The Recognition of Imam al-'Asr: Significance and Obligations

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This text discusses the significance and obligations of the recognition of the Imam of our Time, Imam Mahdi. It sheds light on the topics of belief, disbelief, deviation, Imamate, and duties and responsibilities towards our Imam.

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بسم الله الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

و صلى الله عليك يا وليّ العصر أدركنا

Prophets Ibrahim (a.s.) and Yaqoub (a.s.) advised their sons thus:

وَوَصَّىٰ بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ يَا بَنِيَّ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ لَكُمُ الدِّينَ فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

And the same did Ibrahim enjoin on his sons and (so did) Yaqoub. O my sons! Surely Allah has chosen for you (this) faith, therefore die not unless you are Muslims. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 132)

In another verse, Allah the Almighty addresses the believers,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

O you who believe! Be careful of (***your duty to***) ***Allah with care which is due to Him, and do not die unless you are Muslims.*** (***Surah Aali Imran, 3: 102***)

In another verse, He notifies,

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ اللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيَقُولُونَ نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا بَيْنَ ذَٰلِكَ سَبِيلًا

أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ حَقًّا ۚ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَلَمْ يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ سَوْفَ يُؤْتِيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

Surely those who disbelieve in Allah and His Apostles, and (***those who***) ***desire to make a distinction between Allah and His Apostles and say: We believe in some and disbelieve in others; and desire to take a course between*** (***this and***) ***that.***
These it is that are truly unbelievers, and We have prepared for the unbelievers a disgraceful chastisement.
And those who believe in Allah and His Apostles and do not make distinction between any of them - Allah will grant them their rewards and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (***Surah an-Nisaa, 4: 150-152***)

In yet another verse, Allah the Almighty gives tidings,

آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۚ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ ۚ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا ۖ غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ

الْمَصِيرُ

The Apostle believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers; they all believe in Allah and His angels and His books and His Apostles; We make no difference between any of His Apostles and they say: We hear and obey, our Lord! Thy forgiveness (do we crave), and to Thee is the eventual course. (***Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 285***)

On paying attention to the above verses, it becomes amply clear that to accept Allah and whatever He has revealed, and to obey Him, is belief. On the flip side, refuting anything revealed by Him is disbelief and for the unbelievers, Allah the Almighty has prepared a painful chastisement.

True Islam

We should strive to ensure that our lives end on Islam (i.e. we die as Muslims). For this, it is essential that we must subscribe to all that Allah the Almighty has revealed and the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) has conveyed.

It is easy to believe in something. Anybody can believe in anything. But only that creed can guarantee salvation, which has been endorsed by those whom Allah has chosen as witnesses over this nation. Allah the Almighty has appointed the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) and the infallible Imams (a.s.) as witnesses over this nation.

On the Day of Judgment, only those, whose belief and creed has been verified by these holy personas (a.s.), will gain deliverance.

True Beliefs

Sayyed Abdul Azeem Ibn Abdullah al-Hasani (a.r.) was a highly revered personality from the progeny of Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba (a.s.), whose resplendent shrine is in Rayy, a suburb of present day Tehran, Iran. The reward of visiting his shrine is as much as that of going to the holy shrine of Imam Husayn (a.s.). He enjoyed an extremely great position and had attained a high level of perfection in knowledge and virtues.

He is the pride of the family of Prophethood and Imamat. Fountains of guidance have gushed out from his clan. But concerning truth and correctness of his belief, he does not rely on his knowledge and pre-eminence. Rather, he goes to the Imam of his time, Imam ‘Ali Naqi (a.s.), presents his beliefs to him (a.s.) for verification and deems him (a.s.) to be a witness over his creed. Come, let us hear it from the source himself.

"I went to the presence of my blessed master, Imam ‘Ali Naqi (a.s.). On seeing me, he (a.s.) remarked,

'Welcome, O Abul Qasim! You are our true friend.' I requested, 'O son of Allah's Messenger! I want to present my beliefs and creed before you. If you declare these beliefs to be correct and are satisfied with them, I will remain steadfast on them and meet the Lord with them.' He (a.s.) ordered , 'Go ahead, explain them.'

I declared, 'I believe that.

Tawhid (Divine Monotheism)

Allah, the High and the Almighty, is only One. None is like Him. He is between the two limits, the limit of denial and the limit of immanence (similarity). He is neither body nor form nor accident nor essence. Rather, He is the Creator of bodies, the Maker of forms, the Originator of accidents and essences. He is the Lord of everything and their Master. He is their Originator and He is the One to grant them existence from non-existence.

Prophethood

I deem Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.w.a.) to be the slave of Allah, His Messenger and His last Prophet. There will be no prophet after him till the Day of Judgment. His Shariah is the last Shariah and there will be no other Shariah till the Day of Resurrection.

Imamat

I believe that after Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.w.a.), the Imam, the Caliph, and the one in authority (Wali al-Amr) is Ameerul Mu'mineen 'Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.), followed by his two sons, Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba (a.s.) and Imam Husayn (a.s.), the Chief of the Martyrs. Thereafter, Imam 'Ali Ibn Husayn (Zainul Aabedeen) (a.s.), Imam Muhammad Ibn 'Ali (Baqer) (a.s.), Imam Ja'far Ibn Muhammad (Sadeq) (a.s .), Imam Moosa Ibn Ja'far (Kazem), Imam 'Ali Ibn Moosa (Reza) (a .s .), Imam Muhammad Ibn 'Ali (Taqi) (a.s.), and after him, you, O master!

Mahdawwiyah

{On hearing this} Imam (a.s.) remarked, 'After me, my son Hasan (Askari) (a.s.), followed by his successor. What will be the condition of the people concerning his successor?'

I asked, 'Master! W hat will be this condition and what will happen?'

He (a.s.) informed, 'He will not be seen. It will not be permitted to remember him by his name till he reappears and fills the earth with justice and equity as it would be fraught with injustice and tyranny.'

Tawalla (Loving the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.)) and Tabarra (Expressing Disgust Against their Enemies):

I said, 'Master! I acknowledge their Imamat and believe that their friend is Allah's friend and their enemy is Allah's enemy. T heir obedience is tantamount to obeying Allah and disobeying them is defying Allah.

Day of Judgment

I believe that the ascension (Me'raaj) is truth, questioning in the grave is truth, paradise is truth, hell is truth, the bridge (Seraat) is truth and the weighing scale (Mizan) is truth. Certainly, the Day of Judgment is bound to arrive and there is no doubt or reservation about its advent. And most surely, Allah, the Powerful, will raise the dead from their graves.

Branches of Religion

I subscribe to the creed that after Imamat and Mastership of the Ahlul Bayt (a s.), the following obligations exist: Prayers, Fasting, Hajj, Struggling in Allah's way, Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil.'

After hearing all these, Imam 'Ali Naqi (a.s.) exclaimed,

"O Abul Qasim! Surely this is the very religion that Allah has chosen for His servants. Be steadfast on it. May Allah keep you committed on this in this world as well as the Hereafter!"[1]

Another Chain

There is a very important ziyaarat of Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) called Ziyaarat Aale Yaseen. Renowned traditionalist Shaikh Abbas Qummi (r.a.) has mentioned it as the very first ziyaarat of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) in his celebrated work , 'Mafaateeh al-Jena an'. It is highly recommended to recite this ziyaarat on Mondays and Fridays.

These beliefs have been stated in this ziyaarat as well and Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) himself is made as a witness over these beliefs.

"Then you be a witness on what I have made you as a witness."

1. Kamaal al-Deen, vol. 2, p. 379-380

The lowest grade of belief: Ameerul Mu'mineen 'Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) states,

"The bare minimum by which a person becomes a believer is that when Allah introduces Himself, he should submit himself completely and absolutely before His commands.

And when He grants him the recognition of His Prophet (s.a.w.a.), he must obey him (s.a.w.a.). And when He introduces His Proof and His Witness on His earth to him, he should acknowledge him and

obey him (a.s.)."

On this Sulaym asked Ameerul Mu'mineen (a.s .), "Even if he remains un aware of other realities?"

He (a.s.) replied, "Yes. This will apply till he continues to obey what has been made obligatory on him and refrains from what has been prohibited."1

The lowest grade of disbelief: In the same tradition, Ameerul Mu'mineen (a.s.) proceeds to explain the minimum thing that makes a person an unbeliever.

"The minimum that makes a person an unbeliever that he considers Allah's command as prohibition and that Allah has determined for him a religion which he is following, and he thinks that he is worshipping as per the dictates of Allah, although the fact is that he is venerating the Devil."

The lowest grade of deviation

"And the minimum level of deviation is that man does not recognize Allah's proof, His witness up on the creatures, whose obedience has been ordered by Allah and whose leadership and mastership is compulsory."2

Please Note

Man is either a believer or an unbeliever or deviated. In this tradition, Ameerul Mu'mineen (a.s.) has provided the standards for all three.

Belief is that man recognizes Allah, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) and the Imam of his time. Along with this recognition, he also worships Allah and obeys His Messenger and the Imam.

Disbelief is that man denies all that has been revealed or acknowledges that which Allah has not revealed. He accepts them as his Prophet and Imam whom Allah has not appointed.

Deviation is that he denies the Imamat and mastership of those whom Allah has deemed to be His Proofs on the earth and made them as His Witnesses on the people.

To believe in the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) and his recognition implies that we recognize him (s.a.w.a.) as Allah has introduced him (s.a.w.a.). Moreover, we should believe that he (s.a.w.a.) enjoys all those positions and stations that Allah has determined for him (s.a.w.a.).

It is evident and everybody is aware of the fact that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) is the chief of all messengers and prophets (a.s.). He is the last of all His messengers and prophets (a.s.). Messengership and Prophet hood has ended with him (s.a.w.a.). Now, till the Day of Judgment, no messenger or prophet will arrive.

His shariah is the last heavenly shariah and his book, the Holy Qur'an, is the last divine and heavenly book. Islam is the last and most perfect of all religions. Things that have been made permissible by it shall remain so till the Day of Judgment and articles that have been prohibited by it shall remain so till the Day of Judgment.

To believe in Allah's Proofs connotes that we believe only in the leadership, mastership and caliphate of those appointed by Allah; who's following is the guarantee for salvation, and whose love and obedience are deemed to be the keys of paradise. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) has fixed their number to be twelve and prophesied, "After me, till the Day of Judgment, the number of my successors will be twelve. All of them will be from Quraish.

The first of them will be 'Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) and the last and twelfth will be the son of Hasan al-Askari (a.s.), the Hujjah, the Mahdi. Allah will grant him a long life and keep him in occultation. During his concealment, people will benefit from his existence like they draw advantage from the sun when it hides behind the clouds."3

Our Prophet is the Last Prophet

From the above, we can easily deduce that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) is the seal of all of His Messengers and Prophets (a.s.), Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is the last Imam, the Majestic Qur'an is the last book and Islam is the last religion.

But from times ancient, anti-Islamic forces, imperialist powers and Zionist conspirators have tried their best to create obstacles in these universally accepted and firmer than mountain beliefs of the Muslims, and to deviate them from the right path.

Therefore, there were a few from the community, willing to sell their conscience and negligent of realities, who claimed the elevated station of Mahdawwiyah. Worse are their followers, who throw their leaders into further depths by becoming their ardent fans, to the extent that they (the claimants) seriously start considering themselves as a Prophet or an Imam. Meanwhile, the Holy Qur'an has declared in no uncertain terms:

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ قَالَ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ وَلَمْ يُوحَ إِلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ وَمَنْ قَالَ سَأُنْزِلُ مِثْلَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ ۗ وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذِالظَّالِمُونَ فِي غَمَرَاتِ الْمَوْتِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ بَاسِطُو أَيْدِيهِمْ أَخْرِجُوا أَنْفُسَكُمُ ۖ الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُونِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَقُولُونَعَلَى اللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَكُنْتُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِهِ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ

"And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah, or says; it has been revealed to

me; while nothing has been revealed to him, and he who says: I can reveal the like of what Allah has revealed and if you had seen when the agonies of death and the angels shall spread forth their hands: Give up your souls: today shall you be recompensed with an ignominious chastisement because you spoke against Allah other than the truth and (***because***) ***you showed pride against His communications."*** (***Surah al-An'aam, 6: 93***)

Similarly, in another verse, it warns,

وَمِنَ الْإِبِلِ اثْنَيْنِ وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ اثْنَيْنِ ۗ قُلْ آلذَّكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ أَمِ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ أَمَّا اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْحَامُ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ ۖ أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ وَصَّاكُمُ اللَّهُ بِهَٰذَا ۚ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا لِيُضِلَّ النَّاسَ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

And two of camels and two of cows. Say: Has He forbidden the two males or the two females or that which the wombs of the two females contain? Or were you witnesses when Allah enjoined you this? Who, then, is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah that he should lead astray men without knowledge? Surely Allah does not guide the unjust people. (***Surah al-An'aam, 6: 114***)

False Claimants

Besides these clear statements, Allah the Almighty has made such fantastic arrangements, which expose these false claimants and show their true colors. They forgot that they as well as their followers are/were believers of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) and the Holy Qur'an. When Allah the Almighty declares our Prophet to be the last of all Prophets and the Holy Qur'an to the final of all revelations, then where does the question of someone else's Prophethood arise? And if they don't believe in our Prophet and do not regard the Holy Qur'an as their book, the fact stands that till date Allah the Almighty has not sent a Prophet or a Messenger, who has not verified the previous prophets and accepted their books.

Hence, if these false claimants accept the prophethood of our Prophet and acknowledge the truth of the Majestic Qur'an, then the Book of Allah as well as the Prophetic traditions declare very clearly that Muhammad is the last messenger and Islam is the final religion. Therefore, the question of another prophethood is completely ruled out and when the possibility of another prophethood is refuted, the discussion of another religion is rejected at the very outset.4

And if these false claimants do not accept the Prophethood of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.), then such a person can never claim to be a divine prophet, who does not verify the prophethood of the previous prophets and their books. Hence, these false claimants cannot proof their claim in any manner whatsoever.

How meaningful and consequential are the following verses of the Noble Qur'an! Keeping brevity in consideration, we will take the opportunity of giving only the translation.

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ لَمَا آتَيْتُكُمْ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهُ ۚ قَالَ أَأَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَخَذْتُمْ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكُمْ إِصْرِي ۖ قَالُوا أَقْرَرْنَا ۚ قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوا وَأَنَا مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

فَمَنْ تَوَلَّىٰ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

أَفَغَيْرَ دِينِ اللَّهِ يَبْغُونَ وَلَهُ أَسْلَمَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ

قُلْ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَالنَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

And when Allah made a covenant through the Prophets: Certainly what I have given you of Book and wisdom– then an apostle comes to you verifying that which is with you, you must believe in him, and you must assist him. He said: Do you affirm and accept My pact in this matter? They said: We do affirm. He said: Then bear witness, and I too am of the bearers of witness with you. Whoever therefore turns back after this, these it is that are the transgressors.

Is it then other than Allah's religion that they seek (to follow), and to Him submits whoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him shall they be returned.

Say: We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, an d what was revealed to Ibrahim and Ismail and Ishaq and Yaqoub and the tribes, and what was given to Musa and Isa and to the prophets from their Lord; we do not make any distinction between any of them, and to Him do we

submit.
And whoever desires a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers. (***Surah Aali Imran, 3: 81-85***)

Seal of the Prophets

The aforementioned verses unmistakably declare that it is compulsory and obligatory to believe in all the previous prophets, messengers, and the books revealed on them. Moreover, Allah will not accept any religion other than Islam. Apart from the above, we present hereunder three verses from the Holy Qur'an and one tradition that plainly announce our Prophet to be the last Prophet and Islam to be the final divine religion.

1.

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ وَلَٰكِنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men but he is the Messenger of Allah and the seal of the Prophets. And Allah is the Knower of all things. (***Surah al-Ahzaab, 33: 40***)

This verse evidently announces of the finality of the Holy Prophet's (s.a.w.a.) prophethood.

2.

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ ۖ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُمِّيِّ الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَكَلِمَاتِهِ وَاتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

Say: O people! surely I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, of Him Whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth there is no god but He; He brings to life and causes to die therefore believe in Allah and His messenger, the Ummi Prophet who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him so that you may walk in the right way. (***Surah al-A'raaf,7: 158***)

In the above verse, the terms, 'O people!' and 'to you all' explain that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) is not confined to a particular era or to a special group or generation of people. Rather, his messengership and prophethood is universal and forever.

3.

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ

He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth, that He might cause it to prevail over all religions, though the polytheists may be averse. (***Surah at-Tawbah, 9: 33***)

Noticeably, domination and overpowering imply that this religion will continue to survive till the day of resurrection. Had Allah the Almighty revealed any religion other than Islam and raised any other Prophet, certainly this religion and Prophet would have abrogated Islam just as Islam had abrogated the laws of the previous prophets.

In this case, Islam should not gain clear victory and domination over other religions. But when Allah the Almighty is clearly declaring that We have raised Our Messenger with Islam to grant it victory and domination over all religions and sects, then such triumph can be achieved only when Islam is the last heavenly religion and no other religion ensues. This, undoubtedly, is the fact that Allah has not sent any other shariah or religion or sect after Islam.

4. The following tradition is present in most of the authentic books of the Shias as well as the Sunnis. Addressing ‘Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.), the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) declared,

"أنت مني بمنزلة هارون من موسى ، إلا أنه لا نبي بعدي"

"You are unto me as Haroon was to Moosa except for the fact that there is no prophet after me."

After these irrefutable and undeniable proofs, the falsity of all claimants of prophethood after the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) stands exposed, whether he is the Punjabi of undivided India, Ghulam Ahmad Qaadiyaani, or the Iranian, ‘Ali Mohammad Shirazi, known as Baab.

Interestingly, the teachings and ethics, which they claim to be their creation, are all plagiarized from the Holy Qur’an and traditions, and not a single of these belong to them. And whatever actually belongs to these (impostors) is replete with contradictions. These inconsistencies and paradoxes are sufficient proofs that they had nothing to do with Allah.

Before claiming divinity, they had averred Mahdawwiyah. The sequence of events was as follows: Initially, they claimed to be the representative and door (Baab) of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), thereafter, they claimed to be the Mahdi, then a Prophet and finally, God. Since there is no position beyond divinity and

godhood, they stopped at it. Incongruities in these claims are sufficient evidences to expose these opportunistic claimants.5

1. Al-Kaafi, vol. 2, p. 414, Tr. No. 1
2. Ibid. p. 415
3. Saheeh al-Muslim, vol.2, p. 19; Mataaleb al-So'l, vol. 2, p. 79; Kamaal al-Deen, vol. 1, p. 280; Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 52, p. 93
4. Tableegh al-Resaalat, vol. 2, p. 144; Ayyaam al-Sulh, p. 146
5. Talkhis al-Tarikh al-Nabeel, p. 317 by Haikaluddin

We have already mentioned that after the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.), the number of his successors and the leaders of this nation is twelve. The first of them is 'Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) and the last is Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), who is still alive and in occultation on Allah's command.

On analyzing these false claimants, the following consequences come to light:

1) The presence of false claimants proves the existence of the true claimant to this esteemed position. The counterfeit of only those currencies are available, which are actually in circulation. Hence, one can never find a 75 paise coin or a 25 rupee counterfeit note in the market.

2) An important peculiarity of the real Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is that he will spread Islam to the nooks and corners of the world. The Islamic slogan 'There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah" will echo throughout the universe. All these bogus charlatans have departed from this world but failed in making Islam as the dominant religion of the universe. On the contrary, they became the cause of further dissension and disputes among the Muslims.

3) Yet another significant characteristic of the real Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is that his Imamat and leadership will continue till the Day of Judgment. Immediately after his death, Resurrection will occur. These phony claimants have already left this world, causing confusion and chaos with all their deviations and no sign of Resurrection. T heir demise without the occurrence of Resurrection is another proof of their falsity.

4) Yet another very important feature of Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s.) leadership, which has been highlighted in all books concerning him, is that he will fill the earth with justice, fairness and equity as it would be fraught with injustice, tyranny and oppression. These sham impostors neither reduced the oppression and tyranny of the world nor did they fill it with justice and fairness. The converse was the reality. They became the cause of intense augmentation and increase in tyranny and oppression. This is another evidence of their deception and fallacy.

5) Allah the Almighty has never appointed any fallible and sinning person as a Prophet or an Imam. Human intellect supports the idea that a person who is responsible for the guidance of the entire humanity and is the guarantor of their salvation has to be infallible (ma'soom). While, we observe that

among all these fake claimants, none were infallible. A brief look at their lives will reveal the filth and contamination in which they existed.

6) The true representatives of Allah always raised their voice against injustice and oppression. Consequently, the tyrants and their despotic reigns always opposed them and afflicted them with all kinds of tortures and troubles. On the other hand, these sham impostors assisted the oppressors in their mischievous designs and considered rebellion against the tyrants as prohibited.

Obviously, they had to support these oppressors for otherwise, from where would they receive support and assistance for their devious aims? This is precisely the reason that even today their head offices are based in imperialist and colonial capitals. For instance, while intense war rages on in Palestine, Bahaism continues to have its headquarters in Israel. Similarly, Qaadiyanism has its main centers in Britain and the United States. Obviously, children feel secure in the lap of their parents and are nourished in better there.1

For details, refer to books on Finality of Prophethood and on Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). Moreover, reliable and authentic books have been penned in refutation of these self-idolizing impostors and their sham religions.

These few lines have been jotted down to caution all from being deceived by every false claimant and glib talker, and to preserve our religion and belief.

The Messenger of Allah, Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.w.a.) is the last Prophet, his Shariat is the last Shariat and the Majestic Qur'an is a divine book. After him (s.a.w.a.), there is neither any prophet nor book nor religion. Even today, he (s.a.w.a.) is a Prophet and hence, everyday we proclaim in our azaan and our prayers, ' I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.)'. Not that he 'was' the Messenger of Allah, but he 'is' the Messenger of Allah.

Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is the twelfth and last of the chain of leadership and guidance. He is alive and in occultation on divine command. Further information concerning Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) will be provided for in the coming pages, Inshallah.

Blessings of Allah be on you, O Master of Age, help us!

The belief in the Imamat, awaiting, and reappearance of Hazrat Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is a mirror, which reflects the peak and perfection of true Islam.

In it lies the cure of oppressed mankind and the remedy for tyrannized humanity.

In which one can observe justice, equity, brotherhood and fraternity, instead of injustice, oppression and tyranny.

In which one sees the manifestation of pure monotheism (Tawhid) and sincere worship instead of

polytheism and unbelief.

In which man, free from all sorts of dangers, hazards and insecurities, is worshipping the One God.

It is the reappearance of the Imam who will raise the standard of a divine government.

Who will destroy and uproot the oppressors and raise the oppressed slaves to unprecedented glories.

Whose advent will be a living portrait of perfection of religion, completion of bounties and satisfaction of the Lord.

1) The Creed of Imamate

The belief of Imamate is that important pillar of Islamic belief, without which the religious structure remains incomplete. The acceptance of all actions depends on the belief in Imamate. When the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) commenced his mission with Daawat al-Zul Asheerah, along with the call for Divine Monotheism, proclamation of his own messengership, he (s.a.w.a.) also announced the mastership and vilaayat of Ameerul Mu'mineen (a.s.).

He invited one and all for accepting this invitation. From then onwards, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) kept informing and announcing the people about Imamate and Caliphate. Finally, on 18th Zilhajj, 10 A.H., in the vast plain of Ghadir al-Khumm, in front of a crowd of 1,24,000 pilgrims, he (s.a.w.a.) not only announced the successorship and Imamate of Ameerul Mu'mineen (a.s.) in clear terms, but, even ordered the people to pay allegiance to 'Ali (a.s.). The Muslims duly obliged. Later, in the destruction of Harith Ibn No'man, people also saw the fate of him who denies 'Ali's mastership.

Along with the announcement of the mastership of 'Ali (a.s.), the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) also declared the Imamate and mastership of his eleven descendants. On various occasions, and in numerous ways, he made it clear that after him, till the Day of Judgment, the number of his successors and caliphs shall remain only twelve. The first of them will be 'Ali (a.s.) and the last, Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.).

In a number of traditions, he has also mentioned the names, titles, agnomens, and characteristics of these twelve successors. Through his companion, Jaabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari, he sent salutations to the fifth among the Imams, Imam Muhammad al-Baqer (a.s.). All these are practical testimonies of the truthfulness of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

The series of Imamate and guidance continues today and will go on till the dawn of resurrection. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) has underlined the significance of Imam al-Asr's (a.s.) recognition through the famous tradition,

"من مات ولم يعرف إمام زمانه مات ميتة جاهليّة"

*"One who dies without recognizing the Imam of his time, dies the death of ignorance (i.e. unbelief)."*2

As is evident, the unbelievers will not attain salvation. They will go to hell and shall abide in it forever. Anybody who desires to save himself from the perennial chastisement of hell and gain the everlasting bounties of paradise, then it is for him to gain the recognition of the Imam of his time. On the flip side, one who does not recognize the Imam of his time, his religion is not perfect, his bounties are not complete and Allah the Almighty is not satisfied with him.

Today, who is our Imam?

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) has already mentioned that the chain of Imamate will continue after him till the Day of Judgment. Therefore, it is necessary that there should be somebody from that series who has been divinely ordained. Who is he? In the light of reliable and au the n tic traditions (narrated by Shias as well as Sunnis), the Imam of our time, is the son of Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.), Hazrat Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.).

2) The Importance in the Belief of Mahdawwiyah

If somebody believes and is certain about the Prophethood of all the previous Prophets and Messengers (peace be on them) but denies the Messengership of the last Prophet, Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.w.a.), is an unbeliever and his salvation, impossible.

Similarly, if someone believes in the Imamate of all the infallible Imams (a.s.) but refuses to accept the Imamate of the last Imam, Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), he is not a believer and his deliverance, unattainable. Renowned Sunni scholars like Shaikh al-Islam Hamveeni, in his book "Faraaedus Simtain" and Shaikh Sulayman Qundoozi in his famous work "Yanaabee' al-Mawaddah" have recorded that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said,

"من أنكر خروج المهدي فقد كفر"

"One who denies the reappearance of Mahdi, is an unbeliever."

Imam's Life at a Glance

Name : Muhammad

Title : Mahdi, Baqiyyatullah, Imam az-Zaman, Vali al-Asr, Qa'im, etc.

Agnomen : Abul Qasim, Aba Saaleh al-Mahdi

Father : The Eleventh Imam, Hasan al-Askari (a.s.)

Mother : Narjis Khatoon, also called as Sosan.

Birthday : 15th Sha'baan, 255 A.H.

Birthplace : In the house of Imam Askari (a.s.) in the Iraqi city of Saamarra
Commencement: 8th Rabi-al-Awwal, 260 A.H.of Imamat

Age : Still alive. Shall reappear on the command of Allah the Almighty

3) Occultation (Ghaibat)

One can find in reliable traditions narrated on the authority of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) that when Mahdi reappears, oppression and tyranny will be eradicated from the face of earth, and unjust and tyrannical rulers will be uprooted.

Therefore, every oppressive king, particularly the contemporaries of Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.), strove to prevent the birth of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) and his advent in this world. Also, as the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) had prophesied that the number of Imams will be twelve, and that Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) will be the eleventh Imam, (and Mahdi the twelfth), they were sure that Mahdi will be born in his house only.

Consequently, tight security and strict surveillance was imposed. But just as Firaon had failed in his machinations to prevent the birth of Hazrat Moosa (a.s.), which ultimately did occur, in the same way, despite all their efforts, the oppressors could not stop the birth of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). As there was a great danger to the life of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), the news of his birth was not announced to all and sundry. Only those who could be relied upon were informed about this holy occurrence. After the martyrdom of Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.), when the Imamate and leadership of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) began, the perils to his life increased.

His residence was raided umpteen times by the king's army. Hence, on divine command, Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) went into occultation. On the one hand, conditions were threatening and danger loomed large. While on the other, the masses had their queries and posers for which contact with Imam (a.s.) was necessary. Considering this necessity, Imam (a.s.) appointed four special deputies, through whom contact with Imam (a.s.) could be possible. These four persons were called as Special Deputies (Nawwaab al-Arba' or Naaebeen al-Khaas).

The names of these Special Deputies were as follows (in chronological order):

1) Uthman Ibn Saeed Amri
2) Muhammad Ibn Uthman Ibn Saeed Amri

3) Husayn Ibn Rauh Nawbakhti
4) ‘Ali Ibn Muhammad Seymouri

The series of special deputyship started from 260 A.H. and terminated in the year 329 A.H. (i.e. 69 years). This period is called as Minor Occultation (Ghaibat al-Sughra). The year 329 A.H., with the death of the fourth deputy, ‘Ali Ibn Muhammad Seymouri, marked the end of minor occultation and the beginning of the Major Occultation (Ghaibat al-Kubra). Till Allah the Almighty does not permit Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) to reappear, the major occultation will continue.

Today, we are living in the era of the major occultation in which, Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) has not appointed any special deputy. But he has also not abandoned us. For our religious problems and questions, he has appointed jurists (mujtahideen), bearing all the necessary conditions, as his proof upon us and has ordered us to refer to them. As per his command, it is essential that our lives should be in conformity with the edicts of the living mujtahid.

4) Benefit of Imam az-Zaman's Existence in Occultation

Presently, our Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) is in occultation. But it does not mean that he is living in an isolated place, far away from inhabitation.

Occultation means that people are not aware of his place of abode. Even when they see their Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.), they do not recognize him. Imam Sadeq (a.s.) says,

"يرونهُ و لا يعرفونه"

*"They see him but do not recognize him."*3

But Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) sees the people and recognizes them too. He himself declares,

*"None of your news is hidden from us. We are not negligent in your protection nor are we forgetful of your remembrance. Had it not been so, calamities would have descended upon you and enemies would have annihilated you."*4

This proves that although Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) is hidden from the eyes of the people, he is aware of their conditions. Now, we can benefit from his existence just as people draw advantage from the sun when it is concealed behind the clouds. We can relate all our difficulties to him. At every step, we can reach out to him through our cries for help.

Just let us give it a try, and feel his hand reach unto us, notwithstanding the veil of occultation. One can find thousands of such incidents in reliable books when people have called out to Imam az-Zaman

(a.t.f.s.) for help and he has come to their rescue.

5) Longevity

Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) was born in 255 A.H. Today the age of Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) exceeds 1150 years. This is just his present age and his reappearance is still pending. The years after reappearance have also been discounted.

Perhaps some minds might pose the query, 'Is it possible for a man to live so long?'

The answer is a definite yes. Man can certainly attain longevity for the following reasons:

1) Till date, no limit has been fixed for human age, that after such and such age, man cannot or should not live.
2) There have been people who have lived even more than the present age of Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.), like Hazrat Nuh (a.s.) who propagated for 950 years before the famous deluge and his total age exceeded 2500 years.
3) Hazrat Khizr (a.s.) and Hazrat Ilyas (a.s.) continue to live till date.
4) Shaitan preceded Hazrat Adam (a.s.) in existence and is still alive.

Imam Zain al-Abedeen (a.s.) says,

*"In our Qa'im, is the tradition and sign of Hazrat Nuh (a.s.) and that is his longevity."*5

6) Awaiting

In the major occultation, an important duty is to await the reappearance of Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.). Imam Sadeq (a.s.) relates from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.),

"أفضل أعمال أمتي انتظار الفرج"

*"The best act of my nation is to await the reappearance."*6

Awaiting is an inner condition that we experience vis-à-vis our beloved. Our restlessness for the meeting with the beloved is directly proportionate with the presence of love in our hearts for him. If you are waiting for a guest, you will prepare yourself for his arrival by cleaning up the house and providing the necessities of his comfort. You will inform the people about his arrival and will exhort them to join you in welcoming him. More than the house, you will prepare your heart for his comfort, leisure and ease.

If such preparedness and restlessness is found in us, then we are truly awaiting for the guest. But if I am

simply sleeping lazily, without feeling the need for any preparation and readiness, then such an awaiting is nothing more than lip service.

Those who are waiting for Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) are restless for his reappearance. They are preparing for his arrival by improving themselves and inviting others to change for the better. They are themselves learning religious laws and injunctions while making others also aware of their religious obligations. They are restless due to the delay in the reappearance. The occultation of their beloved Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) has snatched sleep from their eyes.

Imam Zainul Aabedeen (a.s.) has described the characteristics and importance of the one who awaits the reappearance thus,

"O Abu Khalid (Kabuli)! In the period of his occultation, those who believe in his Imamate, await his reappearance are the best people of all times. Allah the Almighty has endowed them with intellect , understanding and cognition to such an extent that occultation (of Imam) for them is as good as his presence.

*They are equal (in status) to those who are fighting alongside the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.a.) with their swords. Certainly, these are the real believers and our true Shias and they call towards the path of Allah, openly and secretly."*7

7) Duties and Responsibilities

It is clear now as to how important it is to await for the reappearance of Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) and how great is the status and position of those who await. Also, it is a reality that as the level increases, responsibilities and duties increase too. Although there are a number of responsibilities of a believer during the major occultation, we shall mention a few important ones hereunder, keeping brevity into consideration.

a) Recognition of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)

By recognition, historical knowledge and information is not what is implied. Rather, it means to be aware of those levels, perfection and authority that has been granted to Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) by Allah the Almighty. If we believe in these, then we will be sure that he is definitely keeping a watch on all our actions, every single one of them. He rules on each and every particle of this world. The entire universe is subject to his command. Only then will we refrain from sins and seek refuge and help from him for all our difficulties.

b) Improvement in deeds

We cannot see Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) with our sinful eyes but he, definitely, is observing us. If somebody really believes that he is constantly being watched by Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.), he will keep

away from quite a few sins. Good deeds are the only way to gain proximity and nearness to Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.). And who does not desire to be nearer to his Imam (a.s.)? He (a.t.f.s.) himself has admonished us,

*"Then each one of you should act in such a way that your deeds bring you closer to our love, and refrain from all those actions that will bring you nearer to our wrath and anger."*8

c) Reformation of the Society

To rectify and improve our society, i.e. our children, brothers, sisters, relatives, friends, acquaintances, etc. is also our responsibility. For, it is essential that the ground be prepared for the reappearance. I m am Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) says,

*"An orphan is he who loses his father. But greater than him is he who has become distanced from his Imam and does not have access to him . He is n o t aw are o f his responsibilities and obligations. Among our Shias, one who is knowledgeable of our traditions and knowledge, should teach this Shia who is ignorant and unaware, and guide him. It is as if he has sheltered and nourished an orphan. Yes, the one who guides him and teaches him our religious laws, will be with us in the highest grades of paradise."*9

d) Supplication (Doa)

Supplication is a weapon of the believer through which he repels calamities and encounters difficulties. He attains his desires with its help. The reappearance of Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) and his being safe from all evils and calamities is the heartfelt desire of every believer. One of the rights that he (a.s.) enjoys upon us is that we should pray for him, first and foremost, in our supplications and invocations.

Naturally, we always pray for that thing first which enjoys utmost significance in our eyes. Nobody is greater than Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) nor is anything more important than his reappearance. It is necessary that after every Salat (prayer), our first supplication be in favor of Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.).

We must begin and end our day with the prayers for the reappearance of our beloved Imam (a.s.). Although there are a number of invocations for Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) like Doa al-Nudbah, which should be recited on Fridays, etc. we shall suffice here with only two important supplications for him.

(a) In every Salat (prayer), especially in obligatory prayers, we should recite the following invocation in the Qunoot. This is also called as *Doa al-Salaamati*.

اَللّـهُمَّ كُنْ لِوَلِيّكَ الْحُجَّةِ بْنِ الْحَسَنِ صَلَواتُكَ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلى آبائِه في هذهِ السَّاعَةِ وَفي كُلِّ ساعَة وَلِيّاً وَحافِظاً وَقائِداً وَناصِراً وَدَليلاً وَعَيْنا حَتّى تُسْكِنَهُ اَرْضَكَ طَوْعاً

وَتُمَتِّعَهُ فيها طَويلاً

(b) After Salat (prayer) al-Subh (morning prayers), we must recite the brief Doa al-Ahd. It is a salutation, a covenant and a supplication, all put together.

اللّهُمَّ بَلِّغْ مَولايَ صاحِبَ الزَّمانِ صَلواتُ الله عَلَيْهِ عَنْ جَميعِ المُؤْمِنينَ وَالمُؤْمِنات فِي مَشارِقِ الاَرْضِ وَمَغارِبِها وَبَرِّها وَبَحْرِها وَسَهْلِها وَجَبَلِها، حَيِّهِمْ وَمَيِّتِهِمْ وَعَنْ وَالِدَيَّ وَوُلْدي وَعَنّي مِنَ الصَّلَوات وَالتَّحِيات زِنَةَ عَرْشِ الله وَمِدادَ كَلِماتِهِ وَمُنْتَهى رِضاهُ وَعَدَدَ ما أَحْصاهُ كِتابُهُ وَأَحاطَ بِهِ عِلْمُهُ، اللّهُمَّ إِنّي أُجَدِّدُ لَهُ فِي هذا اليَوْمِ وَفِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ عَهْداً وَعَقْداً وَبَيْعَةً فِي رَقَبَتِي، اللّهُمَّ كَما شَرَّفْتَني بِهذا التَّشْريفِ وَفَضَّلْتَني بِهذِهِ الفَضيلَةِ وَخَصَصْتَني بِهذِهِ النِّعْمَةِ فَصَلِّ عَلى مَوْلايَ وَسَيِّدي صاحِبِ الزَّمانِ، وَاجْعَلْني مِنْ أَنْصارِهِ وَأَشْياعِهِ وَالذّابّينَ عَنْهُ وَاجْعَلْني مِنَ المُسْتَشْهَدينَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ طائِعاً غَيْرَ مُكْرَهٍ فِي الصَفِّ الَّذي نَعَتَّ أَهْلَهُ فِي كِتابِكَ، فَقُلْتَ: صَفّا كَأَنَّهُمْ بُنْيانٌ مَرْصوصٌ عَلى طاعَتِكَ وَطاعَةِ رَسُولِكَ وَآلِهِ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلامُ ؛ اللّهُمَّ هذِهِ بَيْعَةٌ لَهُ فِي عُنُقِي إِلى يَوْمِ القِيامَةِ

e) Sadaqah

When a person knows and likes somebody from the depth of his heart, he wishes him well and desires his safety from all evils and calamities. He prays for his wellbeing and health. He gives sadaqah for his safety and protection.

Praying or giving sadaqah does not mean that the concerned person is afflicted with calamities. Rather, it is an expression of our love for him. The more we love him, the more will be our invocations and sadaqah in his favor.

Today, who is more deserving to be loved and be attached with than the holy persona of Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.)? Can a believer's heart love anybody else more than him? To pray for Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) and to give sadaqah for his safety is an expression of our love for him. In the ta'qeebaat of the obligatory prayers, it has been emphasized to recite Ayat al-Kursi for the safety and security of Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.).

f) Seeking of Desires

Allah the Almighty has appointed the infallible Imams (a.s.) as the media and doors for approaching Him.

Presently, Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) is that door through whom Allah is approached. The Holy Qur'an says,

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ۖ وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ ۚ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

And Allah's are the best names, therefore call on Him thereby, and leave alone those who violate the sanctity of His names; they shall be recompensed for what they did. (***Surah al-A'raaf, 7 : 180***)

In the interpretation of this verse, traditions say that good names in the verse implies the infallible Imams (a.s.) and that we should call Allah through them.10

Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) is the Door of Allah and His Name. If we plead to Allah through this all-important medium, our supplications will be accepted. Besides, it is the sincere desire of every father or every elder that the youngsters of the family approach him for their needs and that he fulfils them. Particularly, when he is in a position of power and authority. The elders feel great joy in fulfilling the needs of the youngsters.

Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) is our father, elder and the master of all bounties. Today, it is an important duty for us that we present our difficulties to him for their solution.

Unfortunately, we speak of our problems to everybody but to that Imam who is able to provide its remedies within no time.

The Holy Prophet (a.s.) says,

*"Whenever you get entangled in some difficulty, then seek refuge in the presence of Hazrat Hujjat (a.t.f.s.) and invoke him. He will save you and grant you salvation. He answers the needy. He is the refuge of anybody who seeks refuge in him."*11

8) Meeting

Today, we are living in the times of the major occultation but it does not imply that all the doors leading to Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) have been shunted. Direct visitation is possible only on account of his grace. Nobody can arrange a meeting with him unilaterally (without Imam's consent). T here have been some extremely fortunate people who had the honor and grace of a direct meeting with their master, Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.).

Consequently, their problems were solved. Reliable books have mentioned the incidents of these fortunate ones. This was regarding apparent, physical visitation. As far a s heart to he art rendezvous is

concerned, the possibility always exists for everybody. The heart is aware of the path to the sought one. For heartily contact, words are not required. Rather, its beats translate into the most effective of words. A broken heart narrates a thousand incidents in a few seconds. In Doa al-Nudbah, we cry,

بِنَفْسِي أَنْتَ مِنْ مُغَيَّبٍ لَمْ يَخْلُ مِنّا بِنَفْسِي أَنْتَ مِنْ نازِحٍ مانَزَحَ عَنّا

"May our lives be sacrificed on him who is distanced from the eyes but the hearts are not devoid of him. He is physically far from us but his remembrance and memories are not distant from our gatherings."

9) Time of Reappearance

There is no doubt that one day certainly Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) will reappear from the Holy Ka'bah. A heavenly voice will announce his advent to one and all. There will not be any place on earth where the voice of this announcement will not reach. Of course, none knows that when this reappearance will actually occur. Its knowledge is only and only with Allah and none else. The holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) says,

*"The reappearance of Mahdi will be like resurrection which will be very heavy for the heavens as well as for the earth. It will be sudden, unexpected."*12

W e cannot fix the time of reappearance but can advance it with our incessant and unceasing invocations and supplications. Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) exhorts,

*"Pray more for the reappearance for in it lies your salvation."*13

10) The Companions of Imam az-Zaman (a.s.)

We all desire earnestly and fervently to be included among the companions of Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.). Every believer aspires to help the Imam of his time. There is no status or fortune higher than this for him.

More than nearly fourteen hundred years after his friends achieved martyrdom in Karbala while defending the Imam of their time, Imam Husayn (a.s.), Prophets, Messengers, successors, angels, martyrs, witnesses, the truthful ones, and even the Almighty Allah Himself, continue to send incessant blessings and salutations on them.

The door of helping and assisting the Imam of the time is not closed. We too can be among the helpers and supporters of the Imam of our time. Traditions have talked about the characteristics of Imam az-Zaman's (a.t.f.s.) helpers.

If these attributes and traits are found in us, then a million thanks to the Almighty, and we should pray for their betterment and improvement by the day (both quantitatively as well as qualitatively). But if these characteristics are not found in us, or if some are found and others are not, then we should supplicate to Allah the Mighty and the Wise that he adorns us with these attributes, for the sake of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.). Some of these characteristics and attributes are as follows:

- They are devout and highly religious individuals.
- Their hearts are overflowing with the love of their Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.).
- They are nice and decent.
- They are concealed like mines of treasures in the earth.
- In their certitude, they are stronger than steel; if they pass by mountain, they will render it into pieces.
- They fight only for divine pleasure; any opponent who stands against them, bites the dust.
- They are not cowed down by criticism and censure.[14]

11) Advent and Government

When Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) arrives, the world will be a completely different place. Every particle will rejoice at his advent. Hazrat Eesa (a.s.) will descend from the fourth heaven and perform Salat (prayer) behind him. Self-sacrificing, pious, devout, religious and sincere believers will gather around Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.).

They will form circles around him, with him sitting right in the middle, like a moon encircled with stars. He will reappear from Mecca and make Kufa his capital. The entire world will be under the rule of true Islam and the standard of Tawhid will be hoisted in the universe. Polytheism, disbelief, hypocrisy and their like will be uprooted from the face of the earth. Justice, equity, brotherhood and fraternity will be the order of the day.

Traditions have painted the picture of his reappearance beautifully. We shall mention a few special characteristics of his reappearance hereunder:

a) Justice and Equity

Numerous traditions contain the following sentence,

"يملأ الأرض قسطاً وعدلاً كما ملئت جوراً وظلماً"

"He will fill the earth with justice and equity as it would be fraught with injustice and oppression."

Today, whatever oppression or injustice we are witnessing in any form whatsoever, will be totally annihilated. Justice, and sheer justice, will prevail. The deeply felt prayer of humanity will be actualized with the reappearance. The efforts of the Prophets (a.s.) and the Messengers (a.s.) will yield fruits with the establishment of justice.

b) Honor For Religion

Religion will be honored in the government of Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.). It will be implemented with all its minute details. The Holy Qur'an will dominate the universe. All those religious injunctions that have been forgotten or distorted will regain their original practical form and every one will act on them. In the *salwaat* of Friday, we find,

"O Allah! Enliven through him those laws of Your religion that have been destroyed. Grant a fresh lease of life to those sciences of Qur'an that have been forgotten . Manifest through him those laws that have been distorted. Till Your Religion appears in its original and pure form at his hands."15

c) Unity and Harmony

One of the most serious maladies of our society is mutual discord and disharmony. Capabilities are destroyed. Assets are rendered useless. Respect and honor is ground to dust. Houses are divided and families are torn to shreds. All because of a single ailment - disunity and factionalism. But after the reappearance, all this will change. Factions will unite on one platform. In Doa al-Nudbah, we read,

"أَيْنَ جامِعُ الْكَلِمَةِ عَلَى التَّقْوى"

"Where is the one who will gather the people on piety and devotion?"

d) Freshness and Greenness

Traditions have prophesied that when Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) reappears, the earth will throw up all its treasures. It will be green and vibrant. There won't remain any piece of land that will be dry and barren. The earth will gain new life and there will be vitality and vigor everywhere. Grains and fruits will be in immeasurable abundance. In one ziyarat, we salute Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) with the following sentence,

"السلام عليك يا ربيع الأنام ونضرة الأيام"

"Peace be on you, O spring of creation and brightness of days."

e) Perfection of Intellect

Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) will not only enliven the earth and extricate its hidden treasures but he will infuse new life into hearts, restore capabilities and perfect intellects. Traditions have prophesied,

*"When Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) reappears, he will gently stroke the heads of the people by which their intellects will become complete and perfect."*16

Ameerul Mu'mineen 'Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.), in the first sermon of Nahjul Balagha, while explaining the aim of sending the Prophets and Messengers (a.s.), states,

"...that they may extricate the hidden treasures of the intellects..."

Therefore, the advent of Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) will mark the realization of the aim of sending of divine emissaries. Moreover, he will also avenge the blood of Imam Husayn (a.s.). All those who killed him, oppressed him or were satisfied at these oppressions will be the targets of his sword.

1. Taryaaq al-Quloob, p. 15
2. (Bihar Al-Anwar, 23/ 76)
3. Muntakhab al-Asar, Part 2, Ch. 38, p. 301
4. Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 53, Ch. 31
5. Kamaal al-deen, vol. 2, p. 524
6. Kamaal al-deen, vol. 2, p. 644
7. Kamaal al-deen, Ch. 31, H. 2
8. Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 53, p. 181
9. Tafseer Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.), p. 114, 115
10. Al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 618, H.2
11. An-Najm al- Saaqib, p. 787
12. Muntakhab al-Asar, Part 1, Ch. 1, p. 30
13. Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 53, p. 181
14. Muntakhab al-Asar, Part 6, Ch. 1, p. 421
15. Mafaateeh al-Jinaan, A'maal for Friday
16. Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 52, p. 336

Come, let all of us make a covenant that we shall not attach ourselves to any other door except that of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). (They are the strong rope of Allah (Hablallah), without fastening unto them, salvation is impossible). We shall pray for the safety and security of Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.). We will always remember him and narrate our difficulties to him.

We shall plead to him from the depth of our hearts and seek cure from him for our ailments. O Master! We are ill, weak, poor of memory, backward, harassed, in debts, etc. Master! Your Shia and in such a bad state!

We know that our deeds are presented to you due to which your heart bleeds. You are unhappy and unsatisfied with our actions. We are very, very sinful. We confess to all these but Master! If unworthy children will not find refuge in the house of their father, where will they go? Where shall the subjects go but to the court of the king?

If sinners will not go to their Imam, whose door will they knock? Master! We are disgraced, ignorant and disobedient. But we do not have anybody besides you. You are our refuge, our solace, our shelter. We shed tears for your ancestor and seek apologies from you.

We shall end our brief discussion with the following statement:

The brothers of Hazrat Yusuf (a.s.) were the ones who had thrown him in the well and sold him. Whatever difficulties Hazrat Yusuf (a.s.) had to face were on account of his brothers. Yet, notwithstanding all these atrocities and crimes which they had committed against their own brother, when they came to Hazrat Yusuf (a.s.), who by then had become the King of Egypt, they said,

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ مَسَّنَا وَأَهْلَنَا الضُّرُّ وَجِئْنَا بِبِضَاعَةٍ مُزْجَاةٍ فَأَوْفِ لَنَا الْكَيْلَ وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْزِي الْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ

So when they came in to him, they said: O chief! distress has afflicted us and our family and we have brought scanty money, so give us full measure and be charitable to us; surely Allah rewards the charitable. (***Surah Yusuf, 12: 88***)

Accepting their brief apology, Hazrat Yusuf (a.s.) excused them.

W e repeat the same apology in the presence of Yusuf al-Zahra, Hazrat Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.):

"O Master! Difficulties and calamities have surrounded us. We have come to you with very few good actions. But please have mercy on us and grant us in full measure .....".

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