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**Gulzhikhan Zh. Nurysheva: Al-Farabi’s Doctrine on the Head of Virtuous City in the Context of Contemporary Kazakhstan**

**Al-Farabi’s Doctrine on the Head of Virtuous City**

**in the Context of Contemporary Kazakhstan**

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Abu Nasr al-Farabi is rightfully considered as one of the greatest world thinkers whose teachings have always been and remain relevant in all stages of human history. The greatness of al-Farabi is in the fact that every man, a nation, and a state can find answers to their questions in his encyclopedic heritage and define path of future development. A well-known Kazakh writer Mukhtar Auezov speaking about the role of philosophy in human life and society described al-Farabi as a ray of light in the dark labyrinths of the human path to the truth.

The same definition can be given to the philosophy of al-Farabi. His philosophy is always modern, it is close to each of us, and it is capable of finding solutions to the most challenging issues, especially, nowadays when human history has changed quite unpredictably. We still hope that  we can find a way out from this crisis, and the philosophies of the great world thinkers, such as al-Farabi, will be our main helpers in overcoming this situation.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to talk about the way the legacy of al-Farabi has been studied in Kazakhstan. M.Burabayev, a famous Kazakh researcher of the legacy of al-Farabi, writes that al-Farabi was widely known to the Kazakhs in past centuries, but his works in Arabic were available only to the selected people. The fact is that during the Soviet regime the Kazakhs were forced to change their alphabet first into Latin, then into Cyrillic. It could be considered as a deliberate policy aimed at the destruction of the historical memory of Kazakhs. Fortunately, in spite of such harsh measures, Kazakhs were able to save their language, traditions, culture and rich spiritual heritage.

According to the aforementioned scholar, an eminent philosopher, historian, statesman and a diplomat Kazybek Tauasaruly (1692-1776), after spending about eight years in the Middle East, had deeply studied and translated many works of al-Farabi [1]. But the book of Kazybek named “From ancient times to my life”, written in 1776, was published only in 1993, when Kazakhstan reached its political and spiritual independence. In his book, Kazybek calls al-Farabi a wise ancestor, emphasizes his social and ethical treatises, but recognizes that the work of al-Farabi on the natural sciences were difficult to comprehend. There is evidence that Kazybek bought some works of al-Farabi and brought them back to his homeland, but these books were, unfortunately, lost.

Great interest to the heritage of al-Farabi has emerged in the 20s of the XX century. For example, a well-known politician Mustafa Chokai in his book “Turkestan under Soviet power” notes that the thoughts of al-Farabi on the origin of human society had a great impact on the views of many European philosophers. A famous Kazakh poet Magzhan Zhumabayev - that has became a victim of Soviet repressions in the 30s of the XXth century - glorified the name of al-Farabi in his poems. In his poem, written in the early XXth century and dedicated to the ancient Turkestan – Turan, Zhumabayev describes the activities of great thinkers born in holy Turkestan, as well as writes about Turkic music and about al-Farabi’s play on Kazakh dombyra.

The most informative and fruitful period in the study of al-Farabi’s works began with the establishment of the Institute of Philosophy and Law under the Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan in 1967. In 1991, the Farabi researchers established a department of Farabi studies. It can be said that it has been the most stellar years in the history of Farabiology in our country. During these years, a great work in translating and publishing of his works on Kazakh and Russian languages was accomplished. The greatest and the most dedicated scholars have worked in the department of Farabi studies. A strong state support aimed on creating conditions for fruitful work of the department as well as the allocation of funds for the publication of the books should be deservedly mentioned here.

The President the Kazakh Academy of Sciences, a globally recognized scholar Kanysh Satpayev, played a big role in forming the school of al-Farabi. I would compare this wonderful time of true scientific creativity with the era of “the Collegium of Toledo” in the Middle Ages.

Inspired with a brilliant idea of Renaissance in the heritage of al-Farabi, the scientists as Akzhan al-Mashany, Agyn Kassymzhanov, Mukash Burabayev, Boris Osherovich, Clara Tadzhikova Elena Kharenko, Anatoly Kenissarin, Saule Satybekova, Galiya Kurmangaliyeva and others translated and published several volumes of al-Farabi’s works such as “Philosophical treatises” (1970), “Social and ethical treatises” (1973), “The logical treatises” (1975), “Mathematical treatise” (1972), “Comments on the Almagest of Ptolemy” (1975 ), “Historical and philosophical treatises” (1985), “Natural scientific treatises”, (1987) and “Treatise on music and poetry” (1992).

Only nowadays one can perceive the immensity of work accomplished by a relatively small group of scientists. This dedication helped the heritage of al-Farabi to become available not only for Kazakhs, but also to entire Soviet Union. It should be noted that the most systematic and scientific publication of his treatise was accomplished exactly in Kazakhstan.

As the famous researher of al-Farabi Ph.D. Galiya Kurmangaliyeva notes, the work of these scientists made the name of al-Farabi a symbol of Kazakh culture, and al-Farabi’s heritage became our national heritage [2]. Study of the heritage of al-Farabi gradually becomes the object of investigations in various scientific fields. As a result the articles and monographs of famous scientists, including not only philosophers, but also linguists, historians, mathematicians have been published.

Another important stage in the development of Farabi studies in our country began with the attainment of independence. New realities required new approaches to the study of the great thinker. The democratic changes in society have given new impetus for Farabi researchers who were greatly inspired by the opportunity to create freely and creatively without ideological dictates “from above”. Native language of Kazakhs was declared as the state one, and the new opportunities for its development became visible. New schools, universities, where Kazakhs could be taught in their own language, have been established. Naturally, the works of al-Farabi were translated into Kazakh language so that everyone could study him in his native language.

The state program “Cultural Heritage”, initiated by the President N.Nazarbayev, has become an impetus for the development of the studies of al-Farabi works. Works of many well-known representatives of the philosophical world, including al-Farabi, have been translated into Kazakh language within the framework of only one series called “Philosophy”. As a result, a 10-volume collection of his works has been published.

It should be particularly noted that the collection includes the works of al-Farabi “Small syllogism used by the mutakallimun”, “Theology”, “Analytics” that have never been translated before. The legacy of Al-Farabi was also highighted in separate volumes of the two cycles of the series named “Philosophy”: “The philosophical heritage of the Kazakh people from ancient times to the present day” (20 volumes) and “World Philosophy” (20 volumes). Most important fact to mention is that his works have been translated into Kazakh language from the original work. Thus, a new level of quality (substantially different from the ideological translations of the Soviet times) has been achieved.

The year 1993 was marked with an important event in life of Kazakhstan – with naming the Kazakh National University, the largest university in Kazakhstan, after al-Farabi.

Issuance of the journal in the name of al-Farabi has become another important event in the history of Kazakh Farabi studies. Since the year 2002, a philosophic, political and spiritual journal called “Al-Farabi” has been publishing under the editorship of Galiya Kurmangaliyeva, a brlliant expert of the Farabi works that for many years has headed the department of Farabi studies at the Institute of Philosophy and Political Science. An interesting, scientific and easily comprehensible journal, which is aimed at forming the spiritual and ethical values, has played an enormous role in popularization of the ideas of al-Farabi. Nowadays it is deservedly recognized as one of the most respected scientific publications in Kazakhstan and CIS, which is included into the catalogue of UNESCO.

            Thanks to the above mentioned           results of scientific activities of Farabi researchers as well as the support of the government, the name of al-Farabi is well-known to every citizen of Kazakhstan nowadays. The educational institutions, institutions of art, streets and avenues in the cities, including one of the biggest avenues of Almaty, are named after him.

Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (the leader of the country’s higher education and according to QS listed among the top 300 universities in the world) continues the noble and very responsible task in studying the works of al-Farabi. It is natural that Al-Farabi Kazakh National University designed its mission as the popularization and promotion of the ideas of the great thinker. The university carries out an extensive work on strengthening a research center of al-Farabi, development of the al-Farabi museum, publication of his works, organization of further scientific research within the framework of fundamental projects. Three volumes of a new edition have come out: a series of philosophical treatises of al-Farabi in three languages ​​– Kazakh, Russian and English.

Another important step is the introduction of a special course “Al-Farabi and the modern age” into the educational process of the university. Under the leadership of the university rector, academician Galymkair Mutanov, the scientists of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University and the Institute of Philosophy have published a manual with the same name, which became a handbook for students and anyone else who is interested in philosophy of al-Farabi. The undergraduates and doctoral students of philosophy, including familiar to you talented scientist Aizhan Doskozhanova, are engaged into the study of the philosophical legacy of al-Farabi.

In 2013, the university started a research and innovation project “Al -Farabi university smart city” initiated by the rector, an academician Galymkair Mutanov. As a good connoisseur of philosophy, he drew his attention to the doctrine of the virtuous city of al-Farabi and chose it as a fundamental idea on this new project. As Galymkair Mutanov notes, “... smart-city project is actively and successfully implemented in all developed countries, but it is understood in purely housing and communal sense – in terms of quality of life of its citizens through the use of information and communication technologies. A specific character of our idea of smart university is in combination of humanistic and technological platforms, harmony of material and spiritual principles. In fact, the prototype of the smart city is a virtuous city, presented in the treatises of al-Farabi as a just and humane society, the most important signs of which are spiritual values ​​and cooperation in achieving the best possible life” [3].

A constant propaganda of the ideas of al-Farabi is necessary for the realization of the main idea of the virtuous city of al-Farabi – achievement of a common happiness together. It is necessary to ensure that the ideas reach each inhabitant of the city striving for the virtuousness. Pursuing this aim, the international Farabi Forum (under the direct supervision of Mr. Galymkair Mutanov) is being organized for the third year in a row, where the organizer of a today’s symposium – Mr. Vasileyos Syros participated as well.

In the content of the “Al -Farabi university smart city”, as well as in the philosophy of al-Farabi, the understanding of the role of the ruler of the city is particularly important.

It is well-known that the development of the countries and nations is largely determined by the personality of a ruler; which is the reason of many philosophers’ interest in role of the state ruler.

For example, Plato believed that the ruler should be a philosopher seeking for knowledge, he is an honest person, loving the truth and rejecting the lie, since he is the only one able to see an ordered and an ideal existence with no place for injustice. The ancient philosopher argued that only this type of a governor can change the course of history; and the presence of such person in the community will ensure the achievement of yet unrealized ideas. According to Plato, the governor has a good memory, ability for learning, and is just, courageous and wise. [4]

Continuation of the teachings of Plato on the governor of the state can be found in the works of the Al-Farabi. It should be noted that the cardinal point for the whole system of al-Farabi is in the provision stating that “the purpose of human existence is to achieve the highest happiness, which people can achieve only in the virtuous city and often under the guidance of a teacher and mentor” [5]. The virtuous city is different from all other human societies since it is an association of people aimed at mutual assistance in acts, with which the true happiness can be acquired. Self-isolation and loneliness cannot make a man happy. Interestingly, almost exactly the same Kazakh proverb says, “the light of a man can be found with another man”.

Virtuous city of al-Farabi is based on the hierarchy. Hierarchy involves not only the relation of domination and subordination, but also harmony and balance. The hierarchy reflects the objectiveness of the space order, a reflection of which could be found in the reality of Earth’s order. Al-Farabi believed that life on Earth is the reflection of the wonderful harmony of the cosmos since the laws of social development are related to the eternal laws of existence. According to al-Farabi, it is impossible to build a perfect society without knowing the mysteries of the world harmony.

Who should be the ruler of a virtuous city? Another interesting idea of al-Farabi is that people are divided into leaders and followers. Not everyone has the ability to lead. Anyone who is always able to accomplish anything he is indicated to do will never be the leader. Nevertheless, if that person is able to study and learn, he might acquire the ability to lead another person, still being led by another person simultaneously. He is called a second ruler, and according to al-Farabi this kind of leadership can be carried out in agriculture, trading, and in other sectors of the city.

The head of the city in its absolute meaning is the one who does not need to be governed. This man has excellent natural qualities; his soul is connected with an active mind and people governed by such leader, who live together and united by a common place of residence – are the most virtuous, superior and happy people. In modern language such heads of the city are called leaders. They have always played and continue to play a decisive role in the history of mankind thanks to the logical and creative thinking, the courage and high moral principles.

            Head of the city, according to al-Farabi, should possess special leadership qualities, which, in turn, are divided into the innate and the acquired ones. Al-Farabi presents the acquired qualities of head of the virtuous city through his ability to connect with an active intelligence with the help of power of imagination or acquired intellect. He notes that good deeds and statements of the head do not come from him, but are counselled by the active intellect.

Al-Farabi mentions the difficulty of finding the combination of all these qualities in one person since people gifted with such traits are extremely rare.

Al-Farabi believed that the members of the city differ from each other same way as the organs of one body differ in their nature and abilities. And similarly to the hierarchy in the body that terminates at the organs, which do not rule, but only obey, the state hierarchy ends with the social class, whose only responsibility is in subordination and execution of orders.

Al-Farabi compares the head virtuous city with the heart – the main organ of the human body. Heart is the cause of the existence and location of other certain organs of the body. If any of the body organs come to disorder, life of the whole body will not stop, but if the heart fails, the person dies. Al-Farabi considered the heart as a concept closely related to the concept of “soul”, and not only physiologically, but also philosophically. A person manifests his spiritual world through his heart, thanks to it he communicates with other people, with society, nature and God. Al-Farabi attributes to heart all the functions of consciousness: thinking, will, sensation, expression of love and conscience. Moreover, heart is the center of life – physical, spiritual, and mental. It is the source of human experience: it can be a source of love and hatred, heat and cold. If it is opposed to God, then it is “petrified” and “grows cold”. A great Kazakh thinker Abai thinks the same. In his philosophical “Words of edification” he wrote: “Will, mind and heart ... You should unite around the heart and obey it... I will give preference to heart if you do not come to agreement.” [5].

Continuing our thoughts on virtuous city of al-Farabi, we can note that al-Farabi compares the head of the virtuous city with the Supreme Existence because it brings the same order and harmony in the management of the city, which the Supreme Existence contributes to the world harmony. As noted above, ideal for al-Farabi is the unity of knowledge and action – knowledge about the true happiness and actions in accordance with this knowledge. Therefore, one of the tasks of the city head is in directing the citizens to the commitment of acts that lead to the achievement of happiness. Direction to happiness of the citizens of the virtuous city starts with education, strengthening and preserving the virtues in the souls of citizens, as virtues (as well as vices) are assigned as a result of frequent repetition.  We shall note that this task, entrusted to the head of the virtuous city, assumes knowledge of the human soul.

As and when necessitated, the head of the virtuous city should rule in accordance with two rules: the method of persuasion, which is in the first place, and by compulsion, which is to be applied against the rebellious and disobedient citizens who are not voluntarily impelled to the prudence. The head of the virtuous city should manage people with love, because in return this impels a reciprocal feeling from the people. In this state, a person is capable of creativity, achievement of heights in any deed.

The head of the virtuous city should follow the principle of fairness in the distribution of wealth (material and moral). Al-Farabi connects justice with the categories of “middle”, “moderation”. This interpretation of justice is taken from the “Nicomachean Ethics” of Aristotle. Justice, according to al-Farabi, is not equality; instead, it is getting such share of wealth, which corresponds to his position or merit. With such qualities, the head of the virtuous city, of course, is a model for imitation by other members of the city.

In the history of mankind, there are many individuals who have qualities, described by al-Farabi. It should be noted that a number of such leaders can be found among many of our compatriots. Let us dwell on the personality of only one of them – the First President of Kazakhstan - Nursultan Nazarbayev. While analyzing his life and work, it is easy to notice that his personality not only fully complies with the demanding requirements ascribed to the political leaders of the modern state and society, but also personifies a civilized code of a ruler, already comprehended in the works of al-Farabi. There is no doubt that the establishment and development of independent Kazakhstan is closely connected with the name of Nursultan Nazarbayev who has noted in one of his speeches to the students that we are building a virtuous city, of which al-Farabi dreamed about. The history of mankind shows that during the most difficult periods of our development there always appeared leaders able to lead people to the new challenges. And this leader possesses those qualities peculiar to the leaders and is able to take crucial decisions.

According to al-Farabi, the first and the most important quality of the head of the virtuous city is to have “absolutely perfect organs, energies of which are so well-adapted to carry out the actions that they have to perform, that if this person decides to take any action using any organ he will be able to do it easily” [6]. In other words, the head of state must have good health. As a Kazakh proverb says, “The first wealth is health”. Our President is actively involved in sports such as tennis, golf, athletics, skiing, maintains a healthy lifestyle and draws his special attention at propagating similar lifestyle, especially, among young people. It should be noted that this trend is typical for almost all the heads of states of the today’s world.

Our President has always said that our country’s universities have excellent sports facilities and encourages students and teachers to engage in sport and activities, following the example of the world universities that are famous for their magnificent sports teams participating in the universiades, and the sports movements.

Additionally, al-Farabi emphasizes that the head of the virtuous city “should naturally be able to perfectly understand and imagine all that he is said about, reflecting all the spoken in accordance with what he has in mind; should be able to preserve well in his memory all that he knows, sees, hears without forgetting anything” [6]. This, according to al-Farabi, is the property of a perfect mind. N.Nazarbayev has excellent knowledge in various fields of economy, science and arts and has always demonstrated a great understanding of the actual problems in those fields. For example, we have repeatedly witnessed the work of his wonderful memory when he remembered almost every person and the related discussions at the meetings with the young generation – the winners of the state program “Bolashak” initiated by him (a program that gives thousands of talented people the opportunity to study and undergo training in the best universities of the world), as well as at the meetings with business representatives, well-known writers, poets, actors, etc.

Al-Farabi notes that the ruler should “have an expressive style and be able to state clearly all that he conceives; have a love for learning and knowledge, reaching them easily without any fatigue from training, nor pangs from the work” [6]. The well-known oratory skills of our President allow him freely and clearly express his thoughts equally in Kazakh and Russian languages. He constantly strives for knowledge, paying special attention in this study to works on philosophy. The President is the author of such books as “In the flow of history”, “Epicenter of Peace”, “Ten years equal centenary”, “In the Heart of Eurasia”, “The

Another quality of the head of the city that al-Farabi stresses on is “to show determination in the accomplishment of what he considers necessary while being bold, brave, and without any fear and cowardice” [6]. We know that the decision on changing the capital of Kazakhstan from Almaty to Astana was very difficult. In making this decision N.Nazarbayev has demonstrated his courage and the foresight. In history there are many examples of the transfers of the capital, and almost in all cases it took rather long time to accomplish the change. Still, the President of Kazakhstan made a decision (which was dictated by the economic and political conditions) to move the capital in a very short time. The assessment of this bold step is still to be given to time and our descendants, but it is already possible to conclude that he was right.

Al-Farabi notes that the head “must naturally love justice and its advocates... to indemnify the victims of injustice, giving all that he considers good and beautiful” [6]. These are the features of the head of the city showed by N.Nazarbayev in the rehabilitation of numerous victims of Soviet repression in 30-s and 90-s of the XX century.

It is very important to note that al-Farabi compares the head of the city with a person who has a power to “treat the soul” [7]. A doctor treating the body and a statesman who heals the soul have different functions. For example, the doctor treats the hands only to make a person to be able to suffice the objects by hand. He is not interested in what – good or evil – actions this man will do. Al -Farabi notes that the statesman and the ruler should “know the entire soul, its parts, its limitations and deficiencies that contaminate the soul and its parts, and the reasons of contamination; he needs to know those states of mind in which a person conducts good actions; how to eliminate the shortcomings of urban residents; what skillful techniques we must use to achieve the strength (of virtue) in the hearts of the citizens, and know the way to always keep them (these virtues) there” [7].

I consider these requirements to the head of the city to be very reasonable.  A modern ruler at any level should have a very good knowledge both of the health of the body of each of the citizen as well as his soul, and should be able to timely recognize and treat their illnesses. He has to manage the affairs of every part of his city regardless of the size of the city. In modern parlance, the head should be aware of all affairs taking place in his city.

Despite the fact that the city is composed of different buildings that have different goals, he should strive to do something that brings benefit to all the residents; only then the city will function safely and its citizens lead by their wise ruler will reach their noble goal, which is the happiness. These words can be attributed to our university, and the Kazakh society as a whole.

Let us summarize the analysis of the doctrine of al-Farabi about the head of the city.

Al-Farabi establishes a close connection between the human happiness and establishment of the human association. He is sure that happiness is attainable if it is well planned and the people’s lives are wisely directed. This perfectly planned human association is the virtuous city itself.

Unfortunately, there are still ignorant people in the XXIst century engaged in wars and bloodshed, injustice and cruelty. An ignorant person cannot live in harmony with the environment, with people and with himself. These ideas are still relevant today – after more than thousand years after the death of al-Farabi. Most people do not think about the meaning and purpose of life, live by the “programs”: get an education, profession, family, make a career. Still, does it all make a modern man happy?

Undoubtedly, the doctrine of al-Farabi on the virtuous city and its head is very important nowadays. All should agree that the pursuit of happiness is the goal of each of our contemporary, the humanity as a whole. What is the meaning of true happiness, how to achieve it, and who should be the head of the city, who can show us the way to achieve the highest happiness; how should the society of people united by a common purpose look like? Is it all possible? The desire to find answers has formed the basis of the “Al-Farabi university smart city”.

It is true that the university drew attention to the one-sided approach of the creation of contemporary smart cities. This approach is often associated with the creation of comfortable living conditions with the help of science and technology. This results in a poorer meaning and the concept of the smart city. New technologies became dominant and are outrunning the spiritual and moral development of humanity. Non-compliance of the moral levels of society to its level of technical development can sooner or later bring the humanity to disaster.

The current situation requires a new vision on the formation of the moral values that are adequate to modern trends of development of society. Becoming aware of this problem has made the university to develop a research and innovation project called “Al-Farabi university smart city”. In the XXIst century the state of university cities is not only determined by the presence of infrastructure, financial and material resources. Modern universities should have a high level of moral development and should intend to provide special intelligent cities, promote the creation of cultural values ​​of the nation. The project “Al-Farabi university smart city” is aimed at creating a modern university, where the two main principles – the technological and the moral activity – are simultaneously developed in harmony.

This synergy brings the possibility of the transition to a fundamentally new quality of the university city; to the city that is producing new approaches to the development of modern society.

We surely understand the difficulty of building a virtuous city, which is very small in relation to the size of the country and the world overall. Still the work on the implementation of this project, i.e., its components “Sanctify world around yourself!”, “100 books”, “The cult of healthy body”, “Green Campus”, etc, are already yielding positive results. The university management, following the ideas of al-Farabi, has strict requirements to the heads of mini-cities – various structures of the university. The future of virtuous city depends on their personal characteristics, on the level of concordance to the characteristics of the head of the city.

It could be concluded that the philosophical doctrine of al-Farabi remains relevant at all times of development of human society and every modern man can find the answers in the works of al-Farabi to his concerns on all issues of social development as well as his individuality.

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