



Guidance, Consultation, and other Effective Factors in Human Education and Prosperity: Relying on Nahj-al-Balagheh

Sayyed Hossain Vaezi¹, Ali Akbar Yazdani² and Zohreh Farrokhtabar³

¹Department of Theology, Islamic Azad University, (Khorasgan/Isfahan) Branch, Isfahan, Iran.

²History and Philosophy of Education, Islamic Azad University, (Khorasgan/Isfahan) Branch, Isfahan, Iran.

³Ministry of Education, District 4 of Isfahan, Iran.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 16 January 2014;

Received in revised form:

28 January 2014;

Accepted: 24 February 2014;

Keywords

Nahj-al-Balagheh,
Imam Ali (A.S.),
Religion,
Guidance,
Consulting,
Human education,
Human prosperity.

ABSTRACT

Nahj-al-Balagheh means a rhetorical way. It is a noteworthy series of Imam Ali's words and sayings which guide human beings in different occasions and on various topics. Its words are considered the strongest words in guiding human beings after words of Quran and the Prophet Muhammad. Nahj-al-Balagheh is considered as the best path toward prosperity and human development. One of the topics which Imam Ali (A.S.) mentioned in different parts of Nahj-al-Balagheh is the topic of guidance and consulting. Guidance and consulting are regarded as the key issues in the development of behavior and personality. Based on this, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the effective factors in guidance and consulting. This was a descriptive paper in which the aim was to analyze either content or meanings. To reach such analyses, journals, websites, and analyses of different books were used. This paper includes two parts. In the first part, the effective factors on guidance and consulting are investigated as well as the role of a consultant, his characteristics, methods of consultation, and topics of consultation are sought from Imam Ali's point of view and today's science. In the second part, a short contrastive analysis between Imam Ali's words/sayings and today's science is conducted. The implication of the study is accepting the fact that science alone is not enough to educate human beings and that it is necessary to implement religion and the art of rhetoric to be able to guide humans towards education and prosperity.

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Introduction

Throughout the history of human civilization, counseling and guidance were defined as giving advice by parents, religious leaders, teachers, and so on; in primitive societies fathers were responsible for guiding their children and tribe heads were responsible for guiding the people of their tribes. In 1908 the *professional guidance* was started by Frank Parsons in scientific method in the U.S. (Hosseini Birjandi, 2006).

In 1913, the community of professional guidance, which was very effective in school counseling, was started in the U.S, while during Middle Ages it was in the realm of religion. In 1970, the distinction of situational subjects was transmitted from the inside to the outside of counseling. Management theories and ideas were presented and behavior reciprocal analysis and cognitive methods of changing behavior became more important to psychologists and they became more interested in social and cultural factors rather than personal ones. In the same year, counseling became a kind of psychological process and a trust-based relation between the counselor and the client got more emphasized (Ahmadi, 2003). Due to the importance of counseling and guidance in Islam, a number of Imam Ali's sayings about these subjects will be presented in this paper.

The Definition of Guiding and Counseling

Counseling as a word means cooperation and requesting others' ideas in doing tasks (Shafee' Abadi, 2010). In psychology, it means a group of activities that help people to overcome their problems. In other words, it is a kind of education which teaches people how to know themselves better and understand their relations with others more properly. Mc

Daniel says: "Counseling is a series of direct contact with the client to help him to organize his relations with himself and his environment." (Hosseini Birjandi, 2006). As a whole, it is discussing and analyzing the problems which a client is facing and is willing to mention. It is a mutual relation between the counselor and the client to understand each other and to create spiritual and mental facility for the client.

Guiding is a general subject which means showing the way and leading, and basically it is a process that studies a person thoroughly by different techniques and tools in order to help him to distinguish his abilities and disabilities and according to this distinction take suitable decisions to satisfy his personal and social requirements and reach self-control. According to this definition, guiding has a preventive role (Jaberi, 2003). Also, a counselor helps others, for example teachers or school principals to improve professionally.

On the whole, counseling is a process of helping people to distinguish their possibilities and their own suitable direction and to get the most possible adaptation to recognize their talents and limits and choose their life styles.

Important Factors in Guiding and Counseling The Characteristics of a Counselor

In 1960s, counseling became an expertise. In this decade, it emphasized on experiential research. It became a part of the function of psychology in education and used psychological findings in solving psychological problems (Ahmadi, 2008). Since the counselor is the most important person in the process of counseling and comes between the client and his problem, trying to solve it, a part of Imam Ali's sayings in Nahj-al-

Balagheh is dedicated to counselors. He believes: "The person who confines himself to his own ideas will perish and the person who consults others uses the others' wisdom". According to Islam, a counselor should be wise, with free will, religious, intimate, confidant, with expertise, experienced, and truthful; he/she should not be a coward, miser, liar, and not be jealous and pertinacious.

Goals of Counseling

One of the duties of the counselor is preparing the client to accept his responsibilities; to do this, the counselor uses some techniques. Counseling is a learning process through which the counselor helps the client to learn the basic rules of his behavior, and to get clear about his attitude toward his environment and his decisions, and teaches him to know himself and his priorities. The client is helped to change his beliefs about his goals and become aware of the results of his actions (Navabinezhad, 2011).

Counseling is an expertise and needs specific features. The holy prophet Mohammad (PBUH) says: "There is no one who doesn't need counseling." Imam Ali says: "Those who consult with wise men will be guided towards the correct path." Gastad says: "Counseling is a kind of learning which is based on a mutual relation." The counselor helps the client to learn on the basis of his requirements by using his skills and professional techniques. The client uses his knowledge to get his rational goals and become a happy and creative person (Hosseini Birjandi, 2006). It can be said that guiding is a general curriculum and counseling is a part of it.

The way of Counseling and Guiding

The counselor uses specific techniques through counseling. He chooses his techniques according to his characteristics, his attitude toward human beings, the client's features, the problem, and the environmental factors. The counseling methods are classified into three groups according to the activities of the counselor, the activities of the client, and their relations: direct, indirect and eclectic methods.

The Direct Method

This method is also called the "client-centered" method. Williamson, the professor of Minnesota University, was one of pioneers of this method. In this method the counselor is the manager. He believes he is the expert and experienced and has the scientific qualifications and tries to get information, analyze it, understand the problem, and present some solutions to the problem. The counselor considers the client's conditions and knowledge and guides him.

The Indirect Method

It is based on Gestalt, client-centered, and existentialism theories. According to this theory, if there is a warm and intimate relation between the counselor and the client, the client can solve his problem, so there is no focus on specific counseling techniques. The client plays an important role and the counselor _instead of solving the problem_ reflects the client's behavior to him and helps him to discuss and analyze the problem, consider its different aspects, think about different solutions and choose the best one (Shafee' Abadi, 2010). The main goal of this method is to help the client know himself and choose the best way of life.

The Eclectic Method

Thorne is one of the pioneers of this method. Since none of the two methods mentioned above is enough for all people and all kinds of problems, the eclectic method was created (Shafee' Abadi, 2010). Advocates of this method believe that it is not right to use trial and error in choosing a method. Because of personal differences and varieties in the environment and

societies, it is difficult to understand every body's problem and using just one method is not sufficient (Hosseini Birjandi, 2006). Therefore, the counselor should know how to start the counseling session, how to continue it, and how to end it.

Some Practical Counseling Tips

- a. When the client has been made to come to the counselor's, the counselor should prepare him for counseling and after preparing him, the counselor can begin counseling.
- b. If the counselor has chosen a type of counseling, he should compare the technique he has used with the techniques of that counseling method and then evaluate his own counseling.
- c. Step by step counseling is a useful procedure to become skillful in counseling.
- d. Frequent evaluation and recovering defects is an important way to get experienced in counseling, and these are the demanding tasks that a counselor and a trainee should accept to do (Hosseini Birjandi, 2006).
- e. When a person doesn't know what to do in a special situation and is doubtful, he needs to use counseling services. In fact, the client is fearful or confused and wants to get rid of this situation by using others' knowledge and experience. When the situation is clear there is no need to use others' experience. The holy Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) didn't use others' ideas and experiences in making laws, since making laws is done only by God. But in executing laws, the Holy Prophet used others' opinions (Hosseini Birjandi, 2006). In Quran it has been stated that "no Muslim is permitted to oppose what has been stated by God or The Holy Prophet, and if a person does so, he will be misled".

According to above sentences, it is understood that people are not allowed to think or counsel about what has been stated by God and the Holy Prophet and they should accept them as a precept.

Consulting God

A client should consult God before asking help from his counselor. He should pray and ask God to help him and to give knowledge and brightness to his counselor and show them the right way. The Holy Prophet said "When counseling, first consult God then God's creatures". Somebody asked the Holy Prophet "What is meant by consulting God?" The Holy Prophet answered: "It means asking God to give you blessing. When you ask God to help you, you will understand clearly what is said to you."

Consulting People

People should not consult everybody for every problem. People who are coward, greedy and jealous are not good to consult. Imam Ali has said "Don't consult miser people, because he prevents you from benevolence and make you frightened of becoming poor. Don't consult coward person, since he makes you hesitated. Don't consult greedy people, since they will encourage you to oppress others. Greed, misery and fear are habits which originate from not trusting God.

Clarifying Counseling Goal

Counseling causes ideas to get powerful. Besides it makes the lives happy and improving and it stops misleading if it is based on mental and religious rules (Hosseini Birjandi, 2007).

The holy prophet Mohammad (PBUH) consulted people for many purposes like testing counselors, supporting and confirming people, improving people's characteristics and mental powers, showing that the Islamic Government respect people and their opinions and teaching the followers that using others' opinions is not shameful (Hosseini Birjandi, 2007). What was stated earlier is the goal of counseling for the prophet and Imams. But other people's aims to counsel are:

**Counseling and Growth*

Imam Ali believes that Counseling is useful for both the client and he counselor, since they learn from each other. Imam Ali has stated: "The best people to consult are people who are wise, experienced and consider results of every decision."

**Counseling the best Support and Stress relieving*

Imam Ali in Nahj-al-Balagheh has stated that counseling is a good supporter and the governors can use others' ideas to govern better. "There is not any supporter and assistant better than counseling. Every wise man knows that he needs counseling either." Being doubtful and feeling unable causes people stress. The counselor helps the client to realize his mental abilities. So he feels that he can solve his problems and feels relaxed.

**Blessing*

One of the other advantages of counseling is blessing and abundance. Imam Ali says "All the blessing is in using advisors' advices." In other words it means to use others' opinions depends on asking them.

**Not being regretful*

If counseling is done according to Islamic rules and if wise people are consulted, the result is freedom from misleading. Imam Ali says that consulting competent people is a duty, since it causes peace and relaxing from stress and it stops regretting even if the result is not satisfying since the person knows that he has done his duty and has used his alternatives. Imam Ali has stated that "Consulting wise men prevents you from regretting."

**Prohibiting Obstinacy*

Using others' ideas, public participation and accepting others' comments are necessary for every level of management. One of the advantages of Imam Ali's style in doing state affairs is stopping obstinacy and using others' ideas and suggestions except in the case of God's precepts. Imam Ali used to ask his friends and relatives' ideas in different tasks and finally he himself decide what to do. Once Imam Ali told Abdullah Ibn-e – Abbas "I ask your suggestion but whatever I decide, you should obey." Imam Ali has said "Being stubborn and imposing your idea causes misleading but consulting means using others' ideas and knowledge".

**Better Governing*

Clearly every manager or governor should ask others' suggestions but he himself should make decisions and people shouldn't impose their ideas. Imam Ali has stated "In order to strengthen the base of the government and ruling the country well, use reflective and experienced people's ideas"

**Increasing Prudence*

According to Imam Ali's sayings one of the advantages of counseling is prudence and consequently self –dependence. "Consult others to obtain prudence".

**Using Others' experiences*

In Imam Ali's opinion using others' ideas is the key to success. He has stated "Consult others to obtain salvation and success". Asking people's suggestions creates certain and trustful results and a manager who deprives himself of this opportunity will be regretful" (Delshad Tehrani, 2002). Imam Ali has advised people "Consulting knowledgeable people prevent you from faults and regretting".

Comparing Nowadays Counseling with Imam Ali's Views about Counseling

Today counselors consider some points in counseling to make better effects on the clients. Here these practical points are mentioned and are compared with Imam Ali's point of views.

**Giving Advice and Admonishing*

One of the techniques of counseling is advising. Imam Ali has sayings about this. "The person who advises you, helps you and in order not to disparage others' prestige and not to decrease their self- confidence, admonishing should be done secretly; except the advices which are general and not specific to a certain person." According to these sentences while advising we the counselor should respect and consider the client's personality.

**Listening*

To make the client listen to the counselor, the client should accept him and there should be a warm and positive relationship (Sedighi, 2011). Imam Ali has said "Consulting a kind and wise person, brings you success." So it can be understood that one of the key ways toward success is trusting the counselor. If the counselor uses past people's experiences, in fact he has used techniques like acceptance, advising, distinction, presenting a life sample, unfinished thoughts, awareness, making sure, construing, analysis and finally questioning to clarify what is going on to the client and make him aware. Imam Ali has said "There are signs in the past people's lives which can be warnings to you."

**Encouraging*

It means persuading the client to continue the process of counseling and moving toward the right way and improvement. Encouraging is a type of reward which is given to reinforce desired behavior (Sedighi, 2011). Imam Ali in the saying 241 encourages his followers to jihad (holy war) and then he has said "God has made thanksgiving your duty and has gifted you ruling and has given you the opportunity to go to the paradise, so compete with each other to go to the paradise."

**Resistance*

The client's resistance in the counseling procedure hinders achieving goals. This resistance originates from internal factors like the fear of not achieving goals, external factors like possible bad behavior of the counselor or mixed factors like tiredness or sickness (Sedighi, 2011). Imam Ali has said "Don't consult coward people since he will disable you to do your job and make unimportant things important to you."

Based on what was mentioned earlier it is understood that every correct principle of counseling has been mentioned in Imam Ali's sayings. All the rules of modern counseling are similar to Imam Ali's sayings in Nahj-al-Balagheh.

Carl Rogers believes that if the client has sincere behavior and communication toward the counselor, the counselor will accept him and will sympathy him. It is clear that in Imam Ali's sayings the characteristics of a good counselor are expressed. Besides some details which are mentioned in Rogers' theory are not as comprehensive as Imam Ali's sayings.

In Imam Ali's saying number 90 in Nahj-al-Balagheh it is stated that a counselor should do what he advises the client to do. In problem-solving method the counselor emphasizes on what he himself will do. Imam Ali about consulting wise people has said: "Consulting wise men brings you success."

Conclusion

Every counselor who has used a part of Imam Ali's ideas in counseling has got proportional success in his job. If a counselor uses all the principles and rules of counseling mentioned in Nahj-al-Balagheh, he will succeed completely because every modern counseling theory is a part of the rules of Nahj-al-Balagheh. So, to access a complete collection of counseling rules, one should refer to Nahj-al-Balagheh. Counseling in every society is influenced by the customs and the religion of that society. A counselor should study both theoretical and religious rules of counseling and when there is a contradiction between

theoretical rules and religious principles, he should not use that theory because the religion which hasn't been infected by alteration has comprehensive rules for the guidance of mankind which are definitely correct, so if there is a difference between the rules of religion and man-made rules, the fault is of the man who is not immune of fault. As a whole, it should be said that human knowledge will guide mankind just in the case that it is inspired by divine rules.

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