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## **Conclusive Points**

In the discussion so far a few examples and some extracts from the lives of the Ismaili Imams and some of the Ithna Ashari Imams were discussed. When we look at the history of Ismaili Imams, it is apparent that they were not divinely appointed. They sinned and oppressed, like in the case of al-Hakim. How can we follow someone who sins? The Fatimid/Ismaili Imams had no traits in their lifestyles to show that they were spiritual Imams. They have no noble sayings and their life history has nothing in it that one can say, by looking and following their lifestyle, one could get closer to Allah (swt). The goal of the Prophets and the Imams was to lead mankind closer to Allah (swt), but the Fatimid/Ismaili Imams had no traits that would lead someone closer to the Almighty.

On the other hand, the Imams of the Ithna Ashari Shias were full of knowledge, had impeccable characters, their sayings, their lifestyles and supplications, all lead towards seeking closeness to Allah (swt).

Yes, the Fatimid period was a golden period. Egypt was flourishing; nice mosques and university like al–Azhar were built, I agree that this was a great achievement but this does not mean that the Fatimid were the rightful Imams. Right now, when we go to Saudi Arabia, the Masjid ul–Nabi and the Masjid ul–Haraam are very nicely built. The Saudi's are working very actively in propagating their opinion of Islam. This does not mean that they are on the right path. Let us go a step further, right now the western countries are flourishing and they have very good universities, and they are highly developed nations but this does not mean that they are on the right path.

Bohras are very organized, so this is one of the arguments that Ismaili Bohras give to prove the authenticity of their beliefs. Being organized does not mean that they are on the right path! There are other religions that prevail in the Gujarat region of India and those people are very organized too; does it mean that they are on the right path? Even the Aga Khani Khojas are very organized; does it mean that they are on the right path? Moreover, if the Bohras are on the right path then how come we do not see people accepting their religion? How come the Bohras do not propagate their religion? Dai is supposed to invite people towards the religion, is he doing his job?

When the youth question the Bohra Mullas about the inconsistencies, they are told to follow just like

**their fathers.** There are ayahs in the Quran that condemn following the religion of your forefathers blindly, for example; "When they are told 'Follow what Allah has sent down,' they say, 'We will rather follow what we have found our fathers following,' "what even if their fathers neither applied reason nor were guided?!" 1 This Ayah tells us not to follow blindly what our fathers and forefathers followed. Also tells us, that our fathers and forefathers could have been following the wrong path.

I was told, 'What is the big deal, if one follows 12 Imams or 21 Imams?' They further added by saying 'we follow Imamate too, like we are supposed to. So, what is the big deal?' Well, it is a big deal. Allah (swt) orders us to follow His Prophet (sawa) and the ones vested with authority. If we follow the ones not vested with authority by Allah (swt), then we will go astray. For example: I buy very sophisticated equipment. It comes with an instruction booklet that asks me to call an authorized agent for a demonstration. If I just follow the instruction booklet and not call the authorized agent, then I am not following the instructions of the manufacturer. The manufacturer knows its product and knows that just following the instruction booklet is not enough. Along with the instruction booklet, an authorized agent is necessary. Mind you, it must be an authorized agent, not any leader. In the same way, Allah (swt) knows us. Along with the book, He sent the Messenger (sawa) and the Imams (as). We must follow them all. We must follow the ones He gave the authority to.

It is very important to follow the chain. Yes! It is a big deal. Please take this issue very seriously and do some research. This world as we know is temporary. We are being tested. The real life is the hereafter. I know that work keeps us busy. We need to have a balance. We need to take out time for Allah (swt). We need to seek closeness to Allah (swt). In order to seek closeness to Him, we need to believe in all the Messengers and follow our Prophet (sawa) and all the Imams (as). As we know, Risalat2 and Imamat are both important, because they both are part of the principles of religion.

As per our belief, on the Day of Judgment, we will be called with our Imams; if in this world, we believed in the rightful Imams, the ones that the Holy Prophet (sawa) declared by the order of Allah, then we shall be called with them. Otherwise, God forbid, if we had followed the wrong imams, then we will be in their group. So we definitely do need to do some serious research and use our intellect and decide.

We should research without any bias and we should be careful when we encounter the truth because people react to the truth in different ways. Some know the truth, but due to social pressures, they do not accept the truth. To them, society is more important than the word of the Almighty. They think that they will live in this world forever and look at the worldly things and cling to the earth.

Some say these things do not matter as long as we pray and fast and go to Hajj etc. This is a wrong belief! I repeat that Satan worshipped Allah (swt) like no one else. The only wrong thing he did was to disobey one command of Allah (swt), when he refused to do Sajda3 to Adam (as). Satan refused to obey only one command of Allah (swt), and all the years of his worship were nullified and he was thrown out of the kingdom of mercy. Allah (swt) wants us to worship Him the way he wants to be worshipped. We should really ponder on this. The problem with us, Muslims, is that we pick and choose. The things that

are easy to do or are socially acceptable, or are profitable, we accept them; the ones that we do not want to do for some reason, we reject or justify. The problem with us Muslims is that we do not submit to His laws.

Some say that it does not matter what we believe as long as we do righteous deeds. If one does righteous deeds without belief, is that sufficient? What are the righteous deeds?

In the Holy Quran, whenever we see the mention of righteous deeds, it is accompanied by belief in almost all the ayahs.

For example in Suratul Bayyinat verse 7:

Those who have faith and do righteous deeds, - they are the best of creatures.4

Another example, Suratul Baqarah verse 82:

And those who have faith and do righteous deeds, they shall be the inhabitants of paradise; they shall remain in it (forever).5

And there are many other places where faith and righteous deeds come together. Bottom line: righteous deeds are almost always with faith (Imaan) in Quran.

If one does righteous deeds only, without having faith (Imaan), then it is not enough; these deeds which are apparently good deeds will not help this person in the hereafter.

The Holy Quran, Surah Nur verse 39, says:

As for the faithless, their works are like a mirage in a plain, which the thirsty man supposes to be water. When he comes to it, he finds it to be nothing; but there he finds Allah, who will pay him his full account, and Allah is swift at reckoning.6

What is imaan? If one says the Shahadatain (I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah), is that enough? Does it mean that this person has

The answer is no! As per Quran Suratul Hujurat verse 14:

The Bedouins say, "We have faith." Say, "You do not have faith yet; rather say, "We have embraced Islam," for faith has not yet entered into your hearts. Yet if you obey Allah and His Apostle, He will not stint anything of (the reward of) your works. Indeed Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful."

This ayah is clearly saying that if one embraces Islam, it does not mean that this person has faith. This tells us that more is needed to say that we have faith! One cannot just say that he has faith when he embraces Islam.

Then, what is faith? When can one say that he has faith? Imam Ali (as) in Nahjul Balagha says:

He was asked about faith so he said; faith is to know with one's heart and affirm with one's tongue and to act with one's limbs.8

He (as) is saying that: Imaan is made up of three elements (Rukn), Tongue (Say), Heart (Belief) and Amal (Practice).

Let us ponder on this hadith: If one says the Shahadatain using his tongue but does not believe in it and nor practices it, then what good is it? If one says it and believes in it but does not practice, then what good is it? If one says it, practices it and does not believe in it, he is a hypocrite. Therefore, what Imam Ali (as) had rightly said in order for one to have Imaan, he should say it and believe in it from the bottom of his heart and practice.

What are the righteous deeds? The righteous deeds are those that are required by the divine law. Once a person has Imaan in the true sense (say it, believe in it and practice it), then he will do righteous deeds.

In order to practice and do righteous deeds, then it is important to follow the rightful divine leaders. Otherwise, if we follow the ones who are not divine then we will end up doing deeds that we are assuming are righteous but are like mirages, just like what the ayah of Surah Nur that I quoted above, says.

Following the ones who are not divinely appointed will end up in deeds that are null and void. Some people say that intention counts, if the intention is good then that is all that matters. A good deed, in order to be accepted, must be done right. Otherwise, it will not be accepted, whether the intention was pure or not. I will give a worldly example: Let us take computers for instance; when we are supposed to hit 'enter' and we hit 'back space' instead, the computer will not accept the command. We will go no place, no matter how good our intention is. From this worldly example, we see the results of worldly things right in this world. But we believe in Allah (swt), who is Unseen. We believe in the heaven and hell, which are unseen. We believe in the hereafter, which is unseen, and the rewards or punishment that we accumulate for the deeds we do for the hereafter are unseen. So we do need to be careful and perform the deeds as per the requirement of our Lord the Almighty. We can do that only when we follow the rightful divine representatives sent or appointed by Allah (swt). If we follow any Tom Dick and Harry, we will err.

Enough information was provided in this little booklet for one to seriously ponder about and use the intellect and scrutinize without any bias, in order to seek closeness to the Almighty Allah (swt).

I myself was a Bohra once, I had many questions and after I got my answers I converted to Ithna Ashari Shia sect, and I wanted to share my findings with others. If anyone has any arguments against what I wrote or my beliefs, I am willing to listen. I believe that we should never be biased and we should always leave the lid of our heart open, so that the guidance could seep in.

I would like to conclude with the saying of Nabi Shoayb (as) to his people which is in Qur'an In Suratul Hud verse 88:

He said, "O my people! Have you considered, should I stand on a manifest proof from my Lord, who has provided me a good provision from Himself? I do not wish to oppose you by what I forbid you. I only desire to put things in order, as far as I can, and my success lies only with Allah: in Him I have put my trust, and to Him I turn penitently."10

- 1. Surah Baqarah (2), Ayah 170
- 2. Prophethood
- 3. Prostrate
- 4. Suratul Bayyinat (98), Ayah 7
- 5. Suratul Bagarah (2), Ayah 82
- 6. Suratul Nur (24), Ayah 39
- 7. Suratul Hujurat (49), Ayah 14
- 8. Nahjul Balagha, Saying # 227
- 9. The Bohra calendar discussed earlier proves this point inshaAllah
- 10. Suratul Hud (11), Ayah 88

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