المشرق الأنوار. بعد دراسات ودراسات حول المفهوم المعجمي والاصطلاحي للمبالغة بين الأقدم واللاحق، كانت النتيجة أنه في كتاب المشرق الأنوار، خلافاً للاعتقاد السائد، لم تحدث مبالغة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: حافظ رجب برسي، المشرق أنور اليقين، علم الإمام، مبالغة وجرم.

1. Statement of the Problem

Hafiz Rajab Bursi is a Shiite scholar of the Amir al-Mominin (as) religion who, in his theological theories, has revealed secrets about Imam Ali, especially in his most famous work "Mashreq Anwar al-Yaqin fi Haghayegh Asrar Amir Al-Mominin". His valuable mystical works shows that Razi al-Din Hafiz Rajab ibn Muhammad ibn Rajab Bursi has a distinguished personality and a high position in hadith, commentary, mysticism, literature and foreign sciences.

Bursi's view on the knowledge of the Imams (as) is such that some contemporary and later scholars do not consider him an exaggerator and believe that his views are acquitted of exaggeration.

The present study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What fields are Hafiz Bursi's thoughts and works related to?
2. What is Bursi's position on the knowledge of the Imams (as)?
3. What is the exact definition of "exaggeration" and has Bursi exaggerated his beliefs?

This library research uses a descriptive-analytical approach to answer the research questions. There are no independent books or sources about the subject in question, only some articles have been published, including:

1. Bidabadi, Massoud, "Introduction to Mashreq Anwar Al-Yaqin", Hadith Sciences, Vol. 22, 2001.
2. Panahlou, Imran, "Imamate Beliefs in the Field of Imamate from Hafiz Rajab Bursi's Perspective", Doctrinal-Theological Research, Year 9, Vol. 34, 2019.
3. Goli Zavareh Ghomshei, Gholamreza, "Mashreq Anwar Al-Yaqin Fi Haqiqiq Asrar Amir Al-Mominin and its author", Book of the Month of Religion, pp. 41- 42, 2001.

After a brief review of Bursi's biography and his most prominent works, his views on the knowledge of the Imams (as) and the issue of exaggeration in his beliefs and writings will be explored.

2. A review of Bursi's biography and works

Razi al-Din Hafez Rajab ibn Muhammad ibn Rajab Bursi is a Shiite mystic and scholar, known as Bursi. Sheikh Hor Ameli referred to him as intelligent, a great narrator, poet, and writer (Hor Ameli, 1983, vol 2, p. 117-118; Effendi, 1401 AH, vol 2, p. 304; see Amini, 2008, vol 7, pp. 33-34).

Bursi introduces himself in the introduction of Mashreq Anwar Al-Yaqin as follows:

«رجب بن محمد بن رجب المحدث الحافظ البرسي مولداً، الطي محتداً»

He was a native from Bursa and lived in Hilla. The books Majam Al-Baladan and Taj Al-Aroos, mention that Bursa is a region in Babylon in Iraq or between Kufa and Baghdad (Hamavi, 2018, vol 1, p. 565).

The city of Hillah was the Imami Shiism and cultural capital in the Middle Ages, especially from the sixth to the ninth century AH. Bursi is one of the educated people of this school. The titles "Hafiz" and "Muhaddith" point to his mastery in hadith and memorizing narrations. His knowledge of Quranic verses and hadiths confirms his narrations (Bursi, Bitā, pp. 377-379). Documents show that he was a scholar in the eighth and ninth centuries AH (743-813 AH) and lived in the Timurid era (Shibi, 1969, p. 239).

The sultans of this dynasty did not show the same tendency towards Shiism and expressed different views and methods. In the Timurid era, people greatly leaned towards Shiism and some Sunni scholars felt threatened and had no choice but to excommunicate the narrators and mystics and call them corruptors and exaggerators. This was to prevent the growth of Shiism, but these false accusations were considered a real issue by some translators; therefore, they have offered various and sometimes contradictory opinions in describing these scholars. Bursi was forced to emigrate to Hillah to complete his works and publish his thoughts in a Shiite city. After some time, he emigrated from this city and spent the rest of his life in the central desert in Iran. These struggles led this famous mystic's life to remain in an aura of ambiguity. Only little information is available about his biography and life (Goli Zavareh, 2001, 41 & 42, p. 27).

Manifestations of Bursi's beliefs and interests about the Infallibles (as), especially his love for Imam Ali (AS) and his

generation can be seen in his works: Mashreq Anwar Al-Yaqin Fi Haqiqiq Asrar Amir Al-Mominin is his most famous, most important and most detailed work; "Mashareq Al-Aman va Labab Haghayegh Al-Iman" is a summary of the previous book; "Lavami Anvar Al-Tamjid va Javame Asrar Al-Tohid" is a preface of the first book. "Risalah fi Al-Salavat Ali Al-Nabi ba Aleh Al-Masoumin"; "Risalah fi Ziarah Amir Al-Momenin"; "Risalah Al-lam'a Min Asrar Al-Asma val_Sifat val-Horuf val-Ayat"; "Al-dor Al-Samin fi Khamsimata Ayat Nazilat fi Molonan Amir Al-Momenin"; "Asrar Al-Nabi va Fatima va Al-Aima (as)"; "Tafsir Surah Al-Ikhlash"; "Kitab fi Movalid Al-Nabi va Ali va Fatima va Fazailahom"; and "Kitab fi Fazail Amir Al-Momenin" (see: Bidabadi, 2001, 22, pp. 145-139).

Bursi's most important and famous work is Mashreq Anwar Al-Yaqin Fi Haqeeqiq Asrar Amir al-Mominin (AS) which takes a novel and innovative approach and uses the principles of theoretical mysticism to describe and interpret the virtues of Ahl al-Bayt (as), especially Amir al-Mominin (as). Bursi has provided certain narrations related to their virtues, which were less considered before him and have now turned into an important source for scholars.

Henry Corbin states: "Rajab Bursi's works are very important in Shiite philosophy. Among his works, Mashreq al-Anwar includes the most important mystical sermons attributed to the first Imam and it can be considered an excellent introduction to Shiism. This book provides a detailed description of Muhammadan truth, which includes all the words of the Quran (Corbin, Bitā, p. 470).

Bursi published Mashreq Anwar al-Yaqin in 773AH and became immediately recognized among some Imami circles. Shiite elders such as Kafami, Feyz Kashani, Allameh Majlisi, Allameh Amini, etc. have used its contents (see: Kafami, 1405AH, p. 316; Feyz Kashani, 1415AH, p. 197; Majlisi 2010, 25, pp. 169, 26, p. 155, 18, p. 202; Amini, 2008, p. 67). Bursi talks of Imam Ali's knowledge in Mashreq al-Anwar, which will be examined as an example. Then, the ratio of exaggeration will be generally examined.

3. Imam's knowledge

One of the most important duties of an Imam is to preserve the divine religion and reform people's affairs. This is certainly not possible without having knowledge about religion. Knowledge about

the rules of religion (which is necessary for Islamic leaders), and implementing the rules of Sharia and divine education depends on understanding them, which is undeniable about the position of Imamate. Also, the correct application and execution of the rulings regarding individuals and society depends on the Imam's nobility and awareness of individual and collective needs (Bursi, Mashreq al-Anwar, pp. 212 & 217). Imam Baqir (as) says: "God's position is higher than to make obedience obligatory on a servant who has kept the knowledge of the heavens and the earth a secret" (Klini, 1407AH, 1, p. 262). Shiite theologians consider an Imam's attributes at its highest level (Bursi, Bitā, 179-180).

According to Bursi, since an Imam is the leader of an Islamic community in religious and worldly affairs, he should be knowledgeable of all issues related to leadership. An Imam requires to have knowledge beyond other human beings in order to guide people. Shiites believe that an Imam must have complete knowledge of the Shari'a because he is appointed by God. God Almighty gives this knowledge to the Imam (Ibid, p. 221).

According to some narrations, the Imam must have other knowledge that can never be discovered with tools such as sense and intellect in addition to sensory and intellectual awareness. An Imam is positioned in the level of enlightenment and guardianship, which is the truth of his Imamate. He has knowledge over all worlds through divine providence and nothing is hidden from his scientific surroundings (Klini, 1407AH, 1, p. 429; Ghomi, 1988, 2, p. 409; Yazdi, 2010, p. 115). Imam Ali (as), who is the manifestation of God Almighty's knowledge, says: "I am the knowledge of God" (Saduq, Bitā, p. 164). In other words, all worldly events are exposed to the Imam and there is no such thing as the past, present and future for him. It has been said that: "The Imam knows whenever he desires to know. For he is the manifestation of infinite divine knowledge; the scope of an Imam's knowledge includes all sciences in the system of existence, just as nothing is hidden from God's infinite knowledge, »
واعلموا أن الله بكل شيء عليم» (al-Baqarah / 231). However, it should be noted that this divine knowledge is independent, but the Imam's knowledge is subordinate and transverse and related to the eternal divine source. If God does not teach and impart, the Imam's knowledge will be no different than others. Some narrations state: "If

the Imam wants to know something, God will teach it to him” (Klini, 1407AH, 1, p. 258).

Bursi confirms this view in his book and states: “How is the knowledge of the unseen and miracles hidden from him while God’s caliphs are above all creatures and his trustees are above the truths?” (Yazdi, 2010, p. 175). Bursi quotes the verses of Surah al-Qadr in his book and proves the Imam’s infinite knowledge and awareness on creatures and divine destinies” (see: Ibid: pp. 335-321). He writes: “He is the Lord of all creatures, their master and their purpose, the Imam is God’s servant, guardian and caliph, because God says: «وأحصى كل شيء عددا» (al-Jinn /28). That is, the Imam has knowledge of what has been until today and what will be in the future, knowledge of every human being by name and lineage, knowledge of who dies with natural death and who is killed, and knowledge of people’s position in heaven or in hell. An Imam must know all and nothing must be hidden from him, whether hidden or overt, because if he is ignorant of something, he will no longer be a knower, and this is contrary to an Imam’s claim. Sometimes the Prophet waits for the unseen but an Imam always looks at the unseen. This puts the Imam in a higher position than all the prophets except the Holy Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) because an Imam’s grace and knowledge comes from Mohammad (pbuh)” (Bursi, Bitā, p. 141). Some believe that this scope of knowledge according to Hafiz Bursi is exaggerated. This issue will be examined in the following section.

4. Investigating the rate of exaggeration in Mashreq al-Anwar al-Yaghin

4-1. The concept of exaggeration

Exaggeration literally means transgression and “moving beyond size and moderation” (Farahidi, 1404AH, 4, p. 446; Zubaidi, Bitā, 10, p. 269; Ragheb, Bitā, p. 377). For example, when the temperature of water rises, the terms ‘ghal’ and ‘ghalyan’ are used. ‘Ghalv’ or exaggeration is used in the verses of the Holy Quran and the prophetic and Alawite narrations in exactly the same literal sense. Exaggeration also usually refers to extremist beliefs about certain people and the appointment of unrealistic or excessive incidents. The appointment of a false high spiritual and moral degree to a person is

also considered an exaggeration in common parlance. For example, when someone is given divine attributes or even partnership with God, or when one is called a god (see: Gerami, 2012, p. 31).

The idiomatic meaning of this word has appeared in sciences such as theology, rijal, and sectology. Theologians (Mofid, 1414AH, p.131), rijalians (Ibn al-Ghazairi, 1422AH, pp. 139, 177, 12, 122), historians and scholars (Ash'ari, 1993, p. 19), have taken different positions in defining and attributing this word. In theology, Ghalat and Ghaliah, are universal names for all sects that have exaggerated the rights of the Prophet and the Imams (as), especially Ali Ibn Abi Talib (as) and have given them the position of divinity (see: Walawi, 1988, p. 67; Sobhani, 1413AH, p. 417).

With a clear and precise definition of the meaning of exaggeration by the Imams (as), Hafiz Rajab, and past and recent scholars, it can be seen that the perception of exaggeration and non-exaggeration of one's thoughts may depend on one's perception of the concept of exaggeration. Here, we review Bursi's view towards exaggeration.

4-2. Bursi's view on exaggeration

Bursi states: "Avoid exaggerators concerning the rights of the Imams, and say as much as you can in praising them, because the Imams have said: «انزلونا عن الربوبية و ارفعوا عنا حظوظ البشرية» (Bursi, 1430AH, p. 40). He also states: "If the greatness of the heavens and earth is measured by their virtue, it is still small". He condemns any exaggeration and extremist views regarding the Imams and points out: «فالغالي و القالي هلكا في بحر الافراط و التفريط». In the beginning of Mashreq al-Anwar, after praising God, Bursi states: "I am called an extremist because they do not understand my thoughts, they do not have dominance over all scientific fields and they do not understand my reasons, let alone the content and themes beyond reason. They envy me out of hatred and call me a sinner because I have revealed secrets about the Ahl al-Bayt, especially Imam Ali (as)" (Ibid, p. 15).

4-3. The views of earlier scholars

Many early scholars believe that Bursi adored the Imams (as). They have given many narrations related to his spiritual authorities and composed many poems in this regard. For this reason, some

have rebuked him and called him an exaggerator. Sheikh Hor Ameli, quotes some of Sheikh Rajab's writings and refers to him as intelligent, a great narrator, poet, and writer, and values his works: "His book Mashreq contains extremist materials that can be considered exaggerated" (Hor, Ameli 1983, 2, p. ١١٧).

Allameh Majlisi took use of the hadiths in Bursi works and pointed to the dimensions of his mastery and degrees of knowledge as a muhaddith and skilled jurist in most sciences. Some refer to his writings as good and majestic, tender and eloquent. Majlisi takes a turn in opinion after these praises:

«ولا اعتمد على ما يتفرد بنقله لاشتمال كتابية على ما يوهم الخبط و الخلط والارتفاع و انما اخرجنا منهما ما يوافق الأخبار المأخوذة من الأصول المعتمدة»

(Majlisi, 2010, 1, pp. 117-118).

The Safavid scholar Mirza Abdullah Effendi Esfahani writes:

"Razi al-Din Rajab Bursi was a sheikh of Hafiz, a genius, and a muhaddith jurist who lived in the city of Hillah. He was a scholar who talked of secrecy and numbers, and his works are less recognized by others". He adds: "by examining his works we come to the conclusion that what Allameh Majlisi and Sheikh Hor Ameli have said about Hafiz Bursi's exaggeration is not at the level of divinity and the like" (Effendi, 1401AH, vol, 2, p. 349).

Seyyed Mohsen Amin believes that Hafiz Bursi has a confusing and exaggerating nature in his language: "Bursi's writings are not only useless but also harmful, even if they can be justified in some way". He then points to some examples where Bursi has gone to extremes (Amin, 1403AH, vol 6, pp. 468-465).

Allameh Amini is surprised by Seyyed Amin's remarks and says: "We do not know of the examples of introducing Bursi provided by Seyyed Amin. I wish he gave examples of Bursi's exaggerations to support his claim. In addition, we did not find any evidence to support Seyyed Amin in our reviews. Seyyed Mohsen Amin has reprimanded Bursi in creating a text of pilgrimage to the Imams, even though, according to the owner of Riyadh al-Ulama, is it ultimately eloquent?" In response, Allameh Amini says: "If it is thought that the pilgrimage text was written by Bursi, then it is exaggerated; however, Bursi does not make such a claim. Great Shiite and Sunni scholars have

compiled such pilgrimages, and so far, no one has taunted or criticized them” (Amini, 2008, vol13, pp. 89-90).

4-4. The views of later scholars

Hafiz Rajab Bursi says:

«كلما ذكر في الذكر الحكيم و الكلام القديم، من آية يذكر فيها العين و الوجه، واليد والجنب، فالمراد منها الوليّ لانه جنب الله و وجهه الله و حق الله و علم الله، و عين الله ويد الله»

(Bursi, Bitā, p. 117). When a verse in the Quran talks of the eyes, face, hands and body, it refers to the leaders chosen by God.

Allama Hassanzadeh Amoli states: “If we become familiar with the language of hadiths, we will see that many books such as Mashreq Anwar Al-Yaqin by Hafiz Rajab Bursi and the interpretations by Kufi are correct and there are no exaggerations” (Hassanzadeh Amoli, 1999, p. 98). He also states: “In Kafi principles, there are eleven hadiths about the perfect man, which must be carefully examined. In the eighth hadith, Amir al-Mominin (AS) says:

«أنا عين الله و أنا يد الله، و أنا جنب الله، و أنا باب الله»

(Book of monotheism). This shows the authenticity of all narrations in the book Mashreq al-Anwar, as well as the authenticity of many difficult sermons and hadiths of divine knowledge” (Ibid., p. 98).

Allameh Amini has stated: “Bursi is clearly knowledgeable in narration and hadith and some refer to him as an exaggerator; it should be mentioned that all that he has said about Imamate in rank and degree is not exaggerated and is lower than the degree of prophethood. Maulana Amir al-Mominin (as) says:

«إياكم و الغلو فينا! قولوا: إنا عبيد مربيون، و قولوا في فضلنا ما شئتم»

“We are servants of God, say as you want of our grace”. Imam Sadeq (as) says:

«اجعل لنا رباً نوبُ إليه، و قولوا فينا ما شئتم»

“Introduce and give us a God that all events is turned to him, and say what you want about us.”

Many scholars with a long history of knowing divine secrets, have proved all mentioned issues. Imams of guidance (as), have proven all, while non-scholarly scholars do not tolerate it.

There were people among Qom scholars who exaggerated these secrets. Many were influenced including Hafiz Rajab Bursi. It has been frequently narrated from the Ahl al-Bayt (as) that:

«إن أمرنا- أو حديثا صعبا مستصعبا، لا يتحمله إلا نبي مرسل أو ملك مقرب، أو مؤمن امتحن الله قلبه بالإيمان»

“The hadiths and narrations are difficult and complicated, and they can only be endured by the Prophet, or an arch angel, or a believer whose heart is tested by God” (Amini, 2008, 7, pp. 36-37).

It can be said that the concept of exaggeration differs between former and latter scholars. Some earlier scholars considered the Imams (as) to have a special status of exaltation and glory, and a certain degree of perfection and infallibility, and whoever exceeded these limits was accused of exaggeration. For example, the divine knowledge of the Imams (as) and the Prophet (pbuh) was considered to be exaggerated (see: Saduq, Bitā, vol, 1, p. 235.)

More recent scholars believe that the divinity and prophethood of the Imams (as) are exaggerated. Therefore, it can be concluded that the difference between early and late scholars on this issue depends on their perception of the concept of exaggeration.

Consequently, if exaggeration means “belief in the divinity of the Imams (as), obscenity of ablutions and abrogation of duty”, Rajab Bursi does not exaggerate. If exaggeration means “return, and reincarnation”, then Bursi certainly does not exaggerate. If it means “belief in returning to God”, all Shiite scholars are exaggerators because it is their definite belief, and if exaggeration refers to the effects of love and enmity to Imam Ali (as), or in the interpretation of the verse «إن الله لا يغفر أن يشرك به و يغفر ما دون ذلك لمن يشاء» (Al-Nisa’/ 48) (AS), polytheism to Ali is polytheism to God, belief in Ali is belief in God- that when he dies with all worldly sins, he will be forgiven (Bursi, 1424AH, p. 71), then opposing scholars are right, because these cases are almost unique, but still, his language is not atheistic or exaggerated (see: Seyyedi, 2017, 98, p. 77).

5. Conclusion

Hafiz Rajab Bursi is a Shiite scholar who, in his theological theories, has revealed secrets about Imam Ali (as), especially in his most famous work “Mashreq Anwar al-Yaqin fi Haghayegh Asrar

Amir al-Mominin". Bursi believes that the Imam's existence is merged with the role of divine knowledge. Famous Imami theologians, in addition to all unseen rules, including all the rules of religion, personal external issues, past and future events, humans, languages, etc., consider the Imam's secret knowledge as a type of knowledge that is always with him; That is, whenever the Imam desires awareness of an unseen event, he becomes aware. Narrators believe that the verse;

«إن الله لا يغفر أن يشرك به و يغفر ما دون ذلك لمن يشاء»

(al-Ra'd/ 43) refers to Imam Ali (as): "one who is blessed with divine knowledge, must acquire the attributes of God. Even though these attributes are only for the one and only God, this person has been given the knowledge by God. This person, like God, must be aware of the smallest actions, behaviors, speeches and even infidels' thoughts; That is, he must have divine knowledge. The difference is that God's knowledge is inherent, but this person learns through God's command, and the Prophet (pbuh) is obliged to inform disbelievers about this matter. Therefore, what God says about the Imam's knowledge in the Quran is higher than what Bursi has mentioned, and as a result, there is no type of exaggeration in his writings.

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