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Responsibility 31: Vigilance in Mentioning the Imam

We should not take the ‘proper name’ of Imam al-Zaman (ajtf) when we mention him and should observe taqiyyah (dissimulation) as much as possible. The proper name of the Imam is his first name which is the same as the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ). Since we are not permitted to refer to him by his proper name, we should refer to him through his titles and names of appellation.

Without a doubt, it is forbidden (haram) to mention the name of the Imam in gatherings in which the enemies of the religion are present and any place where there is a fear of the enemies. If there is fear that danger may come to a person, then it becomes forbidden to mention the title of the Imam and the names or titles of the other A`immah as well.

However, the prohibition of not mentioning the name of the Imam in other instances, for example in gatherings in which there is no fear or danger of the enemies of Islam, and where it is not necessary to observe taqiyyah. This is a matter of debate amongst our scholars. However that which we deduce from the traditions which speak about this issue is that it is prohibited to mention his proper name (in any gathering).

The Messenger of Allah (S) has said:

هُوَ الَّذِي لَا يُسَمِّيهِ بِاسْمِهِ ظَاهِرًا قَبْلَ قِيَامِهِ إِلَّا كَافِرٌ بِهِ

“He is the one whom no one calls by his (proper) name openly before his advent, except the one who disbelieves in him.”¹

The Messenger of Allah has also said:

فَلَا يَحِلُّ لِأَحَدٍ أَنْ يُسَمِّيَهُ أَوْ يُكْنِيَهُ بِاسْمِهِ وَكُنْيَتِهِ قَبْلَ خُرُوجِهِ صَلَوَاتُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ

“It is not permitted for anyone to call him by his name or his title before his advent, may the blessings of Allah be upon him.”[2](#)

There are many reliable traditions found in the well-known books of hadith on this issue which reach to the level of *mustafihā*[3](#) rather, they reach to the level of being *mutawatir-e-ma'nawī*[4](#) and tell us that it is impermissible to mention the name and title of Imam al-Mahdi (ajtf) before his advent.[5](#)

It is permissible to mention the name of the Imam in supplications and the whispered prayers (Munajat) which are recited in private, however one should keep away from this in large gatherings and according to *ihtiyat*[6](#) it is still better not to do this.

The same holds true for mentioning the name of the Imam in secret and in one's heart such that only the person himself can hear what he is saying this too is permitted, however it is better to observe precaution in these regards as well.

In addition, it also goes against precaution to mention the proper name of the Imam in writings and books. Thus, from the time of the late Shaykh Kulayni [7](#) until now, we see that our great scholars have not mentioned the name of Imam al-Zaman (ajtf) in their books or writings and the methodology of our scholars is constant and none of them have gone against this custom.

Mentioning the proper name of the Imam (ajtf) through the use of the individual letters of his name (م ح م د) as a way of indicating him is permissible and just as it was previously stated, his name is the same as the name of the Messenger of Allah and his title is the same as that of the Prophet of Allah (S).

This same ruling (about mentioning him) applies in regards to remembering him by his name and title in closed gatherings and programs those gatherings in which the Shi'a, especially those particular Shi'a such as the 'Ulama and the pious people are present as long as there is no fear or danger and there is no need to be in a state of *taqiyyah*.[8](#)

So, what is the reason for it to be prohibited to mention the name and title of the Imam? Numerous reasons can be cited why it is forbidden to mention his name, however we must concede that the true reason for this prohibition has been hidden from us (by Allah, the Prophet and the A'imma).

Another name of Imam al-Mahdi (ajtf) which is also one of the names of the Prophet is Ahmad. So the question arises that is it also forbidden to mention the Imam by this name? In brief we can state that it is not forbidden to call the Imam with this name, however, according to precaution, it is better to refrain from this as well.

From some of the traditions, we can deduce that it is also prohibited to mention the specific title which the Imam is known by, as it shares the same ruling as mentioning his proper name.

Some people state that it is forbidden to mention his name and titles and we must not call him by such things is this true? In answer to this we state that the strongest opinion[9](#) is that it is not forbidden to

mention the titles of Imam al-Mahdi (ajtf). However, according to precaution it is not permitted and this is how we should tread in these regards (by observing this precaution).

فِي حَدِيثِ الْخِضْرِ: وَأَشْهَدُ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِنْ وَلَدِ الْحُسَيْنِ لَا يُكْنَى وَلَا يُسَمَّى حَتَّى يَظْهَرَ أَمْرُهُ

In the tradition of al-Khidhr it has been mentioned: “And I bear witness to that man who will come from the children of al-Husain (as) whose title will not be expressly mentioned nor will his name be called until his advent.”¹⁰

- ^{1.} Mikyal al-Makarim, vol. 2, pg. 111; Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol. 12, page 285, sec. 31, no. 14106
- ^{2.} Mikyal al-Makarim, vol. 2, pg. 117; Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol. 12, page 280, sec. 31, no. 14095
- ^{3.} Any tradition that has not reached the level of being classified as being Tawatur is called Khabar-e-Wahid. However, if the number of narrators of the tradition is greater than three, then that tradition is referred to as a mustafidh tradition which is one of the best types of “khabar-e-wahid” tradition.
- ^{4.} A Mutawatir tradition is of two types: The literal/verbal and the figurative/abstract. The literal/verbal mutawatir tradition is one in which the words of the various traditions are exactly the same with no difference in them while the figurative/abstract mutawatir tradition is one in which the words and phrases are not exactly the same, however their content is similar and thus, all of the hadith on that one topic have the same content and substance with different wordings.
- ^{5.} Please refer to books such as Kamal ad-Din wa Tamam an-Ni'mah, vol. 2; Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol. 2; al-Kafi, vol. 2
- ^{6.} Ihtiyat is in the meaning of a recommended precaution here.
- ^{7.} His exact birth date is not known, however he passed away in the year 328 or 329 and had seen the special representatives of Imam al-Zaman عليه السلام and his book al-Kafi is also one of the Kutub al-Arbah or Four Major books of Shi'a tradition and is the most important of all of them.
- ^{8.} It is our opinion that in this era, the name of the Imam عليه السلام can be mentioned without any fear and when we look at the history and see the fear and fright of the past which does not exist today and thus, it is not necessary to refrain from calling the Imam عليه السلام by his name.
- ^{9.} That which the Mujtahid feels is the most correct way and which is also in the meaning of Ihtiyat Mustahab.
- ^{10.} Kamal ad-Din wa Tamam an-Ni'mah, vol. 1, pg. 315; al-Ihtijaj, pg. 267

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