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Translator's Introduction

The time period we are currently going through is one in which the Divinely appointed Imam (representative of Allah (awj)) is not amongst us – at least 'apparently' he is not. From the traditions of the Prophet ('s), we know that the Imam has not distanced himself from his followers, nor is he in some mystical land or in another time realm. Rather, he lives among the people, sees what we are going through and feels the hurt and grief at the state of affairs of the world. In addition, to show us that he is indeed with us, the traditions tell us that he is present in various gatherings throughout the year – such as the hajj – on an annual basis.

This period which has been going on for the past 1,200 years is known as the *ghaybatul kubrah* or the major occultation of Imam al-hujjah, and is one in which we are all in a state of *intizar* or 'active anticipation' for his advent.

During this time, one of the responsibilities for those who want to follow the Imam is to know as much about him as possible. This knowledge of the Imam is not limited to merely the incidental characteristics of the Imam - such as his date of birth, place of birth, his mother and father's name and other such things. Rather, as the traditions, narrated in all of the books of *hadith* tell us that, "The person who dies and does not have a deep understanding (*Ma'rifat*) of the Imam of his time, dies the death of those of the period of decadence (the pre-Islamic era)."

Thus, even if we were to follow all of the dictates of Islam such as praying, fasting, going for hajj and even struggling in Jihad against ourselves and an external threat, however if we do not know and acknowledge the Imam of our time, all of our actions would be in vain!

It is with this thought in mind that we need to proceed forward in life, seeking to better understand our living Imam – and what better way than through what his noble fore-fathers have said about him!

The traditions mentioned in this booklet offer us glimpses of the Imam which should instil a sense of hope in us – a hope for a better future of the world and one in which the rule of Allah (awj) is established over the entire globe. It is only at this time - through the support and guidance of Imam al-Mahdi , that all forms of corruption and evil will be removed from the Earth, paving the way for the utopia which the

Islamic narrations speak so vividly about – the kingdom and rule of Allah (awj).

One of the ways in which we can attain the deep understanding of the Imam , which we must strive for, is to hold firm to the true scholars who are serving the cause of the faith during the period of the occultation of our awaited Imam . It is by following them and adhering to their orders, which in reality is nothing other than following the Qur'an and the Sunnah, that we can safeguard our position with the Imam .

The worth of the scholars during the occultation has been emphasized in a beautiful tradition that has reached us from the 10th Imam, Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Hadi:

لَوْ لاَّ مَنْ يَبْقى بَعْدَ غَيْبَةِ قَائِمِكُمْ مِنَ الْعُلَمَآءِ الدَّاعِينَ إِلَيْهِ وَ الدَّالِّينَ عَلَيْهِ وَ الذَّابِّينَ عَنْ دِينِهِ بِحُجَجِ اللَّهِ وَ الْمُنْقِذِينَ لِضُعَفَاءِ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ مِنْ شُبَّاكِ إِبْلِيسَ وَ مَرَدَتِهِ وَ مِنْ فَخَاخِ الْنَّوَاصِبِ لَمَا بَقِيَ أَحَدٌ إِلاَّ ارْتَدَّ عَنْ دِينِ اللَّهِ وَ لَكِنَّهُمُ الَّذِينَ يُمْسِكُونَ أَزِمَّةَ قُلُوبِ ضُعَفَاءِ الشِّيْعَةِ كَمَا يُمْسِكُ صَاحِبُ السَّفِينَةِ سُكَّانَهَا. أُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الأَفْضَلُونَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ.

"If there were not to remain after the occultation of your Qa'im from among the scholars, a person from among the proofs of Allah who would call (others) towards him (the Imam); represent him (the Imam); defend his (the Imam's) religion; grant safety to the downtrodden servants of Allah from the evils of Iblis and the wickedness of the enemies (of the Ahlul Bayt), then there would not remain a single person (on Earth) except that he would have left the religion of Allah. But rather, these people (the 'Ulama) take it upon themselves to be the protectors of the hearts of our downtrodden Shi'a, just as the captain of a boat takes control of the lives and safety of those on his ship. Thus, these (the 'Ulama) are the people who are the best in the sight of Allah, the Noble and Great."[1]

Was Salam 'Alaikum
Saleem Bhimji

1. Biharul Anwar, Volume 2, Page 6, Section 8, hadith 12

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