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Part 4: It is mandatory to know the Imam of the time

It is mandatory to know the Imam of the time, that people are not helpless in the matter of discarding the obedience of the true Imam, that the one who dies without knowing the Imam of his time will die a death of Kufr and Nifaq (Disbelief and Hypocrisy).

It must be understood that among the Shias, the confession of (belief) in the Imam is one of the principles of faith, and that the one who discards it will be, in the hereafter, with the disbelievers and the polytheists. It should also be known that, in the worldly affairs, they are being dealt with like Muslims. But those who display and express enmity against the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.), like the Kharijis, are considered like disbelievers in the matter of worldly affairs. It is understood from some narrations that, at a time when the Imam is not in power, such inimical fellows too, for relief to the Shias, are being apparently considered as Muslims so that there may be no difficulty in social dealings with them.

But on the reappearance of Hazrat Sahibul Amr (Imam Mahdi a.s.) they will be considered as disbelievers. Most of the Shia scholars are of the opinion that, excepting those who are very weak in their faith, all of such people will remain permanently in Hell. There is hardly anyone among Shia scholars who believes that such inimical people will also get salvation from Hell after remaining therein for a long time.

The Mustadaf (having weak belief) is the one who cannot distinguish between truth and falsehood because of weak sense or the one whom the argument proving the truthfulness of the true faith has not convinced despite the absence of guilt. For example, those who might have been grown up in the palaces of Sunni kings and might not have heard about the difference in faith and who might not have found anyone who could have shown them the truth about the Shia belief. Such people can hope to be forgiven in the hereafter. The truth is that none save the weak ones (Mustadafeen) can hope to get salvation from the divine chastisement. They will suffer Allah's punishment forever.

Both the Ahle Sunnat and the Shias have reported through continuing narrations that the Holy Prophet

(S) says: The one who dies but does not know the Imam of his time will have died the death of ignorance. [Those who died on ignorance and disbelief before the appointment of the Holy Prophet (S) being ignorant of the roots and branches of the faith.]

As regards some prejudiced Sunni speakers who have said that Imam of the time means the Quran, every wise man knows that, to take Book as Imam is against both the open and the hidden knowledge. Moreover the addition of the word 'Zamana' (time) makes it clear that there is an Imam in every time and Quran is the same for all times. So this second reason defeats the arguments that what the Prophet of Allah meant by Imam is the Holy Quran.

Moreover, an Imam of the past is not called 'Imam-e-Zaman' (leader of the time). So it is understood that there must be an Imam for every age whom people may recognize. Excepting the sect of Imamiyah, no sect believes that there is an Imam in every time and that no age remains without an Imam.

Barqui has narrated with reliable chains of narrators through Imam Sadiq (a.s.) that the Holy Prophet (S) said: One who dies but does not know the Imam of his time has died on the religion of ignorance. So it is compulsory for you to obey the Imam of your time. Doubtlessly you have seen companions of Amirul Momineen. What happened to those who did not follow him? So you should not follow anyone else because you are not unable to recognize what is ignorance and who is the Imam. There are verses in the Quran praising us, that is, the verses which talk about our gracefulness and we are the group the obedience of whom has been made compulsory by Allah. All the lands are our booty and the chosen booty is due to us.

It is reported through reliable sources that Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said: The earth does not possess the ability to remain still and to exist but due to the Imam and that the one who died without knowing the Imam of his time has died the death of ignorance. Everyone of you is in a dire need of the knowledge about the Imam when his soul reaches here (pointing his hand to his chest) and said: he will say at that moment that I was on the proper path and the right faith and this is the time when the events of the Hereafter come before his eyes and he observes his condition clearly.

It is narrated with good chains of narrators that Husain bin Abil Ulaa said: I asked Imam Sadiq (a.s.) about this word of the Holy Prophet (S) that if a man who dies without knowing his Imam, his death is the death of ignorance. The Imam replied: Yes, it is true. Had the people followed Imam Ali bin Husain (a.s.) and had they left Abdul Malik Marwani, they would have gained the guidance. We said that the one who dies and does not recognize his Imam dies the death of disbelief. The Hazrat said: No, rather he dies on a path other than that of his prophet. [1](#)

Moreover, it is mentioned with reliable chains of narrators, that Imam Baqir (a.s.) said if a man dies and he did not have any Imam, he had died a death of ignorance and people are not unable to recognize the Imam and a man who dies while knowing his Imam will not be harmed by the appearance of the Imam, be it before that person's death or after it and a man who dies knowing his Imam is like the one who is

with the Imam in his tent [camp].

It is written in *Akmaluddeen* with reliable chains of narrators that people asked Imam Ridha (a.s.): If a man dies without knowing his Imam has he died the death of ignorance? The Hazrat said: Yes, a man who doubts the Imamate of the Imam or desists from him is a denier and the one who denies the Imamate of the Imam or shows enmity towards the Imam is a polytheist, that is, like an idol-worshipper.

Kulaini and Nomani have, with reliable chains of narrators, narrated from Ibne Baseer that people sought the Tafsir of this verse from Imam Ridha (a.s.):

وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنْ اتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ بِغَيْرِ هُدًى مِنَ اللَّهِ.

And who is more erring than he who follows his low desires without any guidance from Allah?
(Sura Qasas 28:50)

The Imam replied: It means the man who acts, in his religion, according to his own opinion without following any of the right guidance of an Imam.

Also Imam Sadiq (a.s.) has said that if a man associates the Imamate of an Imam who has been appointed by Allah with the Imamate of anyone else who is not appointed by Allah is a Mushrik (polytheist) and is like the one who has associated someone with Allah.

Nomani has, with strong chains, narrated from Ibne Abi Yaqoob: I asked Imam Sadiq (a.s.): What about a man who loves you and is fed up with those who are your enemies, recognizes your Halaal as Halaal and your Haraam as Haraam and also believes that Imamate does not go anywhere else from your lineage, but, at the same time, he also says that there are leaders who have differed from this and so, when all will become unanimous I will also become believer in their Imamate. The Hazrat replied: If he dies with this state of mind, he will die a death of ignorance.

Many other similar narrations are there in this connection.

Ali bin Ibrahim and Ibne Babawayh etc have, with reliable chains of narrators, narrated from Imam Baqir (a.s.) that the Lord of the universe will, on the Day of Qiyamat, not let anyone remain so helpless as to say that: O Nourisher! I did not know that the sons of Bibi Fatima (s.a.) are the rulers and guides over all the creation. This verse has been revealed in favor of the Shias of Fatima (s.a.):

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ.

O my servants who have oppressed yourselves by committing numerous sins! Do not be disappointed about the mercy of Allah. Verily, if Allah wishes, He will forgive all sins. Doubtlessly

He is the Forgiver and most Kind. (Sura Zumar 39:53)

What the Hazrat means to say is that they are only the Shias of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) who are entitled to be forgiven. Others do not have this right and that the others will always remain in Hell.

Humairi has, through correct chains of narrators, conveyed from Imam Ridha (a.s.) that the one who likes that there should not be any curtain or veil between him and Allah and who wants to get the mercy of Allah and wishes that Allah also may look mercifully at him should love and befriend the Aale Muhammad (a.s.) and should be aloof from their enemies and follow the Imamate of one of the twelve Imams. Hence the one who does like this will always look towards the mercy and kindness of Allah and the Divine look of mercy and kindness will also not ignore him.

The same gentleman has mentioned in *Uyoon Akhbar* that the Hazrat has, quoting his forefathers, said that the Amirul Momineen (a.s.) said that if a person dies without having faith in anyone of the Imams from our progeny, dies the death of ignorance and Allah will punish him for all his deeds during Islam and ignorance (during his entire life).

In connection with the verse,

وَأَنِّي لَغَفَّارٌ لِّمَن تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَىٰ.

Verily I will forgive the one who left bad deeds and believed and did good deeds and got guidance... (Sura Taha 20:82)

Shaykh Tusi (r.a.) has written in *Majalis* that the Hazrat said: By Allah, if someone repents from polytheism and puts faith in Allah and the Day of Judgement and does good deeds but does not get guidance through our Wilayat and love and through understanding our grace, he will not get any benefit. So the better faith and its part and perfection are the belief in the true Imams and their obedience.

It is mentioned in *Ilalush Sharai* that Hannan bin Sudair asked Imam Sadiq (a.s.): Why is it necessary to know all the Imams who came after the Holy Prophet (S) and not those who were before him? The Hazrat replied:

The reason for this is that the code of life of the Imams who were prior to the Holy Prophet (S) was different from his Islamic Shariat and hence we are not bound to follow their codes. Therefore, it is not compulsory to have their recognition (Ma'refat). On the contrary, the Imams who came after the Holy Prophet (S) are the protectors of his Shariat and hence it is obligatory to know them.

It is mentioned in *Maniul Akhbar* with reliable chains of narrators that Sulaym bin Qays asked Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) about the smallest thing which misguides a man. The Imam (a.s.) replied: It is not to be aware of the man whose obedience is made a must by Allah Almighty and whose guardianship and

love has been made obligatory and who has been designated as His Proof on the earth and also His witness over the creations. Sulaym asked: Who are those persons? Imam (a.s.) replied: They are the ones about whom Allah has said that their obedience is His obedience and His Messenger's obedience and has mentioned:

Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and the Ulil Amr who are from you... (Sura Nisa 4:59)

Hearing this, Sulaym kissed his holy head and said: You have convinced me and have removed my confusion and all doubts from my mind and heart.

In *Ilalush Sharai*, it is narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) that one day Imam Husain (a.s.) came out of his house and went to his companions and said: O People! Allah has not created His servants for any other purpose except that they may know Him. When they will know Him they will worship Him and when they will worship Him this worship of His will make them needless of worshipping others. Hearing this someone asked: O son of the holy Messenger! May my parents be sacrificed for you, what does the recognition (Ma'refat) of Allah means? The Imam replied: It means knowing the Imam of every time whose obedience is compulsory for the people.[2](#)

It is mentioned in *Iqabul Amaal* through Sunni chains of narrators quoting Abu Saeed Khudri that once the Holy Prophet (S) was sitting along with Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) and the companions when the Holy Prophet (S) said: One who said *Laa Ilaaha Illallaah* will enter Paradise. Hearing this the Shaykhain (Abu Bakr and Umar) said: we do say *Laa Ilaah Illallaah*. The Hazrat said: Saying *Laa Ilaah Illallaah* will not be accepted because of this, that is, because of Amirul Momineen (a.s.) and his Shias. Then both the persons (Shaykhain) repeated: We say *Laa Ilaah Illallaah*. Then the Messenger of Allah (S) passed his holy hand over the head of Ali (a.s.) and said:

The sign of the acceptance of your witness is that you should not break his allegiance and should not snatch his rank and should not ascribe falsehood to his word.

According to reliable sources, Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said: From us only is the Imam whose obedience is obligatory. One who denies this and dies, dies the death of either a Jew or a Christian. Allah has never left the earth without an Imam ever since He sent Adam (a.s.) in the world. There always has been an Imam because of whom people got guidance from Allah and he was a Hujjat (proof) of Allah over people. Whoever opposed his obedience was being destroyed and whoever obeyed him used to get salvation. It is incumbent on Allah that it should be so always.

Kulaini has, with reliable chains of narrators narrated from Imam Baqir (a.s.) that: He does not worship Allah who does not know Allah. But the one, who does not know Allah, does worship with deviation (misguidance).

The narrator asked: What is the knowledge (Ma'refat) of Allah? The Imam (a.s.) replied: He should testify Allah, testify His messenger and have faith in the Imamate of Ali (a.s.) and also obey them and

also obey the Imam's guidance. He must also be disgusted with their enemies. This is how Allah should be known.

Kulaini, Barqui and Nomani have, with true and reliable chains of narrators, narrated from Imam Baqir (a.s.) that if someone worships Allah and takes trouble in his worship with utmost care but who does not believe in the just Imam who has been appointed by Allah then. Surely, his trouble and care in worship of Allah will not be accepted. He is misguided and wayward. His example is like that of a lamb which has gone away from its shepherd and its folk and it might have wandered throughout the day.

Then at night it saw another fold of lambs with another shepherd and joined it and passed the night with it. Next morning when that shepherd took his lambs to the grassland it realized that neither that fold is its own nor that shepherd. Therefore it departed from them and wandered for the whole day in search of its own group and shepherd. Then it saw another fold and wanted to join it but that shepherd rebuked it saying 'Go and join your fold as you lost your group and are anxiously wandering.' Hearing this it returned worried and fearful, as it had neither a shepherd who would lead it to the grazing land nor to its home. Suddenly a wolf saw it and in such condition attacked and devoured it taking the benefit of its loneliness.

Similarly if there is a man in this Ummah who has no divinely appointed Imam and who may be just, he too will go on wandering in misguidance anxiously and if he dies in such condition he will have died the death of Kufr (blasphemy) and Nifaq (hypocrisy). So understand that the true Imams and their followers are on the path of Allah and those false Imams who are away from Allah's Path and who are deviated and who also misguide others are like the ash that is scattered by whirlwind. Such people are not in control of whatever they earn except a far-fledged misguidance.^{[3](#)}

Ibne Babawayh has, with reliable chains of narrators, narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) that the Imam is an Alam (standard) and a Sign between the Creator and the creation. So the one who recognizes (knows) him is a believer and the one who does not know him is a disbeliever (denier).

Nomani has, with reliable chains of narrators, narrated that Muhammad bin Muslim asked Imam Baqir (a.s.): Please inform me about the condition of a man who denies any Imam among you. The Imam said:

A man who denies (disbelieves) an Imam who has been appointed by Allah and who shows disgust towards our faith is a disbeliever and he is an apostate who has left Islam because the Imam is from Allah and his faith is the faith of Allah. So when that fellow shows disgust towards the faith of Allah his blood becomes permissible(to be shed) unless he returns to the faith and repents before Allah for whatever he had said.

^{[1](#)}. The writer says: it is possible that what is meant by this tradition is that he cannot be called a Kafir in this world or it means people of weak faith as is narrated by the same gentlemen in other reliable tradition, that is, their death occurs in a state of disbelief, misguidance and hypocrisy.

^{[2](#)}. The writer says: The knowledge of the Imam has been called the knowledge of Allah because we cannot know Allah

except through the Imam. Or it may be because the knowledge of Allah does not give any benefit but through the knowledge of the Imam. Or it may be because if a man knows Allah as such existence [someone] Who left people wandering and Who did not appoint any guiding Imam for them has not known Allah with His attributes of wisdom, tenderness and Mercifulness.

3. The writer says: This example is given on the basis that, for example, a man who has a true Imam but who does not obey his vicegerent but goes to anyone of the false leaders. There he observes things which are against what he had seen and heard from the true Imam. So he hates his leader and goes to yet another false leader and finds the same wrong things. Then the false leader also, seeing the opposition of that person, drives him away fearing that he would take away his other followers too. This continues until, Satan, who is the wolf on the path of religion, taking benefit of the anxiety of that person, drives him totally out of the fold of religion or destroys him by luring him towards the obedience of any false Imam.

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