

Imamat Is Guidance We Need

Basra is a big city and the main port of Iraq. It is situated at the mouth of river Euphrates.

There, in a big mosque, people used to assemble to discuss various subjects on Islamic rules and laws. A famous learned priest of Sunni sect by name Amr Bin Ubeid was once preaching on the subject of Imamat. He was surrounded by a big crowd of people who were asking various questions on the subject. Suddenly, a young and intelligent student of Islam by name of Hesham, entered the gathering and sat down in the first row. He addressed the priest saying that he was a stranger and would like to ask some questions. On getting the permission to do so, he asked the following:

Hesham: First, Sir! May I please know if you have eyes?

Amr: Young Boy! Is this a question to be asked?

Hesham: Whatever it may be, this is my question to which I shall appreciate your answer.

Amr: Alright! you are at liberty to ask, even though it is a foolish question.

Hesham: As I have already asked, Sir, may I please know if you have eyes?

Amr: Yes, I have.

Hesham: For what use are they?

Amr: With eyes, I can see faces of people and colour of various things.

Hesham: And you have a nose also?

Amr: Yes, I do have one.

Hesham: What is its function?

Amr: I smell the scent and odour by it.

Hesham: And do you have a mouth?

Amr: Yes I do have.

Hesham: For what use is it?

Amr: I can talk to people or taste food and drinks with it.

Hesham: Do you have ears?

Amr: Yes, I have two ears.

Hesham: What is their function?

Amr: I can hear voices by them.

Hesham: And do you have a mind?

Amr: Almighty has bestowed me with that also.

Hesham: What is its use?

Amr: With that I am able to distinguish things whatever is felt by the other senses like hands, eyes, ears, nose, tongue etc. In case of a difference, I am able to solve with its help. In case of doubt, I can dispel with it and be sure.

Hesham: So, does it mean that despite being sound and healthy, all these organs cannot function independently without the help of the mind.

Amr: No, No! none of the organs can function independently without the help of the mind.

Hesham: Why is it so? After all, are the organs perfect and strong enough to differentiate between things?

Amr: Young Boy! When any organ has some doubt about a thing which it smells, sees or tastes, it brings the matter to the mind and it is the mind which confirms the truth and removes the doubt.

Hesham: So, from what you have said, do you want me to understand that God Almighty has created and designed the mind to guide the organs and remove doubts.

Amr: Yes! It is so.

Hesham: So the mind is a necessity, otherwise the organs could not work independently.

Amr: Yes.

Hesham: Please Sir! Proclaim your opinion with fairness and justice on this point also. If Almighty has not left the organs of man's body without the guidance of the mind, how is it possible that Almighty God could leave millions of His creatures without an IMAM to guide and solve their problems arising out of doubts and conflicts? Should not our common sense accept this fact?

On hearing this logic argument. and having no answer to give, Amr Bin Ubeid kept silent and went into deep thinking.

Hesham was a deeply learned person and one of the closest companions of Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a) from whom he had obtained his knowledge.

'IMAM' is an Arabic word which literally means 'Leader' or 'Guide'. Any leader or guide can be good or bad, true or false. Therefore, it is essential for every Muslim to know what makes and who is a true and good Imam. The Holy Prophet has said: "If a man dies without recognising the Imam of his time, he dies the death of ignorance."

It is of utmost importance that the Imam must be appointed by a Prophet under the command of God, nobody can be an Imam either by claiming to be so, by inheritance or by the wealth or power which he may have.

It is essential that an Imam possess certain characteristics and qualities so that a clear distinction can be made between a true and false Imam. Some of these are as under:

1. An Imam must be free from every defect – Physical as well as Mental;
2. He must be born of legal Marriage;
3. He must be Ma'sum (Infallible–Sinless) like the Prophet – from birth to death;
4. He must possess all knowledge and be the wisest of all human beings of his time;
5. He must know all the languages including those of animals also;
6. He must be able to perform miracles;
7. He must be bold, brave and most courageous;
8. He should be most generous and be able to help needy and weak persons.

In short, an Imam is the Holiest, most Pious of all – after the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S)