The Era of Expectation and the Role of Belief in Mahdavi Teachings in Reducing Social Harms

Hossein Andalib[1]

Abstract:
Reducing and confronting social harms is considered one of the main concerns of governments. The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic has also repeatedly emphasized the importance of reducing social harms. Various factors can help diminish social problems and contribute to the continuity, vitality, and empowerment of governance. One of the most significant and influential factors is belief in *Mahdavi teachings*, which can play an essential role in combating and reducing social harms. Therefore, the central question of this study is: "What impact does belief in Mahdavi teachings have on reducing social harms?" The hypothesis proposes that the authentic Mahdavi teachings—which begin with individual and social self-purification and extend to all dimensions of human life—possess profound capacities for controlling and mitigating social harms. The study's findings indicate that the people, the government, and the ruling authority each have responsibilities and obligations in educating, promoting, disseminating, and operationalizing Mahdavi beliefs with the goal of reducing social harms. The research method is descriptive and analytical.

Keywords: Mahdavi teachings; social harms; sociological theories; factors of deviance.

[1] Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Qom Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qom, Iran.
Email: Hosein.Andalib@iau.ac.ir

1. Statement of the Problem

One of the major concerns of the prophets and divine messengers has always been the organization of human life and the reduction of social harms in societies. The Holy Qur'an, followed by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) and the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), considered one of their main missions to be reform, as well as the confrontation with corruption, deviation, and individual and social disorders. The Islamic Revolution, inspired by religious teachings and guided by the lofty horizon of Mahdism and Mahdavi teachings—with the aim of preparing for the Reappearance and establishing the global government of the Promised Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance)—has also regarded the confrontation with social harms and efforts to reduce them as one of its primary goals.
The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, while emphasizing the importance of combating social harms, has repeatedly stressed the necessity of finding solutions for these problems. He stated: "We should look at the issue of social harms in the country as if these harms occurred within our own families. Imagine if I had a child who was addicted—what would my feelings be? Or if someone had a runaway daughter at home—what anguish would they feel? Even if such a girl ran away from someone else's home, we must teach ourselves to feel the same concern, even if naturally we do not. We must be sensitive to this issue in society and seek remedies… In fact, our concern for the condition of the people should be the same as our concern for our own family." (Speech of the Supreme Leader, May 1, 2016 [11/02/1395 SH])

Therefore, one of the principal goals and programs of the Islamic Revolution is to strive for the reduction of social harms. However, it is important to note that any effort or action aimed at reducing social harms can be envisioned within three domains: the realm of *beliefs and perspectives*, the realm of *tendencies and motivations*, and the realm of *behaviors and actions*.

To explain, every human being holds certain views and beliefs about the realities of existence—beliefs that may or may not correspond to truth. Likewise, within each person exist desires and inclinations toward particular things, which may or may not align with their true welfare and happiness. These two dimensions—pertaining to the human spirit and inner self—manifest externally through behavioral actions. Thus, a comprehensive confrontation with social harms requires attention to all three dimensions. Naturally, focusing on only one aspect cannot yield complete success. For example, as long as beliefs and perceptions are not corrected, the necessary will and motivation for right conduct cannot emerge; and as long as one's will and desires are not properly directed, behavioral reform will not occur. For this reason, social reformers and those concerned with

the welfare of society must design their strategies and programs to address all three dimensions.

It is also crucial to emphasize that external human behavior stems from two internal elements: *beliefs and convictions* on the one hand, and *desires and inclinations* on the other. Beliefs and convictions shape one's worldview, and this worldview gives rise to the desire and motivation to perform—or avoid—certain acts that are inevitable in human life. Accordingly, since beliefs and convictions (or insights) play a fundamental and decisive role in human decision-making and volition, the divine messengers began their mission by rectifying people's beliefs and convictions.

Imagine a society in which all individuals firmly believe in the Creator and the Resurrection, constantly perceive God as watching over their deeds, and are convinced that a day will come when every person will be held accountable before God for their actions. In such a society, can social corruption and deviation still be regarded as widespread problems? Rather, in such a community, inspired by Mahdavi teachings, people coexist peacefully in an atmosphere of altruism and self-sacrifice, advancing collectively on the path of spiritual and moral perfection, cooperating and helping one another in goodness and piety, not in sin and transgression.

One piece of evidence for the precedence and importance of the intellectual and doctrinal dimension over other aspects of human existence lies in the gradual revelation of the Qur'an: the Meccan verses primarily address issues of belief—affirming God and the Resurrection—whereas the Medinan verses focus more on legislation and practical rulings. Likewise, the first slogan and invitation of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was: *"Say: There is no god but Allah, and you shall prosper."* (Baladhuri, *Ansab al-Ashraf*, n.d., 11/119). Hence, the focus on the intellectual and doctrinal dimension in confronting and reducing social harms arises from its logical and ontological precedence over other human dimensions and external behavior.

Accordingly, the central question of the present research is: *"What impact does belief in Mahdavi teachings have on reducing social harms?"* To answer this question, it is necessary to reexamine the Mahdavi teachings and to analyze and explain their relationship and influence on reducing social harms.

2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1. Sociological Theories

In this regard, scholars can generally be divided into two main groups:

a) Those who regard deviance and abnormal behavior as *real phenomena* with objective characteristics that can be distinguished from "normal" behaviors. These scholars are known as *positivists*, *realists*, *objectivists*, *absolutists*, *determinists*, and *structuralists*.

b) Those who do not necessarily consider deviance and abnormality to be real in themselves, but rather *socially constructed* and *subjective*. According to them, deviance is a social product—a label that society attributes to certain behaviors. These theorists are called *constructionists*, *humanists*, *subjectivists*, *relativists*, *voluntarists*, *individualists*, *interpretivists*, *critical theorists*, and *postmodernists*.

2.1.1. The Positivist Paradigm

Within the *positivist paradigm*, several major theories have been proposed:

1. Strain Theories

a) **Merton:** The cause of deviant behavior lies in the *gap between socially accepted goals and the socially approved means* for achieving them.

b) **Cohen:** Similar to Merton, but emphasizes that deviance arises from *status frustration*—the disparity between individual aspirations and the means to achieve social status.

c) **Cloward and Ohlin:** Introduced the concept of *differential illegitimate opportunity structures*, arguing that deviance results from unequal access to illegitimate opportunities.

2. Social Learning Theories

a) **Sutherland:** Proposed the *differential association theory*, which holds that deviance results when an individual's associations with deviants outnumber associations with conformists.

b) **Glaser:** Developed the concept of *differential identification*, arguing that mere association with deviants does not cause deviance; rather, it is the *internalization* of deviant identities that leads to deviant behavior.

c) **Burgess and Akers:** Proposed the *differential reinforcement theory*, suggesting that when deviant behavior is more frequently and consistently *rewarded* than conformity, individuals are more likely to choose deviance.

3. Social Control Theories

a) **Hirschi:** One of the most prominent theorists in this field, he asserted that the *bond between the individual and society* is the key factor in conformity. Weak or absent social bonds lead to deviance and norm violation.

b) **Braithwaite:** Argued that society can control deviance through *reintegrative shaming*—publicly disapproving of the act while maintaining respect for the individual. (Sediq Sarvestani, 2020: 45)

2.1.2. The Constructionist Paradigm
Within the *constructionist paradigm*, the following theories are significant:

1. Labeling Theory:
Deviance and abnormality are the result of the *application of rules and sanctions* to individuals. A "deviant" is someone to whom the *label of deviance* has been successfully applied, and deviant behavior is that which others define as such.

2. Phenomenology:
Phenomenologists emphasize returning to the *subjective world* of the deviant individual. They argue that social action is not merely the product of external pressures but that actors *actively construct and reconstruct social reality* through daily interactions. In these interactions, individuals learn to take the role of the other and interpret situations from others' perspectives—thus making similar choices when in similar situations.

3. Conflict Theory:
Conflict theorists claim that the *unequal distribution of power* in pluralistic societies leads to deviance. They focus on social and cultural conflicts as the root causes of norm violations. (Ibid: 46)

2.1.3. The Religious Paradigm
In the *religious paradigm*, attention is paid both to the *active and willful human agent*—the conscious actor addressed by divine guidance—and to the *existence of social structures* and their influence on individuals. From the Islamic perspective, true human beings are those who have actualized their *innate nature (fiṭrah)* and attained spiritual maturity; such individuals are likened to the organs of a single body, governed by a unified spirit.

In this view, society is shaped not only by the living members of the present generation but also by the *virtuous and sinful deeds of past generations*, whose moral consequences continue to influence the collective destiny of the community.

In the religious paradigm, the sources of knowledge used to interpret reality—including social reality—are expanded beyond material observation. They encompass *nature, society, history, reason ('aql), the heart (qalb), and the unseen (ghayb)*. Similarly, the instruments of cognition are broadened to include *sensory, rational, intuitive, revelatory, and inspirational* means. The ultimate *criterion of truth* for all forms of knowledge is their *correspondence with reality* (Kheiri, 2010, p. 28).

2.2. Factors of Social Abnormality

Numerous social and environmental factors profoundly influence people's lives, especially the youth, who internalize societal values that shape their behavior. Sociological studies reveal that many deviants are, in fact, *normal individuals in an abnormal society*—psychologically sound persons whose environment drives them toward deviance because their *threshold of resistance* to social pressures is low (A Group of Authors, 2003, p. 207).

According to Otto Kleinberg, "It is now widely accepted that no single intellect can account for behavior as complex and varied as delinquency in general and juvenile delinquency in particular" (Aronson et al., 2020, p. 454). Unfavorable social conditions, weak social control, inadequate education, irresponsible media, economic hardship, cultural poverty, dysfunctional family relations, the prevalence of immoral values and antisocial norms, constant life changes, materialism, and irresponsibility in social interactions—all contribute to corruption and deviant behavior. Such circumstances foster the spread of moral decay and social disintegration (Javadi, 2005, p. 355).

2.3. Consequences of Social Deviance and Pathology

Sociologists typically adopt a *functional approach* when explaining the consequences of deviance and social pathology. Rather than focusing on the individual, functionalists seek the *origins of deviance within society itself*, attributing less importance to biological or psychological factors.

1. Erosion of Conformity Motivation:
Public disgrace and punishment of deviants serve as deterrents that motivate others to conform to social norms. Conversely, when lawbreakers evade social or legal consequences, conformity declines and civic responsibility weakens.

2. Confusion of Values and Norms:
Widespread deviance blurs the boundaries of acceptable behavior, leaving individuals uncertain about societal expectations and trapped in moral ambiguity (Davari & Salimi, 2015, p. 201).

3. Misallocation of Resources and Effort:
Controlling deviance and social disorder demands significant human and material resources, diverting them from more constructive and beneficial societal purposes.

4. Erosion of Public Trust:
Stable social relations depend on mutual trust that others will adhere to shared norms. As deviance becomes more common, *trust among conformists and nonconformists alike diminishes*, undermining the cohesion of society.

5. Disruption of Social Order:

When core societal norms are widely violated, *social life becomes unpredictable and unstable*, producing tension and conflict between conformists and deviants (Ibid, p. 202).

3. Mahdavi Teachings and Their Impact on Social Disorders

3-1. Individual and Social Self-Development

One of the authentic teachings of the Mahdavi tradition is the necessity of individual and social self-development. The Holy Qur'an emphasizes this through the keywords *taqwa* (piety) and *righteous deeds*. In the hadiths that outline the duties of the Awaiters, the focus is consistently on piety, abstinence, chastity, avoidance of sin, and drawing near to God. As Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) states:

"Whoever wishes to be pleased to be among the companions of the Qa'im (the Awaited Imam), must be an Awaiter and act with piety and good morals while awaiting. If such a person dies before the appearance, his reward is like that of someone who witnessed the time of the appearance. Strive therefore (in good deeds) and await, may this awaiting be blessed for you, O group of mercy."
(Majlisi, 1407 AH, vol. 52, p. 140)

Beyond all this, we must define our position regarding the uprising of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance). Clearly, if we contribute to the spread of corruption, we will be among those whom the revolution of Mahdi aims to confront and eliminate. Conversely, if we strive to reform society, we belong to the devoted companions. Therefore, even if, by remaining silent, merely observing, or aiding the spread of corruption, we hasten the appearance of the Imam, we certainly endanger our own position. Is it not the case that the Qa'im arises to restrain the corrupt, eliminate prohibitions, eradicate sin, and reform humans and societies? How then can we benefit from his uprising?

It should be noted that depicting the corrupt and sinful state of the world in the End Times serves both as a warning to human communities and as a signal indicating the proximity of the appearance of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance). These warnings and prophecies place a heavy responsibility upon us and make us aware of the disastrous consequences of corruption and decay.

Muhammad ibn Muslim relates that he asked Imam Baqir (peace be upon him): "O son of the Messenger of Allah, when will your Qa'im appear?" He replied:

"When men resemble women and women resemble men, then men will confine themselves to men and women to women!" (Saduq, 1/331)

In this regard, Professor Motahhari writes:

"A superficial understanding among people regarding Mahdism and the uprising of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) is that it merely has an explosive nature; it arises solely from the spread of oppression, discrimination, suppression, injustice, and corruption. However, the Qur'anic verses indicate the opposite. The appearance of Imam Mahdi is one link in the chain of struggle between the people of truth and falsehood, ultimately leading to the final victory of the righteous. An individual's share in this success depends on his faith and righteous deeds. The appearance of the Promised Mahdi fulfills the promise that Allah Almighty made to the righteous and pious from the earliest times in the heavenly scriptures—that the earth belongs to them, and the ultimate triumph is exclusively for the pious." (Motahhari, 1385 SH, p. 54)

Sheikh Saduq narrates from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) that this event will not occur until each of the fortunate and the wretched reaches the culmination of their deeds. In other words, the group of the blessed and the group of the wretched must each reach the apex of their respective actions.

Islamic narrations also speak of an elite group that joins the Imam immediately upon his appearance. Naturally, this group is not created suddenly; it becomes apparent that despite the prevalence of oppression and corruption, there exist profound conditions that cultivate such an elite group. This indicates that truth and righteousness have not vanished entirely; even if, quantitatively, the number of the righteous seems small, qualitatively they represent the most valuable of the faithful, akin to the companions of Imam Husayn (peace be upon him). (Ibid., pp. 56-57)

Therefore, one of the authentic Mahdavi teachings is individual and social self-development. It should now be noted that if people devote their efforts to individual and social self-development, would we not witness a significant reduction in social harms? In other words, part of social problems stems from the lack of individual and social self-development. For example, if a person, through self-discipline and attention to religious prohibitions, refrains from using narcotics and strengthens the skill of saying "no" to such offers, would the phenomenon of addiction not decrease? This is not to suggest that other factors do not contribute to reducing harms like drug abuse; rather, the first step in combating addiction is the intellectual and perceptual empowerment of individuals, which, if well established, enhances the effectiveness of subsequent measures.

Another example of social harm is divorce. One of the root causes of divorce is the lack of ethical conduct and self-development among individuals. If spouses, inspired by religious teachings and authentic Mahdavi principles, engage in ethical self-development, adorn themselves with moral virtues, and avoid vices, would we not observe improved behavior between them and consequently a reduction in some divorces? Therefore, one of the factors behind certain social harms is the lack of self-development and the low moral level of individuals in society, and inspiration from Mahdavi teachings can provide substantial assistance in this regard.

3-2. Confronting Seductive Ideological Currents

Throughout history, alongside divine intellectual currents, there have always existed movements that aim to prevent humanity from progressing along the divine path. In contemporary times, the emergence of new spiritual movements (*New Religious Movements*), also referred to as "emerging mysticism" or "deviant sects," represents one such seductive current. These movements have been established with the objective of countering divine and Mahdavi teachings and are currently active.

In these emerging mystical movements, there are different approaches toward Mahdism. The first group consists of those who fundamentally believe in a savior themselves and are, from the outset, in conflict with the concept of Shi'i Mahdism, such as certain Eastern mystic traditions or mystical currents derived from Christian mysticism.

The second group consists of movements that present their own school as a "salvific path" and their leader as a savior. Among the followers of these schools, there is essentially no perceived need for a savior because, firstly, their spiritual teachings are defined as individual and personal, and they do not claim any social mission—meaning they do not aim to establish a global just government or end oppression and transgression in the world. Consequently, they generally invite followers toward seclusion, isolation, and personal purification rather than societal reform. This group believes that anyone who practices their teachings reaches the "shore of salvation"; the ultimate goal of existence is achieved through individual reform, so there is no deficiency requiring a savior or hero to lift it. Figures such as Wayne Dyer, Eckhart Tolle, Scivener Shinn, and even the "Halgheh Mysticism" movement (which is domestic and claims an Islamic identity) fall into this category.

Eckhart Tolle, for example, authored an independent book on the End Times called *A New Earth*. This book proposes an eschatological plan for governing the earth based on Tolle's ethical and spiritual teachings. Although it does not designate a specific savior, the author presumes that if this spiritual plan is

implemented, human development and happiness will be achieved, and humanity will reach its true ideal. Unfortunately, some emerging deviant sects, such as the Halgheh Mysticism, not only ridicule the narrations concerning the appearance of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) but also consider his appearance unnecessary. (See: Andelib et al., 1394 SH, pp. 299-300)

Additionally, some deviant sects, through the promotion of illusory and imaginary concepts such as the "Law of Attraction" and "meditation," aim to replace belief in God's providence, the culture of effort, work, production, and the spiritual and psychological benefits of religious practices with alternative cognitive frameworks and behavioral patterns, thereby detaching contemporary Muslims from spirituality and religion. For instance, the deviant teaching of the Law of Attraction assigns humans a type of "ontological authority," claiming:

"Whatever you visualize in your mind, you will hold in your hands." (Bourne, 1387 SH, p. 22)

According to this teaching, thoughts and ideas have the power to create and attract objects and phenomena in the real world:

"You attract everything to yourself: people, jobs, living conditions, health, wealth, debt, joy, the car you drive, and the society in which you live. Like a magnet, you attract all these things toward yourself. Whatever you think, happens. Your entire life is the manifestation of the thoughts running in your mind." (Ibid., p. 32)

In contrast, according to divine and Mahdavi teachings, ontological authority over beings and the universe belongs solely to God. Through divine bestowal and grace, the Perfect Man—i.e., the Prophets and the Infallible Imams, including Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance)—possess ontological authority. Scholars such as Mohaghegh Esfahani and others among the Imami ulema, based on religious texts, affirm the ontological and legislative authority of the Ahl al-Bayt. (Mohaghegh Esfahani, 1418 AH/2:387; Safi Golpayegani, 1380 SH/1:72; Makarem Shirazi, 1368 SH, 9/161) Alongside this belief, the Qur'an, the Prophets, and the Infallible Imams consistently emphasize the culture of work and effort. For instance, God says:

"And that there is for man nothing except what he strives for." (Surah An-Najm 53:39)

Thus, from the perspective of divine and Mahdavi culture, daydreaming and fantasies never replace work, effort, and production; without them, success and acquisition of wealth or other material matters cannot be achieved.

Meditation, which is taught today in Iran and other countries as "yoga" under the label of a sport, is not truly a sport but claims to be a technique for achieving tranquility. In reality, the primary purpose of yoga is to unite the three forces to awaken the kundalini and reach the stage of *samadhi* (Saraswati, 1380 SH, ch. 2, para. 40), while suspending all forms of self-awareness and cognitive interactions (Ibid., ch. 1, para. 2). These techniques can result in emptiness, nihilism, submissiveness, and even serious medical consequences (see: Andelib, 1397 SH, pp. 274-280).

In conclusion, emerging spiritual movements and deviant sects, by seducing and weakening belief in Mahdavi and other divine and ethical teachings, not only have destructive effects on people's intellectual and cognitive sphere but also influence outward behavior. Consequently, we witness abnormal behaviors in society, where the culture of work, effort, reflection, and critical thinking is replaced by empty fantasies, laziness, and engagement in hollow teachings and destructive entertainments.

Meanwhile, the conduct of the Infallible Imams, particularly Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance), has consistently opposed seductive and deviant currents. For example, the Imam issued a noble decree condemning, cursing, and labeling Shalmaghani as deviant. (Tousi, 1412 AH, p. 252) Accordingly, by following the authentic Mahdavi teaching that highlights the deviant nature of induced beliefs from seductive and deviant currents, one can remain vigilant against joining such groups and thereby reduce social harms associated with inclination toward emerging mysticism and deviant sects.

3-4. Social Solidarity

From a sociological perspective, one of the primary functions of religion is to create social solidarity and cohesion. According to Durkheim, *"the performance of religious rituals and ceremonial aspects of religion plays an important role in strengthening social cohesion… In his view, no matter how insignificant religious ceremonies may seem, they still gather people together on various occasions to perform religious rites and ceremonies; and through this, they foster intimacy among them and alter their perceptions of each other."* (Fasihi, 1389 SH, pp. 138–139)

Considering religion's role in fostering cohesion and solidarity on one hand, and the full manifestation of Islam in the concept of Mahdism on the other, it can be said that belief in Mahdism—with elements such as reliance on the shared religious expectation of a global promised savior and adherence to the principle of Islamic Mahdism among Muslim nations—can effectively create and strengthen social cohesion and solidarity.

In any society, values are the strongest binding agents and constitute a major social capital. *"Relying on shared values can strengthen the mental connection among individuals. Therefore, in societies where individuals have mental ties with one another, loyalty assumes a special status, and cohesion consequently strengthens. Values are the best binding agents… which can be regarded as the foundation for strong bonds among people."* (Mehrabi, 1387 SH, p. 37)

Thus, reliance on shared values derived from belief in the Promised Savior (Mahdism) reinforces interpersonal bonds, thereby fostering social cohesion and solidarity. This, in turn, significantly contributes to reducing social harms. One of the causes of social problems is the sense of alienation an individual feels toward society. For example, a person in a major city who threw stones from a pedestrian bridge at moving cars explained to a reporter:

"I felt those people had taken my rights, and I, being in this situation, was a result of their actions. I wanted to show them that you have expensive cars while I have nothing. I did this to release my own frustration." (ISNA, 1400 SH)

This statement reflects the individual's sense of alienation and explains their engagement in deviant and dangerous behavior. Clearly, if authentic Mahdavi teachings, which promote social solidarity and cohesion, are seriously studied, applied, and practiced—uniting individuals around principles of brotherhood and justice—the conditions for social harm can be significantly mitigated.

3-5. Social Security

Social security is among the most critical demands of citizens. Its realization is so important that God presents a city with security as an exemplary model:

"And God sets forth an example: a city which had security and peace, and its provision came abundantly from all directions." (Surah An-Nahl 16:112)

Conversely, any act that threatens social security constitutes a socio-security risk, requiring vigilance and intelligent response. Social security refers to *"people's peace of mind from fear, threat, anxiety, and protection of their life, property, honor, identity, and beliefs from any danger or aggression… Social security is concerned with threats that endanger the community's identity; for if society loses its identity, it cannot endure."* (Rezaei, 1391 SH, p. 192)

While achieving full security in all its dimensions is difficult and almost impossible before the appearance of the Mahdavi security-establishing government, the perfect security of the Mahdavi state serves as an ideal model for societal security prior to the emergence of Imam Mahdi.

In contemporary security theories, *"people-centered security"* is considered one of the most effective and efficient types of security. This form of security is closely linked with authentic Mahdavi teachings. A Mahdism-believing individual, understanding their social duty and divine responsibility regarding social security, acts upon their religious and civic obligations when aware of threats and their manifestations. They alert relevant authorities and dedicate effort and vigilance to maintaining security.

3-6. Social Supervision

The principle of social supervision, or *enjoining good and forbidding wrong*—one of the invaluable characteristics of divine religions, particularly Islam—plays a critical role in countering social harms. This principle holds a prominent place in the Qur'an and in the conduct of the Infallible Imams. The Qur'an highlights this principle as a feature of believers and depicts hypocrites as its direct opposite:

- *"The hypocrite men and the hypocrite women are alike. They command what is wrong and forbid what is right and close their fists from giving in God's way. They have forgotten God, and He has forgotten them; indeed, the hypocrites are disobedient."* (Surah At-Tawbah 9:67)
- *"The believing men and believing women are allies of one another; they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, perform prayers, give charity, and obey God and His Messenger. God will have mercy on them; God is Mighty and Wise."* (Surah At-Tawbah 9:71)

As seen, the Qur'an frames social supervision as the duty of all believers. Naturally, the Infallible Imams, at the apex of the believers' hierarchy, adhered to this principle even more strictly. The core mission of the Prophet (PBUH) and his infallible successors was based on this principle, although the methods and approaches varied according to circumstances. For example, the establishment of a religious government by the Prophet, the governance of Muslims by Imam Ali (AS), Imam Hasan's (AS) confrontation with Mu'awiya, and Imam Husayn's (AS) uprising against Yazid can all be interpreted in this light. Indeed, Imam Husayn (AS) explicitly stated that his uprising aimed at enjoining good and forbidding wrong.

Similarly, other Imams consistently emphasized social supervision. For instance, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (AS) said:

"Enjoining good and forbidding wrong is the path of the Prophets and the righteous, and a duty upon which other obligations depend. Through it, paths are made safe, trades are made lawful, oppression is removed, the oppressed seek justice, and affairs are set on the right course. Therefore, hate wrong with

your hearts, forbid it with your tongues, confront it openly among wrongdoers, and fear no reproach in the way of God." (Al-Kulayni, 1377 SH, 5/56)

Given the immense importance of this principle, it can be asserted that in combating social harms, in addition to all strategies derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah, serious attention must be paid to social supervision. However, it is crucial to note that improper application of this principle—without considering conditions and context—may not only fail to achieve the desired outcome but may even produce the opposite effect. One essential condition is observing hierarchical steps: initially, one should employ gentle, friendly, and reasoned reminders to those neglecting or violating moral obligations. Only if necessary should stronger measures or practical interventions be applied. Acting harshly or violently from the outset eliminates the possibility of logical reasoning, gentle persuasion, and compassion.

3-7. Strengthening Socio-Cultural Institutions

There is no doubt that cultural institutions play a highly significant role in reforming society and preventing the emergence of social harms. Both the Qur'an and the conduct (*sīrah*) of the infallible Imams (ʿa) emphasize the importance of these institutions. The family can be regarded as the most fundamental socio-cultural institution, having a foundational role in the moral and spiritual upbringing of individuals. The Holy Qur'an explicitly advises parents to be mindful of the family's guiding role and to protect its members from divine punishment: "O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, over which are [appointed] angels, harsh and severe; they do not disobey Allah in what He commands them but do what they are commanded" (Qur'an, al-Taḥrīm: 6). From the Qur'anic viewpoint, the establishment of family life plays a vital role in ensuring emotional and psychological tranquility: "And among His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought" (Qur'an, al-Rūm: 21).
The same emphasis is found in the traditions of the infallible Imams (ʿa). Among these, one of the rights of children upon their parents is good upbringing. Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) stated: "The right of a child upon his father is that he should give him a good name, raise him properly, and teach him the Qur'an" (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, Saying 399).
Educational institutions such as schools and universities also have an undeniable cultural role and are instrumental in preventing the spread of social ills. Islamic teachings place strong emphasis on the pursuit of knowledge and specify the qualifications of teachers. The Qur'an states: "Allah will raise those of you who believe and those who have been granted knowledge by degrees. And Allah is acquainted with what you do" (Qur'an, al-Mujādilah: 11).

The narrations of the infallible Imams (ʿa) also describe the lofty status of knowledge and learning. The Prophet (ṣ) identified knowledge as the source of all good and ignorance as the source of all evil (Majlisi, 1983 [1403 AH], Vol. 74, p. 175), while considering scholars to be the most valuable of people (Muhammadi Rayshahri, 1996 [1416 AH], Vol. 3, p. 2066). The extensive body of narrations concerning knowledge, education, and the role and qualities of teachers all underscore the irreplaceable function of scientific, educational, and cultural institutions at every level of society. Hence, if the goal is to address social harms based on the principles of the Qur'an and Sunnah, a comprehensive and well-structured program must be designed and implemented to organize and empower cultural and educational institutions.

8-3. Sense of Dignity and Servitude

One of the most important educational objectives of the prophets was to enable human beings to truly know themselves so that they might recognize their intrinsic worth and develop a sense of dignity and servitude before God. A person who attains such awareness naturally honors themselves under the shade of divine servitude, and their character and behavior are elevated accordingly. For such an individual, engaging in base and disgraceful acts brings about an internal sense of bitterness and disgust, prompting them to distance themselves from such deeds in order to restore their human dignity. This kind of person avoids association with corrupt or ignoble individuals, as their sense of inner honor constantly calls them toward the path of righteousness.

As mentioned, the prophets and the infallible Imams (ʿa) have always sought to make people aware of this divine worth and to warn them not to sell themselves cheaply. The noble saying of Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (ʿa) is a clear testimony to this truth: "Indeed, your bodies are worth nothing less than Paradise; therefore, do not sell them for anything less than Paradise" (Kulaynī, 1998 [1377 SH], Vol. 1, p. 19).

Now imagine a society whose members conduct their individual and collective behavior based on the spirit of human dignity and servitude to God—could social harm be considered a problem in such a society? In such an environment, not only would individual and collective corruption be minimized, but people would also act according to a spirit of forgiveness and self-sacrifice, which are the natural outcomes of human dignity.

9-3. Social Justice

One of the key causes of the emergence and spread of social harms is the absence or weakness of justice in various social domains. Justice means placing everything in its proper position. This meaning is derived from the words of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), who said: "Justice places everything in its rightful place" (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, Saying 437). If a society witnesses widespread injustice and the authorities show no determination in confronting manifestations of inequity,

conditions will arise for the growth of corruption, moral decay, and deviation, enabling wrongdoers to act freely. Thus, from the Qur'anic perspective, divine messengers were sent precisely so that humanity might rise up for the realization of justice: "We have indeed sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and sent down with them the Book and the Balance so that mankind may uphold justice…" (Qur'an, al-Ḥadīd: 25).

From the very beginning of the Islamic government in Medina, the Prophet (ṣ) utilized every opportunity to implement divine laws and establish justice in society. He advanced justice across multiple fields—judicial, economic, administrative, and familial. His insistence on enforcing divine limits (*ḥudūd Allāh*), judging only according to revelation, distributing the public treasury equally, and abolishing false social privileges exemplified his profound commitment to justice.

Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), despite immense challenges after assuming the caliphate, followed the Prophet's path and sought to implement justice comprehensively in every aspect of life. Yet, those whose interests conflicted with justice resisted him vehemently. His determination was such that, at the outset of his rule, he declared: "If I find that property has been misappropriated, even if it has been spent as dowries for women or the price of slave girls, I will return it to the treasury; for in justice there is relief, and he who finds justice burdensome will find tyranny more oppressive" (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 15).

The conduct of other Imams (ʿa) likewise demonstrates the utmost emphasis on justice and its full realization. They never tolerated even the slightest injustice and used every means to prevent it. For instance, Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (ʿa) encouraged his companion ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn to serve as a minister in the court of Hārūn al-Rashīd so that he might avert oppression and aid the wronged. The Imam told him: "Indeed, God has among the officials of tyrants those through whom He protects His friends from injustice—and you are one of them" (Kashshī, 1969 [1348 SH], p. 433). Similarly, Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) instructed his companion Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar al-Juʿfī to use the funds given to him by the Imam to resolve disputes among the Shīʿa, thereby preventing them from resorting to tyrannical courts that might issue unjust rulings against them (Kulaynī, 1998 [1377 SH], Vol. 2, p. 209).

The Imams' commitment to justice was so complete that they sought not only to eliminate oppression but also to remove its very causes. In one narration from the life of Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa), a servant had hired several workers to labor in the Imam's field until evening. When their work was finished, the Imam said: "Pay their wages before their sweat dries" (ibid., Vol. 5, p. 289).

Among the most evident forms of social injustice in the economic realm are profiteering and hoarding, both of which are grave social ills. In the conduct of the Imams (ʿa), in addition to emphasizing the moral and legal prohibition of such acts and warning of their worldly and spiritual consequences, there was practical abstention from these behaviors and firm action against those who

committed them. A notable example is Imam al-Ṣādiq's (ʿa) interaction with his servant Miṣādaf, whom he sent to Egypt with a thousand dinars for trade. Miṣādaf returned with a large profit, but when the Imam learned that this gain resulted from collusion among merchants who had exploited market scarcity to raise prices, he refused to accept the profit and said: "O Miṣādaf, indeed, struggling with the sword is easier than seeking unlawful gain" (ibid., Vol. 5, p. 161).

Based on this rich Qur'anic and hadith-based heritage, it is understood that in the era of the Reappearance, through the revival of divine monotheism and the universal establishment of justice and equity, both individual and social justice will encompass the entire world. The Prophet (ṣ) stated: "The Mahdi of my nation is the one who will fill the earth with justice and equity after it has been filled with oppression and tyranny" (Sulaym ibn Qays, p. 429).

As discussed, justice is among the defining characteristics of the ideal society within Islamic civilization. Just as oppression and injustice lead to the collapse and backwardness of societies and are condemned in the Qur'an (Kheiri & Erfani, 2018 [1397 SH], p. 59), so too the conduct of the infallible Imams (ʿa) and the authentic teachings of Mahdism offer countless examples aimed at the realization of justice in all spheres of life. Now, consider a society in which every individual acts according to such a model—could such a society possibly suffer from disputes, conflicts, and endless legal battles born of greed, injustice, and the violation of others' rights?

3-10. A Sound Administrative System

The existence of a sound administrative system founded upon divine laws is another essential factor in preventing social harms. Naturally, for a healthy society to be realized, its executive officials must themselves be virtuous and incorruptible, and its governing laws must be righteous and based on divine injunctions. The distinctive feature of divinely guided societies lies first in the dominance of revelation-based legislation, and second in the integrity of those who implement it, ensuring that they do not deviate from the divine code. Accordingly, the infallible Imams (ʿa) endeavored both to elucidate divine law and to ensure its execution by righteous administrators. The Prophet (ṣ), following the establishment of the Islamic state in Medina, emphasized both the articulation of divine revelation and the appointment of upright officials— reflecting his commitment to this principle.

This, of course, does not mean that all of his administrators were faultless; rather, when corruption did appear, the Prophet dealt with it decisively and made amends. A clear example is the incident involving Khālid ibn al-Walīd, who committed atrocities during his mission to the Banū Jadhīmah tribe. The Prophet (ṣ), expressing disavowal of Khālid's actions, dispatched Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) to compensate the victims and restore justice (Wāqidī, 1985 [1405 AH], Vol. 2, p. 881; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, n.d., Vol. 2, p. 151; Ṣadūq, 1983 [1403 AH],

p. 562).

During the caliphate of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa), numerous accounts attest to his intense efforts to establish a just and religiously grounded administrative order. A prominent example of this commitment was his immediate dismissal of many officials appointed under ʿUthmān's rule upon assuming power. Despite appeals from certain individuals to retain Muʿāwiyah, the Imam resolutely declared: "I will not employ Muʿāwiyah even for two days" (Ṭabarī, 1983 [1403 AH], Vol. 3, p. 461).

This same approach is seen in the practice of later Imams (ʿa). Although after the time of Imām al-Ḥasan (ʿa) the Imams no longer held political power, from the era of Imām al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) onward they maintained administrative communication with the Shīʿa through an organized *network of representatives (wikālah)*. These agents were chosen and appointed based on their justice, trustworthiness, and administrative competence. Yet, a few of them deviated due to worldliness, and in such cases, the Imams acted firmly—removing, denouncing, and in one instance even ordering the execution of a corrupt agent. This occurred under Imām al-Hādī (ʿa), who, due to the agent's severe deviation and the harm he caused to the Shīʿa community, was compelled to issue such a decisive command (Kulaynī, 1998 [1377 SH], Vol. 1, p. 524).

These examples illustrate that the Imams' approach to administration was grounded in meritocracy and firm opposition to corrupt officials. Corruption within the administrative system is not only a manifestation of social decay in itself but also a cause of its further spread throughout society. Since governmental administrators are the very instruments through which social corruption must be confronted, their moral failure renders reform impossible and the structure of justice unsustainable.

Conclusion

This study examined and analyzed the role of belief in Mahdavi teachings in controlling social harms. The findings indicate that within every sociological theory selected, the teachings of Mahdism possess the potential to guide both belief and practice toward the control and reduction of social corruption and deviance. The continuous changes in living conditions, the challenges of modern existence, materialism, and the lack of social responsibility—all of which contribute to the spread of corruption, deviation, and social harm—can be mitigated through faith in and adherence to Mahdavi principles.

The authentic teachings of Mahdism—encompassing *individual and social self-purification, resistance against deceptive movements, hope for the future and the meaningfulness of life, social solidarity, social security, social supervision, the strengthening of socio-cultural institutions, the sense of dignity and servitude, social justice, and a sound administrative system*—constitute a

comprehensive and inclusive framework capable of significantly contributing to the reduction and eventual eradication of social harms.

Therefore, at the educational level, seminaries (ḥawzah ʿilmiyyah), universities, scientific centers, and visual and auditory media such as national broadcasting organizations bear the responsibility of teaching, promoting, and cultivating authentic Mahdavi beliefs. At the level of institutional support, cultural governmental bodies—such as the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, the Islamic Propagation Organization, and other cultural institutions—are responsible for supporting educational, research, and cultural initiatives that advance Mahdavi principles.

On the practical and executive level, every individual—citizens, officials, intellectuals, scholars, and academics—must strengthen and apply authentic Mahdavi beliefs in their actions. Likewise, governmental and administrative institutions, including the three branches of power and ruling bodies, are obliged to uphold Mahdavi principles by aligning their actions, laws, regulations, and administrative conduct with these teachings. Moreover, particular attention must be paid to ensuring that every governmental and public initiative includes a *Mahdavi cultural framework* as an integral component of its implementation.

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