

SULUK MUNTAZIRAAN

THE PATH OF
THOSE AWAITING
IMAM MAHDI
(A.S)



Dr Sayyed Mohammed Bani Hashmi

Suluk Muntaziraan

The Path of those
Awaiting
Imam Mahdi (a.s)

THE PROMISED
MAHDI 

وَانتَظِرُوا الْفَرَجَ وَلَا تَيَاسُوا مِنْ رُوحِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ أَحَبَّ الْأَعْمَالِ
إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَنْتَظَارُ الْفَرَجِ مَا دَامَ عَلَيْهَا الْمُؤْمِنُ

'Await deliverance from Allah, and do not despair of Allah's mercy. Verily the most beloved act before Allah Almighty is awaiting deliverance, if the believer maintains this state.'

Khisal-e-Saduq, vol 2, pg 616

Book Title	Suluk Muntaziraan
Published by	The Promised Mahdi
Cover Design	Ain Digytaal Inc.
Language	English
Year of Publication	Muharram, 1446 AH / July 2024

Translator’s Note	ix
SECTION I	1
IMPORTANCE & DEFINITION OF INTEZAAR.....	1
Chapter One	2
Necessity of Intezaar	2
Intezaar- the condition for acceptance of deeds.....	2
The necessity of Intezaar	5
Chapter Two.....	12
Intezaar of Reappearance.....	12
The indescribable nature of Intezaar	12
Defining Intezaar based on its requirements and effects.	14
Being prepared for the Advent of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) ...	16
Chapter 3.....	19
Intezaar of Faraj.....	19
Intezaar, the opposite of despair	19
Awaiting Deliverance - the Believer's Highest Act of Worship.....	24
Waiting for deliverance along with submission to the divine decree.....	26
SECTION 2.....	29
TYPES OF INTEZAAR.....	29
Chapter I.....	30

Intezaar of the reappearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s).....	30
Occultation of Imam (a.s) – the greatest calamity	30
Heedlessness to the pain of Imam’s (a.s) absence	49
Believer’s sorrow on the injustices across the world.	53
 Chapter Two.....	61
 Awaiting the reappearance of the Muntazar	61
Awaiting Absolute Solace (Faraj).....	61
Entrusting the guidance of the creation to Imam (a.s).....	63
Imam Mahdi’s(a.t.f.s) distress due to the difficulties of the Shias	64
The Supplication of Tears (دَعَا عَيْرَات)	73
 Chapter Three.....	78
 Grades of Intezaar	78
The value of an action is according to the intention	78
The intention of seeking Allah’s proximity.....	80
Degrees of the intention of seeking proximity	83
The intention of seeking proximity during Intezaar of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s).....	88
Awaiting whose Faraj?.....	93
The highest level of Intezaar corresponds to the highest level of Maarefat and love	102
Dua of Imam Askari (a.s) in Qunoot for the reappearance of his son	110
Two examples of Imam Zamana (a.s) praying for his early reappearance.....	113
The highest rank of Intezaar of Imam Asr (a.s).....	115

SECTION 3.....	119
CONTINUOUS INTEZAAR	119
Chapter One	120
The possibility of Bad'a concerning the time of reappearance and its signs	120
No definite time has been specified for the reappearance.....	120
The signs of the appearance (of the Imam) are also subject to bad'a.	130
Chapter Two.....	139
The sudden advent of Imam (a.s).....	139
The reformation of the issue of appearance in a single night.....	139
Despairing of Faraj at the time of Faraj.....	146
Reappearance will be sudden.....	150
What about the definite signs of reappearance?	160
The slightest despair is unacceptable.....	163
SECTION 4.....	167
BLESSINGS OF INTEZAAR.....	167
Introduction	167
PART I.....	169
The effects and blessings of Intezaar during the time of occultation	170

The effects of considering reappearance (zuhur) to be near	170
Necessities of Intezaar.....	177
First stage	177
Living with the remembrance of Imam (a.s) and according to his pleasure.....	177
1. Observing Taqwa (piety) and Wara' (abstinence)	179
2. Real Fear and Hope	190
3. Despising the world.....	205
Necessities of Intezaar.....	231
Second stage	231
The desire to assist Imam (a.t.f.s) and join him.....	231
Necessities of Intezaar.....	244
Third stage	244
Preparing oneself to accompany Imam (a.t.f.s).....	244
Connection with Imam Asr (a.s)	244
Devoting oneself to Imam (a.s).....	247
Necessities of Intezaar.....	252
Fourth stage	252
Training of true muntazirs	252
The obligation of supporting the weak	252
Pure affection for Imam (a.s) is a sign of perfect Intezaar.....	265

PART 2..... 271

**The effects and blessings of Intezaar after
reappearance 271**

Taufeeq of assisting Imam (a.s) at the time of
reappearance..... 271

The reward of the companionship of Imam Muntazar
(a.t.f.s)..... 287

Accompanying Imam Asr (a.s) in avenging the
martyrdom of Sayyedush Shohada (a.s) 290

Remembrance of the tragedy of Hazrat Ali Akbar (a.s). 299

Translator's Note

It gives me immense pleasure and great satisfaction in translating the book '**Suluk Muntaziraan**' penned by *Dr Sayyed Mohammed Bani Hashmi*. It is the English translation of the Persian book by the same name. Literally, the title means "The Path of those awaiting the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s).

The concept of Intezaar, signifying the anticipation of the Promised Mahdi, holds significant importance in Shia Islam. It embodies the yearning and hope for the arrival of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s), who is believed to restore justice and peace on Earth following a period of oppression and injustice. This belief has served as a source of comfort, motivation, and resilience for successive generations of Shia Muslims, inspiring them to uphold their faith and pursue righteousness in the face of profound challenges.

Within the initial section of the text, Dr Sayyid Mohammad Bani Hashmi extensively explores the concept of Intezaar, drawing upon traditions concerning Intezaar from the teachings of Prophet Mohammed (s.a.w.a) and the Twelve Imams (a.s). A notable tradition attributed to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) asserts, "*The highest form of worship within my community is Intezaar-e-Faraj.*"

The text further delves into the profound spiritual significance of Intezaar (the anticipation of Imam Mahdi (a.s)). It examines questions such as the necessity of Intezaar, the potential definition of Intezaar, the spontaneity or acquisition of the feeling of 'Intezaar,' the differentiation in grades of Intezaar,

and the possibility of forcing an individual into becoming a 'Muntazir.' The author addresses these inquiries considering the Quran and ahadees.

Later, the discussion extends to the topic of Bada (change in destiny) concerning the signs related to the advent of Imam Mahdi (a.s). Shia narrations distinguish between 'The Changeable signs' and 'The Certain signs.' Dr. Bani Hashmi clarifies, with the aid of traditions from the Imams (a.s), that even the 'Certain signs' are subject to Bada. The author emphasizes that the process of 'Intezaar' for Imam Mahdi must be continuous and not solely reliant on signs. Imam Mohammed Baqir (a.s) states, *"Do not fix a time for reappearance.... Await this matter morning and evening."* Essentially, a true Muntazir must anticipate the reappearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) both morning and evening, remaining steadfast in anticipation despite the passing of time.

The second section of the book addresses the significant responsibilities bestowed upon the Shia community during the extended occultation of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s). They are tasked with preserving the pristine teachings of Islam, safeguarding the divine message, and paving the way for the establishment of a just global order under the leadership of the Awaited Savior (a.s).

Prominent Shia scholars and religious figures stress the paramount importance of individual spiritual growth and ethical integrity in expediting the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s). Dr Bani Hashmi highlights that the core pillars of a true Muntazir's life include embracing Wara', balancing hope and fear, and detaching from worldly desires. Moreover, a genuine Muntazir should not only focus on personal spiritual advancement but also strive to cultivate more individuals in

the community who embody the essence of being a Muntazir. Through sincere repentance, steadfast prayers, ethical behaviour, and unwavering dedication to social justice and human rights, believers can attract divine blessings and potentially hasten the arrival of their revered Imam.

Additionally, Shia followers are urged to actively combat oppression, corruption, and immorality in society. By standing against injustice, advocating for the marginalized, and working towards the establishment of a fairer society, sincere Shia adherents (Muntazirs) align themselves with the fundamental principles that Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) will espouse upon his return.

It is believed that when the world plunges into chaos and turmoil, and the faithful earnestly pray for divine intervention, the stage will be set for the manifestation of the Promised Mahdi (a.t.f.s). Therefore, Shias are called upon to spearhead positive transformations, preparing the ground for the ultimate ascendancy of truth and justice under the guidance of Imam Mahdi (a.s).

Although efforts have been made to maintain the essence of the original text, this is not a literal translation but aims to capture the sentiment and essence of the Persian language. Given the challenge of translating lengthy Persian / Urdu phrases into English, some phrases have been segmented for clarity and understanding by English readers.

Phonetic spellings have been favoured over their Arabic pronunciations. Therefore, 'Wilayat' is utilised in place of 'Wilayah'; 'Maarefat' instead of 'Maarefah'; 'hadees' instead of 'hadith', and so forth.

The English translation of the Quran is sourced from M. H. Shakir's widely acknowledged translation of the Holy Quran. The Arabic text of all narrations (ahadees) and supplications is extracted from Jameah Noor CD. The translation of the ahadees aligns with the English interpretation rather than being a direct translation from the Arabic text.

I express my deep appreciation to those who assisted me during the translation of this book. While some individuals encouraged me to embark on this endeavour, others reviewed the translation and provided valuable suggestions for enhancement. Additionally, certain individuals stepped forward to facilitate the publication of the book. I beseech Imam Zamana (a.s) for their prosperity in this world and the hereafter.

Lastly, I dedicate this humble offering to Imam Zamana (a.s) and seek his contentment and satisfaction through it.

يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ مَسَّنَا وَأَهْلَنَا الضُّرُّ وَجُنَّتْ بِبِضَاعَةٍ مُزْجَاةٍ فَأَوْفِ لَنَا
الْكَيْلَ وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْزِي الْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ

O Chief! Distress has afflicted our family and us, and we have brought scanty money, so give us full measure and be charitable to us; surely Allah rewards the charitable.

(Surah Yusuf, v 88)

SECTION I

IMPORTANCE

&

DEFINITION

OF

INTEZAAR

Chapter One

Necessity of Intezaar

Intezaar- the condition for acceptance of deeds

To qualify as an acceptable act of worship in the presence of Allah Almighty, a religious deed must satisfy specific criteria, a substantial portion of which is denoted by the "religion" of the performer of the deed. These are similar subjects that are occasionally referred to as "the correct religion" and a "religion that embodies Allah's will". This reality is emphasised in a saying attributed to Imam Ali (a.s): no good deed performed by a non-religious individual is acknowledged.

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ دِينَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ تَمَسَّكُوا بِهِ لَا يُزِيلُكُمْ أَحَدٌ عَنْهُ لِأَنَّ
السَّيِّئَةَ فِيهِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ الْحَسَنَةِ فِي غَيْرِهِ لِأَنَّ السَّيِّئَةَ فِيهِ تُغْفَرُ وَ
الْحَسَنَةَ فِي غَيْرِهِ لَا تُقْبَلُ

O people! Be careful of the religion with which you associate. Let not anyone deviate you and lead you astray from it (i.e. the true religion). For evils committed in this (true) religion are better than the virtues performed in the other (wrong) religion. Because the sins committed in the correct religion will be forgiven, but the virtues performed in the wrong religion will not be accepted.¹

It is therefore necessary to recognise the religion before performing any deed, as this is a prerequisite for the

¹ Maaniul Akhbar, pg 185, 186

acceptance of the deed. Furthermore, this issue is clarified through the utilisation of narrations (ahadees).

A man came to Imam Baqir (a.s) while he had a note with him. Before he opened his note, the Imam said,

هَذِهِ صَحِيفَةٌ مُخَاصِمٍ يَسْأَلُ عَنِ الدِّينِ الَّذِي يُقْبَلُ فِيهِ الْعَمَلُ.

'This is the note of an opponent who asks about the religion in which deeds are accepted.'

The man said, 'May Allah have mercy on you! This is exactly what I want to know.

Then the Imam said,

شَهَادَةٌ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
وَأَلِهِ عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ، وَتَقَرَّرَ بِمَا جَاءَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ، وَالْوَلَايَةَ لَنَا أَهْلَ
الْبَيْتِ، وَالْبِرَاءَةَ مِنْ عَدُوِّنَا، وَالتَّسْلِيمَ لِأَمْرِنَا، وَالْوَعْدَ، وَالتَّوَاضُعَ،
وَأَنْتِظَرُ قَائِمِنَا؛ فَإِنَّ لَنَا دَوْلَةً إِذَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ جَاءَ بِهَا

*'Bearing witness that there is no god but Allah alone with no partner and that Mohammed (s.a.w.a) is His servant and messenger, and affirming what has come from Allah, and accepting the Wilayat (guardianship) of us the Ahlul Bait (a.s), and disavowing our enemies, and submitting to our command, and piety, and humility, and awaiting our Qaem (the one who will rise); for surely there is a government for us which Allah will establish whenever He wills.'*²

² Al-Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chp of Permanence of Islam, H no 13

According to this statement, Intezaar of Qaem-e-Aale Mohammed (a.t.f.s) is one of the pillars of the religion in which deeds are accepted.

In another hadees, Abu Basir narrates from Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) that once he (a.s) said,

أَلَا أُخْبِرُكُمْ بِمَا لَا يَقْبَلُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مِنَ الْعِبَادِ عَمَلًا إِلَّا بِهِ فَقُلْتُ
بَلَى

'Shall I not inform you about that which Allah the Exalted will not accept any deed from His servants except through it?'

Abu Basir replied: Yes, please inform me. Then the Imam (a.s) explained,

فَقَالَ شَهَادَةٌ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْإِقْرَارُ بِمَا
أَمَرَ اللَّهُ وَالْوَلَايَةَ لَنَا وَالْبِرَاءَةَ مِنْ أَعْدَائِنَا يَعْنِي الْأَيْمَةَ خَاصَّةً وَ
التَّسْلِيمَ لَهُمْ وَالْوَعْدَ وَالْإِجْتِهَادَ وَالطُّبَّانِيَّةَ وَالْإِنْتِظَارَ لِلْقَائِمِ ع

*'Bearing witness that there is no god but Allah and that Mohammed (s.a.w.a) is His servant (and messenger), and affirming what Allah has commanded, and accepting our Wilayah (guardianship), and disavowing our enemies - meaning specifically the Imams - and submitting to them, and piety, and striving (in acting on the Shariah), and humbleness, and Intezaar of Qaem (a.t.f.s).'*³

Therefore, no deed in religion is acceptable to Allah without the state of 'awaiting' (Intezaar) the Promised Mahdi (a.t.f.s).

³ Ghaibat Nomani, Chp 11, H no 16

What is meant by being accepted is that the deed becomes an act of worship that is eligible for a reward from Allah and causes the person to draw closer to Him.

All rewards specified in the Quran and Sunnah for the performance of a particular deed are dependent on the deed's acceptance. Furthermore, if the action fails to satisfy the prerequisites for acceptability, the individual who performs it has no entitlement to receive any reward from Allah. Therefore, in the absence of the state of *Intezaar* for the *Qaem* (a.t.f.s), engaging in acts of worship does not result in the acquisition of any merit or recompense. Certainly, if Allah, out of His benevolence and grace, wishes to accept an imperfect act of worship devoid of certain conditions, that is an entirely different matter. Nevertheless, the acceptance of deeds is contingent upon the conditions that have been explicitly stated, by divine promises and established norms.

The necessity of *Intezaar*

In numerous narrations from the infallibles (a.s), the *Qaem* from the *Ahlul Bait* (a.s), whose awaited reappearance is counted among the pillars of religion, has been precisely identified. For example, it is narrated from Imam *Jawad* (a.s) that he said,

إِنَّ الْقَائِمَ مِنَّا هُوَ الْمَهْدِيُّ الَّذِي يَجِبُ أَنْ يُنْتَظَرَ فِي غَيْبَتِهِ

*'Indeed, the Qaem who is from us is Mahdi (a.t.f.s), whose Intezaar (awaiting) during his occultation is obligatory.'*⁴

The expression of "obligatory" in the words of Imam *Jawad* (a.s) indicates the necessity of the state of awaiting during the

⁴ Kamaluddin, vol 2, pg 377, Chp 36, H no 1

hidden Imam's (a.t.f.s) occultation. The conclusion that can be drawn from this whole discussion is that practising religion and servitude to Allah is impossible without fulfilling this important pillar – that is, awaiting Qaem (a.t.f.s). And one who seeks to worship the Lord must not neglect this obligatory matter. However, a point arises: 'Is the state of awaiting a voluntary state that it can become subject that it can be made mandatory? Is commanding "to await" correct at all? Anyone who has found the state of Intezaar within himself testifies that this state comes about involuntarily when its prerequisites exist within the person, and there is no need for an order or directive regarding "Intezaar". So, if the prerequisites completely exist, it inevitably comes about, and commanding it is meaningless.

Therefore, it can be said that the state of Intezaar itself, like eating and drinking, is not voluntary to man. If someone seeks to create this state, they must possess its prerequisites within themselves, and when those prerequisites are realized, the state of awaiting comes about on its own. So, the order and obligation of Intezaar (awaiting) comes down to creating those prerequisites.

Of course, Intezaar has varying degrees of intensity, and each level has its particular prerequisites. The lowest level of Intezaar is when one considers the possibility of something occurring. The intensity of awaiting depends on the strength of this possibility. A higher possibility causes a stronger (sense of) Intezaar and the strength of awaiting leads to effects appearing in the awaiting person (Muntazir) that are not noticeable at the lower levels. Our present discussion does not pertain to the lower levels of awaiting that have little effect

on the individual. On this basis, we summarize the prerequisites that bring the state of awaiting to a considerable and influential level in an individual in four factors:

First: *Having certainty in the occurrence of something.* That is, one definitively and certainly knows that something will occur and has no doubts or uncertainties about it. In this case, awaiting its occurrence comes naturally. And the stronger this knowledge and certainty, the more intense is the awaiting of its occurrence.

Second: *Considering its occurrence to be near:* One might definitively know that something will occur but see its occurrence to be in a distant future. In this case, the state of Intezaar becomes weak. The more a person loves what he has been informed will occur, the more intense his state of Intezaar becomes. Someone can be given definitive news of the occurrence of something, but that thing is not desirable or beloved to him; in this case, his Intezaar will surely be less and weaker.

Third: *To love that condition of which one knows about its occurrence.* The more a person loves something that they have been informed will occur, the more intense their anticipation (Intezaar) of it becomes. It may be that definite news of an event is given to a person, but that thing is not pleasing and beloved to him. In this case, their anticipation of it will certainly be less and weaker.

Fourth: *Loving the one whose arrival has been announced.* The more a person loves someone whose arrival he is certain of, the more he awaits his arrival.

If these four factors exist regarding the occurrence of something, involuntarily and surely, then “awaiting” its occurrence will also be intense, and there is no need to order it. It is not necessary to tell someone - in whom these prerequisites are present - “Be a muntazir” because these factors are already there in him. One cannot even say, “Don’t be a muntazir” because, with the presence of these factors, he cannot but be a ‘muntazir’.

The case is the same regarding Intezaar of the advent of Imam Asr (a.s).⁵ For the state of Intezaar to occur in someone, its prerequisites must be provided. If the prerequisites are realized, the Intezaar also exists and there is no need to separately give its order. And if those prerequisites do not exist, Intezaar cannot come about. The most important of these prerequisites are the same four factors:

First: *Certainty about the advent of His Eminence:* The more knowledge and certainty someone has regarding the reappearance of the Imam (a.s), the more his Intezaar is solid and positive. And if –God forbid - he has some doubt or uncertainty about its very occurrence, or his belief in it is weak, his Intezaar will also be weak and frail to that extent and may even disappear.

Strong and firm certainty in this issue is directly related to the person’s faith and belief in the promises of the Quran and

⁵ Although the concept of the advent of a ‘Universal Reformer’ is expounded in all religions, our sources and references are the Shia Ithna Ashari books that say that this Universal Reformer (Messiah) is none other than Hazrat Hujjat ibn Hasan Askari (a.t.f.s). The term ‘Intezaar’ is used solely in context of awaiting his reappearance.

Sunnah; and the more this faith and belief become established and profound, the more intense his Intezaar will become on its own.

Second: *Considering reappearance to be near:* It is possible for someone to be certain of the principle of reappearance of his Eminence. But he sees its occurrence to be in the distant future. In this case, his Intezaar becomes frail. But if we do not consider the matter of the reappearance to be distant - as has come in the narrations of the Ahle Bait (a.s) - rather, we see it as near, then our Intezaar becomes more intense. This is why it has been said,

إِنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَهُ بَعِيدًا وَنَرَاهُ قَرِيبًا

*'Indeed, they (disbelievers and atheists) see it as distant while we see it as near.'*⁶

This is so that the state of Intezaar becomes more intense within us. Such a belief automatically raises one's level of Intezaar. Of course, this is completely different from "making haste" (استعجال) which has been condemned in narrations and which involves making predictions about the time of the advent.⁷

Third: *Loving the advent of Imam Asr (a.s):* The more one loves the state of the advent of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) while being completely convinced about it and considering its occurrence to be near, the more his Intezaar will be. And if he does not

⁶ Surah Maarij, v 7 & 8

⁷ For more details, refer to the book Maarefat Imam Asr from pg. 274 - 276

like it, his awaiting will become weak. This love comes about only when the believers have a clear picture of the time of the advent so that they not only do not fear it but count the moments for its occurrence. Numerous glad tidings have been mentioned in the Quran and Sunnah regarding the “incomparable” and “outstanding” blessings of the time of the advent, a glimpse of which will be pointed out in the second part of this book. Firm belief and conviction regarding these glad tidings automatically raise the believer’s Intezaar.

Fourth: *Loving Imam Asr (a.s) himself*: The more is one’s affection and attachment for Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), the more he loves his advent, his Intezaar for his arrival will be greater and stronger.

With the existence of these four factors, Intezaar of the advent of Imam Asr (a.s) comes about automatically. And with the absence or weakness of these factors, awaiting also becomes weak and less effective. The stronger these prerequisites are, the more intense the awaiting becomes.

Therefore, to fulfil the obligation of awaiting Imam the Qaem (a.t.f.s), these prerequisites must be strengthened. The order to await His Eminence (a.t.f.s) is the order to create these prerequisites. And even if some of these are involuntary, their causes must be provided.

For example, loving Imam (a.t.f.s) does not come about merely by a person's will and choice, and creating it also requires certain prerequisites since merely by a person's will, love for something or someone does occur. Gradually, by performing appropriate voluntary acts, the grounds for

creating it must be provided so that Allah may bless and increase one's love for his Imam (a.t.f.s)

Regarding the first and second factors too, greater familiarity with the Quran and the Sunnah and the glad tidings mentioned therein through studying, taking seriously, giving importance, etc. which are all voluntary acts, can provide the ground for stronger knowledge and faith, and firmer conviction.

In general, acting upon the religious duties along with recognition of Imam Asr (a.s) during his occultation can be very effective in this regard, the details of which have come in their proper place.⁸

It should be noted that ordering for Intezaar, or any involuntary action in general draws the attention of the 'mukallaf' (the one who is responsible) to it and occupies his thoughts and heart with it, causing him to consider it important and strive for its realization. And this itself is a main factor for that involuntary state to come about. Thus, the orders that have come in religion regarding involuntary matters (including awaiting) are very effective in their realization.

⁸ For more explanation, refer to the book '*Maarefat Imam Asr*' (Section 2). Also refer to the book '*Aftab dar Ghurbat*' (Section 2)

Chapter Two

Intezaar of Reappearance

The indescribable nature of Intezaar

In attempting to explicate the meaning of the Arabic term "Intezaar", various descriptions and explanations have been provided, none of which fully capture the original significance. If it is simply stated that the meaning of Intezaar is "looking forward to something or someone", this merely constitutes a translation of the word from Arabic to English and cannot be considered an accurate definition. To offer a truly precise description of Intezaar, one must move beyond a direct linguistic translation and employ concepts other than the word itself. Otherwise, one has merely supplied a transliteration of the term, rather than an authentic elucidation.

However, is such an approach genuinely feasible? Can the concept of Intezaar be adequately explained by reducing it to alternative notions? Can Intezaar be deconstructed and analysed into more fundamental constituent ideas?

Upon closer inspection, it becomes apparent that Intezaar is a profoundly wijdaani (intuitive) matter, and for those who have not directly experienced it, no amount of verbal or cerebral description will enable them to fully comprehend its essential reality. Intezaar possesses a 'fundamental' and 'elemental' meaning. It is 'primordial' in the sense that it cannot be further reduced to other conceptual building blocks, and it is

'elemental' in that it resists decomposition into simpler constituent notions. The sole means of apprehending Intezaar is to directly grasp its essential nature.

This characteristic of being fundamentally intuitive also exists within all forms of essential human knowledge. For example, sensations such as hunger, thirst, happiness, anger, love, hatred, and so forth, constitute inherently wijdaani (intuitive) modes of knowing that can only be directly perceived. The sole means of comprehending hunger and thirst is to experience them first hand; the only way to understand happiness and anger is to embody those emotional states; and the sole path to grasping the essence of love is to become a lover oneself. If an individual has not directly "experienced" love, no definition or description can enable them to truly understand its meaning, nor can any alternative frame of reference be employed to facilitate their comprehension. All foundational and elementary forms of knowledge share this trait.

The significance of 'Intezaar' only becomes apparent to the one who is actively engaged in the state of Intezaar. If someone has never tasted the condition of Intezaar, no amount of description or explanation will suffice. Excessive elucidation may lead to further confusion regarding its meaning. However, for the individual who has directly experienced Intezaar, its significance is readily evident. To such a person, one might evoke the recollection of a time when a beloved had travelled away, leaving the individual without news of their whereabouts, with the promise of their return by a certain date. That wijdaani (intuitive) state before their arrival is what is termed "Intezaar". In this manner, to remind the audience of

the concept of Intezaar, we provide them with situational cues to recall their own direct experience of Intezaar. If the individual is currently in a state of waiting or expectation, we need only prompt them, and they will readily affirm the meaning.

Defining Intezaar based on its requirements and effects

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the manifestation of the state of Intezaar is contingent upon the fulfilment of its requisite preconditions. If those prerequisite factors are satisfied, the condition of Intezaar will arise spontaneously. Therefore, to evoke an understanding of 'Intezaar' within the audience, one can make use of reminding them of those 'prerequisite elements' that were elucidated in the previous chapter. "Intezaar" is necessitated by the realisation of those foundational factors, although the effective role of the order to do "Intezaar" should also not be overlooked in its actualisation. From these conditions and contexts, we can refer to the "requirements" of Intezaar, and this represents one way to define Intezaar through the lens of wijdaan (intuition). We employed this approach in the prior chapter to explicate the necessity of Intezaar.

At times, to draw attention to 'wijdaani' (intuitive) matters, we may state some of their effects and consequences, so that the audience can infer the prerequisite from its resultant manifestations. These effects and consequences are distinct from the 'wijdaani state' itself. Invoking such supplementary factors can assist in attaining knowledge of that underlying intuitive condition.

For example, if we wish to explain the concept of love, we may state that if one loves someone, one will continually remember that person, long to see them, and feel a sense of absence and yearning when they are not in one's company. Yet none of these attributes constitute 'love' itself, but rather are among its effects and consequences. An individual who has already directly experienced the state of love, upon hearing these descriptors, will understand them as manifestations of that underlying wijdaani condition, and thus have love itself recalled to their consciousness through such auxiliary factors. The same principle applies to 'Intezaar', which is a fundamental and wijdaani (intuitive) matter. Intezaar too possesses attendant effects. One who has directly "perceived" the state of Intezaar will be able to identify with its outward expressions. Therefore, by reminding the audience of such effects, the essential state of Intezaar can be evoked within them. These types of definitions formulated about Intezaar are akin to prompting the recollection of its ancillary attributes, and this represents a secondary manner of elucidating the concept of Intezaar. Pay close attention to the definition presented by one of the true muntazir for Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s):

‘The meaning of Intezaar is a spiritual state from which preparation emerges for what you are waiting for...The more intense the Intezaar, the greater the preparation becomes. Don’t you see that when there is someone whose arrival you are keenly awaiting, your preparation for his arrival increases as the time of his arrival draws near?’⁹

⁹ Mikyalul Makarim, vol 2, pg 152, Chapter 8

In this statement, Intezaar is introduced as a spiritual and inner state, and its reality is not directly explained. Instead, one of its most important effects is stated - the preparation to receive the one whom we are awaiting. This preparation is an inner state, but it also manifests outwardly. When someone is awaiting the arrival of a dear one, they prepare themselves for it by tidying up the house, decorating it, wearing preferred clothes, preparing enjoyable food, and inviting people to welcome the guest.

All of these are the effects and consequences of Intezaar. It is summarized in the word "preparation" (تَهَيُّؤٌ) in the famous book Mikyalul Makarim

Being prepared for the Advent of Imam Mahdi(a.t.f.s)

"Preparation" (تَهَيُّؤٌ) is a requirement for the state of Intezaar. One who awaits the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) must prepare themselves accordingly. This preparation entails arranging one's entire life in alignment with the wishes and desires of the Imam. Fundamentally, the Imam desires to see each individual acting in strict adherence to religious laws.

True preparedness means being in such a state that if the Imam were to reappear immediately, there would be no distractions or concerns in one's life that would prevent one from hastening to greet the Imam and join him. The best way to gauge the scope of this preparation is to consider how one would conduct oneself if one knew the Imam's return was imminent, say within two days.

Certainly, the 'muntazir' (one who waits) would fulfil all religious obligations, towards both Allah and fellow humans.

They would rectify any shortcomings in their personal or social conduct. Their heart's focus would be devoted intensely to the Imam of their time. Their concern would be that the Imam, upon reappearance, does not overlook them due to deficiencies in their religious practice. Their worry would be of being met with indifference when going to meet the Imam. So, they would abstain from anything that might provoke such concern, and strive to reform their past. In those two days, they would not be preoccupied with worldly matters or selfish pursuits, but rather ensure their life's aim is aligned with the Imam's wishes."

In short, he prepares himself in every way so that when the Imam reappears, he can be among those who join him and become a companion of Imam Mahdi (a.f.t.s) This is the meaning of 'real' preparation' which is necessary for Intezaar. And it truly brings a profound change in man.

For this reason, the author of Mikyalul Makarim has added the following after his discussion on "preparation" (تَهْيِئَة):

'So, the believer who is awaiting the coming of his Master, the more intense his Intezaar becomes, the more his efforts increase in preparing for him (Master) through piety, striving, purifying the self from disgraceful traits, and acquiring praiseworthy morals.'¹⁰

The one awaiting the reappearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) makes earnest efforts to observe the limits of the Shariah to attain a state of preparedness. If one engages in something disapproved by the Shariah or the Imams (a.s) while claiming

¹⁰ Mikyalul Makarim, vol 2, pg. 152, Chapter 8

to be a sincere 'muntazir', it is akin to welcoming a guest in a manner the guest finds displeasing - for example, greeting them with musical instruments and forbidden amusements, despite knowing these would greatly anger the guest.

Therefore, the scope and domain of preparation for the Imam's advent revolves around doing what he (a.s) approves and what his forefathers (a.s) have permitted, not what we consider right based on our flawed views.

So far, the meaning of 'Intezaar' has been explained by focusing on the four prerequisite factors and some implications of preparation for the advent of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s). The next chapter will elaborate on the third way of defining 'Intezaar' that complements the previous two explanations.

Chapter 3

Intezaar of Faraj

Intezaar, the opposite of despair

One of the ways of recognizing something is recognizing its opposite. As it is said **إِنَّمَا تُعْرَفُ الْأَشْيَاءُ بِأَضْدَادِهَا** – (Things are only known through their opposites). Indeed, something cannot be recognized except through its opposite. Yes, recognizing the opposite of something is effective and beneficial in understanding its truth.

This rule also applies to "Intezaar (waiting)". So, to understand Intezaar, they take help from its opposite, which is despair. In the book *Mikyalul Makarim*, after mentioning **تَهْيِئ** (preparation) which is one of the requirements of Intezaar, despair - which is its opposite - has been mentioned to complete that definition.

Ya's (**يَأْس**) means 'despair' or 'misery' and it is the opposite point of Intezaar which implies an abundance of hope. If Intezaar means waiting for the reappearance, its opposite is despair from reappearance which is an entirely *wijdaani* concept. But often Intezaar is used to mean waiting for deliverance, in which case its opposite is despair from divine aid and help. Such despair is considered one of the greatest

major sins. To understand the precise meaning of Intezaar-ul-Faraj, some explanation is given about it.

In the Holy Quran, the advice of Prophet Yaqub (a.s) to his sons regarding finding Prophet Yusuf(a.s) is narrated where he said:

لَا تَيْأَسُوا مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يَيْئَسُ مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

*'Do not despair of Allah's Mercy. Only the disbelieving people despair of Allah's Mercy.'*¹¹

In the narrations, when listing the major sins after associating partners with Allah, which is the greatest sin, they consider despair from the mercy of Allah as the second major sin. It is narrated from Imam Moosa ibn Jafar (a.s) that he said:

أكبر الكبائر – الشرك بالله ... وَبَعْدَهُ الْيَأْسُ مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ لِأَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يَقُولُ: «وَلَا... تَيْأَسُوا

*'The biggest of major sins is associating partners with Allah ... and after that is losing hope in the mercy of Allah, because Allah the Almighty says: 'Do not despair of the Mercy of Allah.'*¹²

Individuals who are confronted with adversity, be it material suffering and challenges or spiritual confinement due to sins, ought not to abandon hope in the assistance and compassion of Allah. Abandoning hope in Allah's assistance and mercy is an offence that surpasses all others committed by the sinner.

Imam Ali (a.s) said:

¹¹ Surah Yusuf, v 87

¹² Uyoon Akhbar Raza, vol I, pg. 285, 286

أَعْظَمُ الْبَلَاءِ انْقِطَاعُ الرَّجَاءِ

*'The greatest affliction is being cut off from hope.'*¹³

Therefore, regardless of the severity of the adversity, abandoning faith in Allah's mercy is more severe and disgraceful. Individuals who have faith in Allah's assistance and support should never be without hope. Divine mercy invariably envelops him, possibly in a manner beyond human comprehension. Therefore, it is said,

كُنْ لِمَا لَا تَرْجُو أَزْجَى مِنْكَ لِمَا تَرْجُو

*'Be more hopeful of what you don't expect than what you expect.'*¹⁴

The door of deliverance and consolation could open for an individual who places hope in the Lord, even when conventional estimates indicate that there is no hope. This opening may differ from how it was when hope existed according to normal expectations. More faith in Tauheed (Monotheism) corresponds to a decreased despair and an increased expectation of Allah's assistance during times of difficulty. This is true regarding spiritual and material problems alike.

Suppose an individual is confronted with a financial dilemma. In what manner might it be resolved? If that individual is a devout monotheist, he is completely cognizant of the fact that Allah alone possesses the ability to resolve this dilemma. He

¹³ Ghurar

¹⁴ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 71, pg. 134, H no 9

must use methods and strategies to address this dilemma, as the absence of Allah's will renders all endeavours in this matter futile. Undoubtedly, he employs ways and means, yet he regards them merely as channels, and completely entrusts the matter to Allah.

In a similar vein, it is customary to visit a physician when a child becomes ill. However, a monotheist differs in this regard; he regards medical care as a mere instrument and a route that is religiously and rationally obligatory and attributes the eradication of disease and suffering exclusively to the power of Allah.

A non-monotheist, or a superficial monotheist who is unaware of reality, and one who has a weak faith in Tauheed, on the other hand, turns to means and mediums when in crisis, failing to recognise that Allah alone possesses the ability to remove them. His heart becomes attached to them (means). Irrational in his judgement, he ascribes all consequences and remedies to human beings (including doctors) while remaining unconscious of Allah. This is the same "polytheism" in which most believers are regrettably entangled. The Quran states

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ

*'Most of them do not believe in Allah without associating others with Him.'*¹⁵

This "association" (polytheism) is not synonymous with shirk, which involves joining others with Allah in servitude and worship, and it does not entirely exclude an individual from adhering to Tauheed (monotheism). Nonetheless, it is an

¹⁵ Surah Yusuf, v 106

indication of a fragile faith in Tauheed, which most believers succumb to due to indifference, neglect, and a weak conviction. As one's faith in Tauheed becomes deeper, his expectations regarding afflictions become more centred around Allah and less on others. The ultimate stage is to place one's sole hope in Allah.

The 'Chief of Monotheists', Ameerul Momineen (a.s) says,

اجْعَلُوا كُلَّ رَجَائِكُمْ لِلَّهِ وَلَا تَرْجُوا أَحَدًا سِوَاهُ

*'Place all your hopes in Allah, and hope in none other than Him.'*¹⁶

When confronted with severe afflictions, an increasing number of believers place their trust in Allah. However, when confronted with trivial difficulties, those very same individuals disregard Allah in favour of the "means" (wasail). When one contracts a cold, Allah and His assistance are seldom recalled; instead, one places their trust primarily in medical treatments and remedies. However, the same individual when diagnosed with cancer does not have much faith in medical treatments; as a result, he remembers Allah more frequently and earnestly, and he beseeches Allah for assistance with greater devotion.

However, the genuine monotheist (Muwahhid) differs from this. He places equal hope in Allah amidst all challenges, regardless of their difficulty. Except for Allah, he is despondent and pessimistic towards all others. Although he acknowledges that the degree of difficulty of adversity may differ among human beings, Allah perceives no distinction between them; curing a cold is not "easier" in His eyes than curing cancer.

¹⁶ Ghurar

Consequently, regardless of the availability of conventional means and instruments, one must have complete and unwavering faith in Allah and have no hope in anyone other than Allah. The ideal monotheist recognises his helplessness and destitution in the presence of Allah in all circumstances, even when he may be free of issues. His reliance on Allah, devotion, and hopefulness do not diminish during times of ease and joy. He is convinced that he could be confronted with the most challenging obstacles at any moment and that if Allah forsakes him, he will be subjected to all kinds of tribulations. Anticipating deliverance certainly entails this. Such individuals are exceedingly rare, yet their worth is immense. Desperation is the antithesis of Intezaar. Thus, a person experiencing hardships, regardless of their severity and intensity, does not despair and lose hope in Allah's assistance and mercy. Such an 'Intezaar' represents the utmost devotion to Allah.

Awaiting Deliverance - the Believer's Highest Act of Worship

Based on the aforementioned justifications, it can be concluded that awaiting deliverance is the most cherished deed in the eyes of Allah, as it signifies the highest level of belief in Tauheed within an individual. The value and worth of each action in Islam is determined by Tauheed. Awaiting deliverance (Intezaar-ul-Faraj) is one of the deeds that Allah holds in the highest regard.

Ameerul Momineen (a.s) has stated in this regard,

وَأَنْتَظِرُوا الْفَرَجَ وَلَا تَيَأْسُوا مِنْ رُوحِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ أَحَبَّ الْأَعْمَالِ إِلَى اللَّهِ
عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَنْتَظَارُ الْفَرَجِ مَا دَامَ عَلَيْهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

*'Await deliverance from Allah, and do not despair of Allah's mercy. Verily the most beloved act before Allah Almighty is awaiting deliverance if the believer maintains this state.'*¹⁷

"Deliverance" (Faraj) refers to 'solace' and 'relief' while suffering. Without affliction, deliverance is devoid of significance. Awaiting deliverance (Intezaar-ul-Faraj) entails desiring the mercy of Allah amid suffering. As an individual's faith in Tauheed grows deeper, so does the magnitude and intensity of their Intezaar. In the same way that despondency towards Allah's Mercy is abhorrent to Him, its opposite, eager anticipation of deliverance, is loved by Him. And because despair results in polytheism, the most abhorrent deed in Allah's eyes, awaiting deliverance, which is the opposite of despair, is one of the most cherished deeds in His eyes.

Another statement from Ameerul Momineen (a.s) identifies awaiting deliverance as the believer's highest act of worship. He says,

أَفْضَلُ عِبَادَةِ الْمُؤْمِنِ أَنْتَظَرَ فَرَجِ اللَّهِ

*'The best act of worship for a believer is awaiting deliverance from (the side of) Allah.'*¹⁸

The term "Allah's Deliverance" (فَرَجِ اللَّهِ) translates to "deliverance from the side of Allah." (فَرَجٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ) The highest act of worship for a believer is to await Allah's deliverance. This is an act of devotion that surpasses the worth of all other religious deeds. Although one may engage in numerous acts of

¹⁷ Khisal, vol 2, pg. 616

¹⁸ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 52, pg. 131, H no 32

worship, "Tauheed" and firm faith in Allah remain the essence and foundation of all worship. The depth of this conviction (of Tauheed) is exposed through afflictions. The degree to which an individual truly believes in Allah as the sole source of hope remains ambiguous, even for that individual, until they experience affliction. Especially in the face of grievous afflictions, one's faith in Allah becomes evident to both the individual and others. True believers are those who endure adversity for years without succumbing to despair and maintain contentment with the divine will, despite encountering numerous obstacles along the way.

When someone asked Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s): 'How is a person deemed to be a believer?' The Imam (a.s) replied,

بِالتَّسْلِيمِ لِلَّهِ، وَالرِّضَا فِيهَا وَرَدَّ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ سُرُورٍ أَوْ سَخَطٍ

*'By submitting to Allah and being content with what befalls him – from joy or grief.'*¹⁹

If one's life circumstances are always joyful, being content with the divine decree is easy. But if matters cause sorrow, maintaining contentment becomes very difficult.

Waiting for deliverance along with submission to the divine decree

It is not without reason that the greatest devotion to Allah in the Ahle Bait (a.s) religion consists of patience and contentment with the divine decree. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) said,

¹⁹ Al-Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chp of Satisfaction with decree, H no 12

رَأْسُ طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ الصَّبْرُ وَالرِّضَا عَنِ اللَّهِ فِيمَا أَحَبَّ الْعَبْدُ أَوْ كَرِهَ

*'The head (chief) of Allah's obedience is patience and satisfaction with Allah in what the servants love or hate.'*²⁰

The human "head" is the sacred and most vital organ. The vitality and persistence of the remaining organs are contingent upon the health and survival of the head. An individual who lacks a head is rendered lifeless, with their remaining organs and appendages serving no purpose.

Additionally, the spiritual existence of man is identical. Man's true existence consists of Imaan and submission to Allah. The fundamental intention behind the creation of humans is to engage in the worship of Allah. The spirit of worship, which governs an individual's spiritual existence, consists of wholeheartedly submitting to His Will, particularly in areas that he finds abhorrent and disagreeable. A sincere monotheist is certain that Allah holds the power to resolve every difficulty, and that He causes suffering on His devotees to examine the depths of their submission. The test of Allah's servitude must be passed. A genuine servant must be made clear. The most praiseworthy indication of being a servant is that one places complete trust and hope in Allah in all situations. Neither happiness nor anguish can deter him from diligently performing the obligations of Allah's servitude.

²⁰ Al-Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr

The highest demonstration of Allah's servitude is to maintain faith for deliverance amidst adversity. On the contrary, as adversities intensify, an individual's expectation for ease amplifies. Sincere worship, founded upon a profound and steadfast faith in Tauheed, embodies the spirit of Allah's servitude and the soul of obedience. Thus, it can be asserted that the utmost and most superior form of worship performed by a believer is the "Intezaar of the relief (انتظارالفرج) bestowed by Allah in times of adversity. This spiritual devotion is the soul of other forms of worship.

SECTION 2

TYPES OF INTEZAAR

Chapter I

Intezaar of the reappearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s)

Occultation of Imam (a.s) – the greatest calamity

As previously stated, individuals tend to direct their greater focus towards Allah during challenging circumstances; consequently, their anticipation for Faraj (ease) becomes heightened. As the severity and difficulty of the distress increase, so does the hope in Allah's Mercy and support. Simultaneously, dependence on superficial means diminishes and weakens. Therefore, the intensity and strength of Farajis directly proportional to the severity of human suffering. Illnesses that are challenging to cure afflict individuals more frequently than common illnesses; consequently, the anticipation of Faraj is more pronounced in the former case.

Additionally, distress in humans may or may not have a material basis; it is a mental and spiritual condition. The extent to which an individual is distressed may vary among those afflicted with a specific ailment. It may affect some individuals more severely than others. This is dependent on the individual's mental reaction to the illness. As a result, the severity of distress is not solely determined by the nature of the illness; rather, the spiritual impact of that illness on the individual is the most significant determinant. Typically, the degree of an individual's distress is dictated by their emotional and spiritual connections to a particular situation. The distress

is more severe when these attachments are more crucial and intense.

The best example of this is when a young child becomes ill. In this case, although the parents themselves are not sick, in many cases their distress over their child's illness is greater than if they were to fall ill. The mother, whose affection and love for her child is usually greater than the father's, can tolerate her illness much more easily than her child's. In this case, the younger the child, the stronger this emotional attachment, and the mother's distress when her child falls ill is much more excruciating and difficult to bear. The mother truly wishes that she had become ill instead of her child, and in fact, becomes ill herself over her child's illness.

The reason for this is the deep spiritual attachment the mother has for her child. Where such strong emotional dependence does not exist, this is not the case. So, the same mother, when she sees another person's child afflicted with the same illness, does not become as distressed. And if she hears that some child has fallen victim to that disease, she is impacted emotionally to some extent but this sadness quickly disappears and the matter does not disrupt her normal life or preoccupy her thoughts. Whereas for her own child's illness, she never feels this way, and her peace and comfort disappear at that time, and until her child recovers, she cannot stop worrying.

This extends beyond an individual's immediate circle, particularly relatives. Instead, spiritual and emotional intimacy is crucial. Although some individuals may not have a particularly close familial relationship with a particular person,

their profound spiritual attachment to that person may cause them distress and worry over their difficulties.

This introduction allows us to proceed to the main topic. When examining the Intezaar of the Faraj of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), it is critical to consider the extent to which his Ghaibat (occultation) has caused us distress. If an individual is distressed by the separation from the Imam, then they will find meaning in awaiting his Faraj; the intensity of this distress directly correlates with the severity of their awaiting of Faraj.

An individual's distress over Imam's (a.s) ghaibat can be quantified in proportion to the degree of their intellectual and spiritual affiliation with their Imam. Certain individuals may experience no distress regarding the Ghaibat of their Imam. The matter is not significant enough to occupy their thoughts or compel them to think of a remedy for this suffering. Does the Intezaar of the Faraj of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) even arise for such individuals? Individuals who have a thousand rupees stolen from their pocket or purse may become anxious and preoccupied with concerns such as what to do, whom to contact for assistance, how to locate the criminal, and so forth. This concern or preoccupation persists for a minimum of several minutes. However, has their separation from Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) ever caused them the same amount of distress and concern? Have they given some consideration to what they might do to rectify this circumstance (i.e occultation of Imam (a.s))

The loss of a possession that is more significant to an individual causes them to experience heightened distress. When something is more significant to an individual, it occupies a greater portion of their thoughts and heart. Certain challenges

can become so burdensome that they prevent an individual from attaining rest and solace, and diminish the enjoyment of life's delights.

Possibly everyone has encountered this at some point in their lives and struggled with it in this manner, but the percentage of Shias who have been so afflicted by the agony of separation from the Imam (a.t.f.s) remains unknown. How many are there who have lost their comfort and tranquillity, if only temporarily and to a limited extent, due to this tragedy?

Has it ever happened to any of us that the agony of being separated from the Imam (a.t.f.s) prevented us from falling into slumber, even for a few minutes? We agree that all cannot be afflicted to the same extent. Yet, has any one ever pondered the reasons behind our Imam's occultation and the protracted nature of this tragedy, which spans more than 1163 years? How much has this matter, in reality, troubled us?

If we find out that God forbid, we have become afflicted with cancer, suddenly all the worries and griefs of the world weigh down our hearts, and we become lost in thought about what to do to be saved from this pain. But since the time we heard that our Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) has become distant and hidden from us by Allah's command and will, how much have we grieved? How much have we contemplated where this affliction has come upon us from, and what is the path to salvation and deliverance from it?

We have heard the saying of Imam Baqir (a.s) who said,

إِذَا غَضِبَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى عَلَى خَلْقِهِ نَحَانَا عَنْ جَوَارِهِمْ .

*'When Allah becomes angry with His creation, He distances us from being near them.'*²¹

The meaning of this statement is that the separation from Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) is due to Allah's wrath and contempt towards humanity. Furthermore, if this is the case, we ought to reflect on the rationale behind our being subjected to such a penalty and consider potential remedies.

To elucidate the extent of this suffering, let us initially contemplate the blessings that each of us would possess if Imam (a.s) was present and apparent. What individual advantages might we have obtained from his presence that we are presently denied? How many difficulties could be averted, and how much perplexity and uncertainty could be avoided if every individual were granted regular and easy access to their Imam?

At times, when identifying a jurisprudential ruling becomes exceedingly challenging and when the number of differing opinions on a given subject becomes so great, those with a feeble mind choose a path of indifference and negligence rather than acting upon the situation and fulfilling their religious obligation. Additionally, individuals who hold more firm convictions become bewildered. On the other hand, if they could readily locate the Imam (a.s.) and inquire about him, they would avoid these challenges and acquire knowledge of their obligations directly from the Imam.

Confusion prevails in matters of belief to a greater extent than in religious rulings, and the majority of individuals cannot accurately and adequately evaluate various religious ideologies and schools of thought, each of which asserts its truth and

²¹ Usool Kafi, Kitabul Hujjah, Chapter on Ghaibat, H no 31

rejects different viewpoints. Their preference for a specific school of thought is frequently influenced by the level of confidence they have in prominent individuals; that is, they ascertain whether an ideology is true or misleading based on its advocates whereas the opposite should be true.²²

As per the saying of Imam Ali (a.s),

إِنَّ دِينَ اللَّهِ لَا يُعْرَفُ بِالرِّجَالِ بَلْ بِآيَةِ الْحَقِّ فَأَعْرِفِ الْحَقَّ تَعْرِفْ أَهْلَهُ

*'Indeed, the religion of Allah is not recognized through men but through the sign of truth. So, know the truth and you will know its people.'*²³

Most believers do not have precise and adequate knowledge of theological discussions (Ilm Kalam) to be able to act upon this wise advice. Instead, they believe in the validity of something based on the personality of individuals. Even experts, as they have different and sometimes contradictory foundations in religion and Maarefat, rarely reach understanding and consensus through discourse. The small group who do share common ideological foundations still differ in their inference from the Quran and Sunnah, or intellectual and theoretical interpretations.

²² However, this is not the case with the pure and infallible Ahle Bait (a.s). They are the yardstick of truth and falsehood. Their satisfaction is a pointer to the 'truth' and their wrath is an indication of 'falsehood'. In Ziarat Aale Yasin we say, 'Truth is defined by your satisfaction. Falsehood is identified through your displeasure' (Ihtejaaj Tabarsi, vol 2, pg 317; Behaarul Anwaar, vol 102, pg 82)

²³ Amaali Tusi, pg 625

During the Imam's occultation, in addition to reason - which has definitive authority and necessity in matters of 'evident principles' and 'general axioms' (Badihaat wa Mustaqallaat Aqliyyah)" - we have transmitted evidence, texts of the Quran and Sunnah, which are subject to different and sometimes conflicting interpretations, and nothing more than black ink on white pages.

The expression "black ink on white pages" was used by the Last Messenger (s.a.w.a) in his will to Imam Ali (a.s) to describe the believers of the last era.

يَا عَلِيُّ وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ يَقِينًا قَوْمٌ يَكُونُونَ فِي آخِرِ الزَّمَانِ لَمْ
يَلْحَقُوا النَّبِيَّ وَحُجِبَ عَنْهُمْ الْحُجَّةُ فَأَمَنُوا بِسَوَادٍ فِي بَيَاضٍ

"O Ali, know that the most amazing in faith among people and the greatest of them in certainty are a people who will be in the Last Era, who will not meet the Prophet and the Proof will be concealed from them, yet they will believe in the black over the white."¹²⁴

Faith through black over white is based on trust and reliance on the Quran and narrations of the Ahlul Bait (a.s), which are the only correct sources of religion. Such faith is highly valued and precious solely because of its difficulty and is therefore very rare. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a) himself, when speaking to his successor Imam Ali (a.s) about the time of occultation of the 12th Imam (a.t.f.s), said,

²⁴ Kamaluddin, Chapter 25, H no 8

إِنَّ الثَّابِتِينَ عَلَى الْقَوْلِ بِهِ فِي زَمَانِ غَيْبَتِهِ لَأَعْرُ مِنْ الْكِبْرِيتِ الْأَحْمَرِ

*'Indeed, those firmly established upon belief in him during his occultation are rarer than red Sulphur.'*²⁵

Red sulphur is a metaphor for something extremely rare. During the occultation of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), the religious must maintain their faith by relying solely on the black ink over white pages, that is, the writings. Therefore, their number will be exceedingly few, and those steadfast in belief in the absent Imam will be rarer than red sulphur.

This is one of the effects and consequences of the Imam's occultation that has afflicted his nation, and unfortunately, the depth of this affliction and suffering remains unknown to many Shias. The deprivation of the physical presence of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) in society and the prolongation of this pain has gradually normalised the issue for many people - even for Imam's friends and Shias - to the extent that they subconsciously assume that this is how it should always be, and they feel little sense of the void from Imam Zamana's (a.t.f.s) absence.

To better reveal the extent of the Shia's deprivation and misery during their Imam's occultation, one of the best methods is to compare the time of occultation with the time of his advent. By doing so, one can consider what blessings will become apparent then, and what divine bounties will pour upon the entire world - bounties and blessings that will make the time of occultation completely different in character.

²⁵ Kamaluddin, Chapter 31, H no 7

For example, it is narrated from Imam Ali ibn Husain (a.s) that he said,

إِذَا قَامَ قَائِمُنَا أَذْهَبَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ عَنْ شِيعَتِنَا الْعَاهَةَ وَ جَعَلَ قُلُوبَهُمْ كَزُبْرِ الْحَدِيدِ

*'When our Qaem rises, Allah will remove weakness and illness from our Shias and make their hearts as firm as iron.'*²⁶

The troubles of the Shias will only be removed with the advent of their Imam, and their hearts will become as strong and steadfast as iron, such that no factor can induce weakness or deviation in their belief and religiosity.

One of the other glad tidings for the time of the Imam's advent is that Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) will save the Shias from difficulties and hardships. As Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) said,

هُوَ الْمَفْرَجُ لِلْكَرْبِ عَنْ شِيعَتِهِ بَعْدَ ضَنْكٍ شَدِيدٍ وَ بَلَاءٍ طَوِيلٍ وَ جَوْرِ وَ خَوْفٍ فَطُوبَى لِمَنْ أَدْرَكَ ذَلِكَ الزَّمَانَ

*'He is the one who will relieve the distress from his Shia after severe constriction, lengthy tribulation, and oppression. Glad tidings to the one who reaches that time.'*²⁷

The severe misery and tribulation of the Shias refers to the time of the Imam's occultation when they spend their lives in stress and difficulties. With the Imam's advent, these troubles will also be removed and the believers will attain comfort and

²⁶ Khisal, vol 2, pg 541

²⁷ Kamaluddin, Chapter 55, H no 8

ease throughout the world. For this reason, one of the Imam's titles in supplications is مُزِيلُ الْهَمِّ, (Reliever of Anxiety).²⁸ Another of his titles is الكَلِمَةُ عَلَيَّ التَّقْوِيَا جَامِعٌ (the Unifier of the Word upon Piety)²⁹ According to this attribute, the different beliefs that have emerged due to ulterior motives and exploitation will be united on the axis of piety and the divine foundation, and only the true creed and “Allah's approved word” (Tauheed) will prevail over hearts and minds.

Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) described this same characteristic saying,

أَمَّا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يُظْهَرَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى الْحَقَّ وَالْعَدْلَ فِي الْبِلَادِ وَ
يَجْمَعَ اللَّهُ الْكَلِمَةَ وَيُؤَلِّفَ اللَّهُ بَيْنَ قُلُوبٍ مُخْتَلِفَةٍ وَلَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ عَزَّ
وَجَلَّ فِي أَرْضِهِ

*'Do you not wish that Allah the Exalted reveal the truth and justice throughout the lands, and that Allah unite the Word (belief), and that Allah reconcile hearts that are diverse and do not disobey Allah in His land?'*³⁰

With the advent of Hazrat Baqiyatullah (may our souls be sacrificed for him), the fake and deviant religions will disappear, and people will unite upon the religion of truth - Islam. Allah the Exalted has said,

²⁸ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 102, pg 102

²⁹ Dua Nudbah (Iqbalul Aamaal, pg 297)

³⁰ Usool Kafi, Kitabul Hujjah, Chapter of Nawadir concerning Ghaibat

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

*'It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion, although the polytheists dislike it.'*³¹

Regarding the first part of the verse, Imam Moosa ibn Jafar (a.s) said,

هُوَ الَّذِي أَمَرَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْوَالَايَةِ لَوْصِيَّتِهِ وَالْوَالَايَةُ هِيَ دِينُ الْحَقِّ

'He is the One who commanded His Messenger with guardianship (wilayat) of his successor, and Wilayat is the religion of truth.'

Continuing further, Imam (a.s) said,

يُظْهِرُهُ عَلَىٰ جَمِيعِ الْأَدْيَانِ عِنْدَ قِيَامِ الْقَائِمِ

*'He will manifest it over all religions at the rise of the Qaem (a.t.f.s)'*³²

Clarifying this same matter, Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) said to Mufazzal,

فَوَ اللَّهُ يَا مُغْضَلُ لِيُزْفِعَ عَنِ الْمَلِكِ وَالْأَدْيَانِ الْإِخْتِلَافُ وَ يَكُونُ
الدِّينُ كُلُّهُ وَاحِدًا، كَمَا قَالَ جَلَّ ذِكْرُهُ إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ

'By Allah O Mufazzal! He will eliminate differences from the various faiths and religions, and the entire religion will become

³¹ Surah Taubah, v 33

³² Usool Kafi, Kitabul Hujjah, Chapter of Nakto wa Tanfo Min Tanzeel fi Wilayat, H no 91

one, just as the Majestic said: 'Indeed religion in the sight of Allah is Islam.'³³³⁴

With the advent of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), differences in interpretations, misunderstandings, and deviations in religion and morals will also be eliminated, and human beings across the earth will attain unity of word and belief centred on truth and the correct religion. In this way, the path of proper servitude to Allah will become easy for all creatures.

In the era after reappearance, the intellect and faith of people will reach perfection, and the path to achieving moral perfection will be fully prepared for them. Imam Baqir (a.s) has said regarding this,

إِذَا قَامَ قَائِمُنَا وَضَعَ يَدَهُ عَلَى رُءُوسِ الْعِبَادِ فَجَمَعَ بِهَا عُقُولَهُمْ وَ
أَكْمَلَ بِهَا أَخْلَاقَهُمْ

'When our Qaem rises, he will place his hand on the heads of the servants, through which he will gather their intellects and perfect their morals.'³⁵

Intellects will become so perfected that believers will no longer value material and worldly matters and will not rise in conflict and disagreement with each other over money and status. Rancour will depart from their hearts, and compassion and forgiveness will prevail among them.

Imam Ali (a.s) has said in this regard,

لَوْ قَدْ قَامَ قَائِمُنَا... وَذَهَبَتِ الشُّحْنَاءُ مِنْ قُلُوبِ الْعِبَادِ

³³ Surah Aale Imran, v 19

³⁴ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 53, pg 4

³⁵ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 52, pg 336, H no 71

*'When our Qaem rises...rancour will disapear from the hearts of the servants.'*³⁶

In another narration, Imam Baqir (a.s) describes that time as follows,

إِذَا ظَهَرَ الْقَائِمُ... وَيُعْطِي النَّاسَ عَطَايَا مَرَّتَيْنِ فِي السَّنَةِ وَيَرْزُقُهُمْ فِي الشَّهْرِ رِزْقَيْنِ وَيُسَوِّي بَيْنَ النَّاسِ حَتَّى لَا تَرَى مُحْتَاجًا إِلَى الزَّكَاةِ وَ يَجِيءُ أَصْحَابُ الزَّكَاةِ بِزَكَاتِهِمْ إِلَى الْمَحَاوِجِ مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ فَلَا يَقْبَلُونَهَا فَيَصُرُّونَهَا وَ يَدُورُونَ فِي دُورِهِمْ فَيَخْرُجُونَ إِلَيْهِمْ فَيَقُولُونَ لَا حَاجَةَ لَنَا فِي دَرَاهِمِكُمْ

*When the Qaem appears.....He will give the people two gifts per year and provide them with two provisions per month, and he will create equality between the people until you do not see a needy one who requires Zakat (obligatory charity). The bearers of Zakat will come to his needy Shias, but they will not accept it, and they will turn it away and go around in their homes. Then they will come out to them and say, "We do not need your dirhams (silver coins)."*³⁷

And when greed for money, status, and the world departs from people, and each only benefits from material means to the extent of their needs and is contented the way will be paved for the complete faith of the servants.

A person said to Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s), 'I fear we are not believers.' The Imam replied: Why do you say that? He said:

³⁶ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 52, pg 316, H no 11

³⁷ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 52, pg 390, H no 212

Because we do not see among the believers someone who values his brother in faith more than money. Rather, among us who believe in the wilayat of Imam Ali (a.s), money is more important and dearer than our religious brother.

The Imam replied,

كَلَّا، إِنَّكُمْ مُؤْمِنُونَ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَكْمُلُ إِيمَانُكُمْ حَتَّى يَخْرُجَ قَائِمُنَا،
فَعِنْدَهَا يَجْمَعُ اللَّهُ أَحْلَامَكُمْ، فَتَكُونُونَ مُؤْمِنِينَ كَامِلِينَ

*'No, you are believers, but with an imperfect faith until our Qaem rises. At that time Allah will gather your intellects, then you will become complete believers.'*³⁸

Relating these narrations is merely opening a window towards the 'Golden Age' of the advent, so that we can compare those ideal and desirable conditions with what we experience in the present era of occultation, and the extent of deprivation and need of the Shias becomes evident. This comparison makes the pain of separation more tangible. Through our deprivation and distress, it becomes clear to us what precious jewel and invaluable treasure has been hidden behind the curtain of Ghaibat for centuries. The one whose advent will make the world a paradise and garden, how helplessly he is concealed behind the dark veil of Ghaibat. On the other hand, we see needy and thirsty people who have abandoned the search for the "cool water" and the "fountain of life"(i.e. Imam (a.s)) and have become happy and content with a delusive existence.

If the blessings of the existence of this caring and compassionate divine representative become more evident to

³⁸ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 67, pg 351, H no 54

us, we will feel the pain of his remoteness and absence more deeply and profoundly, and only then will we truly find our predicament and become realistic. If we do not realize our afflictions and difficulties during the Ghaibat of our Imam, then gradually the “anticipation of Faraj” will turn into “complaining about the absence of the Imam”, and never will the anguish and pain for the anticipation of Faraj be created in us, and we will not sincerely complain to Allah.

The interpretation of ‘complain’ concerning the occultation of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) has been taught to us in some of the reliable supplications. In a supplication that the first deputy of Imam Mahdi, Shaikh Amri, dictated, and the late Sayyid Ibn Taos highly recommended reading on Friday evenings,³⁹ we present it before Allah in this way:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَشْكُو إِلَيْكَ فَقْدَ نَبِيِّنَا وَغَيْبَةَ وَلِيِّنَا وَشِدَّةَ الزَّمَانِ عَلَيْنَا وَ
 وَقُوعَ الْفِتَنِ بِنَا وَتَظَاهِرَ الْأَعْدَاءِ عَلَيْنَا وَكَثْرَةَ عَدُوِّنَا وَقِلَّةَ عَدَدِنَا
 اللَّهُمَّ فَافْرُجْ ذَلِكَ بِفَتْحٍ مِنْكَ تُعَجِّلُهُ وَنَصْرٍ مِنْكَ تُعِزُّهُ وَإِمَامٍ عَدْلٍ
 تُظَهِّرُهُ إِلَهَ الْحَقِّ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ

‘O Allah, we complain to You of the loss of our Prophet, and the absence of our Guardian, and the harshness of times against us, and the occurrence of tribulations among us, and the alliance of enemies against us, and the multitude of our enemies and the scarcity of our number. O Allah! So, relieve that through a victory

³⁹ He says that even if you have a valid excuse for missing the Taaqibat of Asr on the day of Friday, you must not miss reciting this dua and must forgo your laziness. Since Allah has considered its recitation as His special right. So have faith in it (Jamalul Usboo, pg 315)

*from You which You hasten, and a help from You through which You render us mighty, and a just Imam whom You cause to appear. O God of Truth, O Lord of the Worlds.*⁴⁰

In another supplication that has reached us from the second deputy of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) regarding the acts of the holy month of Ramazan, this same expression is seen:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَشْكُو إِلَيْكَ فَقَدْ نَبَّيْنَا وَغَيْبَةَ إِمَامِنَا وَكَثْرَةَ عَدُوِّنَا وَشِدَّةَ
الْفِتَنِ وَتَظَاهَرَ الزَّمَانَ عَلَيْنَا فَصَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَأَعِنَّا عَلَى
ذَلِكَ بِفَتْحٍ تُعَجِّلُهُ وَبِضُرٍّ تُكْشِفُهُ وَنَصْرٍ تُعِزُّهُ وَسُلْطَانٍ حَقِّ تَظْهِرُهُ وَ
رَحْمَةٍ مِنْكَ تُجَلِّدُنَاهَا وَعَافِيَةٍ مِنْكَ تُلْبِسُنَاهَا بِرَحْمَتِكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ
الرَّاحِمِينَ

*'O Allah, we complain to You of the loss of our Prophet (s.a.w.a), and the absence of our Guardian (Imam), and the multitude of our enemies and the paucity of our number, and the severity of tribulations among us, and the times' alliance against us. So send Your blessings upon Mohammed and his progeny, and help us against that through a victory which You hasten, and a distress which You dispel, and a help through which You render us mighty, and the sovereignty of truth which You manifest, and a mercy from You which envelops us, and well-being from You with which You clothe us, with Your mercy, O Most Merciful of the merciful.'*⁴¹

Complaints are made at the time of tribulation and affliction: A person complains to Allah about something that is hurting

⁴⁰ Jamalul Usboo, pg 318; Kamaluddin, Chapter 45, H no 43

⁴¹ Dua Iftitah (concluding part)

and painful for him. These supplications have reached us from the holy presence of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) himself, therefore not only are such complaints to the divine threshold not wrong, but rather they indicate the supplicant's proper understanding and perception during the absence of the Imam (a.s) who feels the affliction and calamity of being away from his Master and asks Allah for victory and relief.

Some of the difficulties of the era of Ghaibat are addressed in these phrases: distress and adversity of the believer; multitude of the enemies of the Shias; scarcity in number of the believers; severe tribulations and pressures of time upon the Shias. These are a few of the many troubles and pains of the believers during the absence of their Master, and they are examples that should be hoped to be removed through divine Faraj. Crying out and complaining to the divine threshold is the only remedy for these pains.

However, one point should not be neglected. The lament here does not stem from dissatisfaction and impatience with Allah's decree and will. Sometimes one complains about something because they are unhappy with it, but the believer is never dissatisfied with whatever Allah has decreed, even if it be tribulation and affliction.

Afflictions and difficulties are painful and distressing for the believer, but their distress does not imply dissatisfaction. In general, distress has two meanings – one is discomfort and affliction, and the other is dissatisfaction and discontent. These two meanings are not necessarily connected. One may be distressed (in the first sense) by something but not dissatisfied with it. Illness and disease are usually distressing and unpleasant for people, but if one has faith, they are not

discontent with the fact that Allah has decreed sickness for whatever reason and wisdom.

Yes, if he has committed a sin, which is likely why he has fallen ill, he is displeased with committing that sin. However, because Allah has afflicted him as a punishment for his sin, he is not displeased with the essence of his Lord and His justice. Therefore, if he raises his hands in prayer to remove that illness and asks Allah not to deal with him justly, it is not because he is displeased with the justice of his Lord; rather, he knows that seeking wellbeing from the Almighty Allah is beloved to Him. For this reason, he seeks wellbeing and health.

But in any case, before and after prayer, they are not dissatisfied with Allah's decree. So, if their prayer does not effectively remove illness, they are inwardly pleased that Allah has so willed. This requires faith in a person. In any case, the believer should lament before Allah to remove difficulties, and Allah loves this lament if there is no dissatisfaction with what He wills. Allah wants that when servants are in distress, they turn to Him alone and ask no creature unless Allah has ordered resorting to them, in which case it is resorting to Allah. One wisdom of afflictions can be that Allah wants them to be content with what He favours for His servants.

As stated in the Imams' narrations, "satisfaction" (رضاً) with Allah's decree and patience (صبر) with afflictions along with gratitude for blessings, brings one to the rank of the truthful ones (صدّيقين).⁴² The 'beautiful patience' (صبر جميل) the

⁴² Usool Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of Raza bil Qaza, H no 6

Quran orders is patience in which there is no complaining to people (فَأَصْبِرْ صَبْرًا جَمِيلًا).⁴³

When Jabir Ju'fi asked Imam Mohammed Baqir (a.s) about the meaning of "beautiful patience" in the above verse, the Imam replied

ذَلِكَ صَبْرٌ لَيْسَ فِيهِ شَكْوَى إِلَى النَّاسِ

*'It is a patience in which there is no complaint to the people.'*⁴⁴

The spirit of patience is the believer's contentment and satisfaction with Allah's decree, and if he complains to the divine threshold to remove his affliction and distress while maintaining patience, he has not done anything wrong. What is incompatible with صَبْرٌ جَمِيلٌ (beautiful patience) is complaining to the creatures (Ghairullah) i.e. to people who themselves need Allah's aid and mercy.

Believers only ask for relief from their Allah and rely on none but Him. Therefore, being deprived of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), the biggest difficulty today prompts complaining to Allah about this and asking for relief. In both cases after complaining to the Lord, they ask Him to send relief soon and deliver them from difficulties, which will occur with divine succour through the appearance of the Imam of Justice.

To summarise, complaining to Allah, without discontent or dissatisfaction, is not only not blameworthy but is encouraged.

⁴³ Surah Maarij, v 5

⁴⁴ Usool Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of Sabr, H no 23

Heedlessness to the pain of Imam's (a.s) absence

The previous discussion concludes that a believer's life will only reach its ideal and virtuous state with the appearance of his Imam. Before that, the faith of human beings does not reach its desired perfection, and the believers will not be befittingly able to tread the path of servitude to Allah. A serious obstacle in this path is worldly and material attachments, and Allah's servants will always have troubles in the path of their spiritual progress until they reach complete intellectual maturity. This obstacle will be removed by the capable hand of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) after his reappearance and the believers - who will be spread across the world - will be able to properly tread the path of spiritual progress and evolution. At that time, divine knowledge and wisdom will become abundantly available to the believers. To the extent that Imam Baqir (a.s) said:

تُوْتُونَ الْحِكْمَةَ فِي زَمَانِهِ حَتَّىٰ إِنَّ الْمَرْأَةَ لَتَقْضِي فِي بَيْتِهَا بِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ
تَعَالَىٰ وَسُنَّةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ص

'You will be granted wisdom (hikmah) in his time, to the point that a woman will judge in her home according to Allah's Book and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a)'⁴⁵

And in this way, the time of spiritual happiness and joys for the Shias will arrive with the appearance of Hazrat Baqiyatullah A'zam (may our souls be sacrificed for him). This joy will be so all-encompassing that it reaches even the deceased believers in their graves,

⁴⁵ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 52, pg 352, H no 106

لَا يَبْقَى مُؤْمِنٌ مَّيِّتٌ إِلَّا دَخَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ تِلْكَ الْفَرَحَةُ فِي قَبْرِهِ وَذَلِكَ حَيْثُ
يَتَزَاوَرُونَ فِي قُبُورِهِمْ وَيَتَبَاشَرُونَ بِقِيَامِ الْقَائِمِ

'No deceased believer will remain except that happiness will reach him in his grave. That is when they will visit each other in their graves and give good tidings to each other of the rising of Qaem (a.t.f.s).'⁴⁶

Not only humans, but animals, plants, and even inanimate objects will benefit from the blessings of His Eminence's reappearance. Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) says,

فَعِنْدَ ذَلِكَ تُفْرِحُ الطُّيُورُ فِي أَوْكَارِهَا وَ الْحَيْتَانِ فِي بِحَارِهَا وَ تُمْدُّ
الْأَنْهَارُ وَ تَفِيضُ الْعُيُونُ وَ تَنْبُتُ الْأَرْضُ ضِعْفَ أَكْثَرِهَا

'At that time, the birds will rejoice in their nests, the fish in the seas, the rivers will flow, the springs will burst forth, and the earth will bring forth many times its usual produce.'⁴⁷

The era of reappearance is blessings and beauty, and the believers will see the world in all its freshness, the earth in all its abundance, and the world in all its blessings. Let us now compare living in such an atmosphere with the deprivations, deficiencies, and pains of the people of faith in the time of their Imam's occultation, so that we realize that living without the presence of the Imam (a.s) is a life of misery and wretchedness. But alas, most people do not feel this misery!

⁴⁶ Ghaibat Nomani, Chapter 19, H no 5

⁴⁷ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 52, pg 304, H no 73

The greatest pain beyond the occultation itself is not feeling this pain!

Our example is like that of a small child who loses his father at a young age and becomes an orphan, but due to immaturity does not understand what calamity has befallen him. However, the wise elders pay attention and sympathize with him, while the child himself is busy playing and absorbed in childish matters. While playing, he completely forgets the grief and sorrow of losing his father and busies himself with his toys etc.

The same oblivious child, as he gradually grows up and reaches adulthood, will feel the pain of orphanhood, and realize what calamity had befallen him in childhood. When he feels the absence of his father and tastes the pain of being fatherless, that is when his sorrows and griefs begin, and he feels the pain of years of suffering, all at once.

The feeling of being an 'orphan' in the time of occultation is similar. The believers in this time are orphans who have become distant from their true father and have no way to establish a normal connection with him and benefit sufficiently from him. This reality was pointed out centuries ago by the venerable father of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) quoting their ancestors reaching to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a),

أَشَدُّ مِنْ يُتَمِّمِ الْيَتِيمِ الَّذِي انْقَطَعَ عَنْ أُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ يُتَمِّمُ يَتِيمٍ انْقَطَعَ
عَنْ إِمَامِهِ وَلَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى الْوُصُولِ إِلَيْهِ

*'More severe than the orphanhood of the orphan who has been separated from his father, is the orphanhood of the orphan who has been cut off from his Imam and cannot reach him...'*⁴⁸

Yes, this feeling of being an orphan is more difficult and the calamity more severe. Because this orphan has lost his true and 'real' father, while the other orphan has only lost his biological father. But it is regrettable and painful that most of these orphans, since they lack sufficient intellect and maturity, do not feel the pain of their orphanhood like that immature child. Hence, they have no worry or grief in their lives over this. They are preoccupied with various amusements and pleasures and have completely forgotten this pain. The dust of this negligence has covered many of the faithful. Only a few believers are found who are restless and anxious over this matter (i.e. occultation)

If the believers are asked to count their adversities, what percentage of them consider the deprivation and remoteness from the existence of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) as their first adversity? And what percentage mention this adversity as tenth, hundredth, and so on in importance? And are there not Shias who never consider this issue as their adversity? Just as when a child in a remote part of the world does not feel anguished due to his father's death. How much does this occultation make us sad?

The important thing is that the issue of occultation of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) must be considered among the personal adversities of the believers. This will only happen when the spiritual and cognitive attachment of the Shias towards their Imam reaches a minimum desirable level. Unfortunately,

⁴⁸ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 2, pg 2, H no 1

since this is not the case for many of them, this issue is not counted among their adversities, and this is where the main problem lies.

Until this flaw is resolved, and the spiritual relationship of each believer with the 'absent' Imam becomes so strong that remoteness from him causes them distress, the yearning for reappearance will not be achieved for them. The reason for this is quite clear. Until one feels distressed, reappearance has no meaning for them. Why would one who does not consider himself in adversity, await relief from Allah? First, something must upset and distress him, so that he hopes for Allah's mercy and aid for relief.

Therefore, to be saved from this worrying negligence, there is no way but to gain more knowledge about Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) and to establish a stronger spiritual connection with the 'Polestar of Existence', (قُطْبُ عَالَمِ هَسْتِي) and if this happens, the state of awaiting the relief by Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) will naturally occur in the person. But if this does not happen, with no amount of advice and obligation will this state and yearning be created in the individual.

Now let me point to one of the contexts that prepares a suitable and effective ground for tasting the pain of Occultation of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s).

Believer's sorrow on the injustices across the world.

We know that Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s) divine mission is to remove injustice and oppression from the entire world and to establish justice and equity. This matter has been recurrently narrated from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a) and other infallible Imams (a.s). The Ahle Sunnah have also transmitted

similar narrations in their traditions. For example, it has been quoted from Imam Husain (a.s) who said,

لَوْ لَمْ يَبْقَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا يَوْمٌ وَاحِدٌ لَطَوَّلَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ
حَتَّى يَخْرُجَ رَجُلٌ مِنْ وُلْدِي فَيَبْلُغُهَا عَدْلًا وَقِسْطًا كَمَا مِلْتُمْ جُورًا
ظُلْمًا كَذَلِكَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ص يَقُولُ.

*'If there remained (in the life of the world) but one day, Allah would prolong that day until a man from my progeny would emerge and fill the earth with justice and equity just as it had been filled with injustice and oppression. I heard this from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a)'*⁴⁹

This issue –universal justice and equity –defines Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s) divine mission and agenda. As explained in the book Mikyalul Makarim, justice is more general than equity, since equity is used in cases of establishing others' rights while justice has a wider scope and dimension. The author writes,

العدل موافقة الحق مطلقاً. و القسط موافقة الحق في
مورد الخلاق... و الجور ضد القسط. والظلم ضد العدل. فالظلم
هو التجاوز عن الحق مطلقاً. و الجور هو التجاوز عن الحق الراجع إلى
الغير

'Justice (عدل) is observing every right completely. And equity (القسط) is observing rights with regards to the creation (people) ... And injustice (الجور) is the opposite of equity

⁴⁹ Muntakhabul Asar, pg 247, H no 1

(القسط), and oppression (الظلم) the opposite of justice (العدل). Thus, oppression is exceeding the overall (established) rights completely, while injustice is exceeding others' rights.'⁵⁰

As per this definition, justice (عدل) entails the observance of the rights that are owed to all individuals. In the case of an individual, doing justice towards them entails the fulfilment of that right. However, equity involves respecting the rights of individuals and other creations.

Allah Almighty is the first to possess rights over humans. Displaying justice towards Him entails respecting divine rights. People have a fundamental duty to Allah's obedience; in fact, disobedience to Him constitutes a violation of one of Allah's rights and an act of oppression against Him. Furthermore, an individual's soul and existence possess an inherent right over the person; therefore, each sin is, in essence, an act of self-oppression. Humans must therefore respect Allah's rights over themselves, and monotheism, which is Allah's indisputable right, must be established throughout the universe, for the world to be filled with justice.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) and the Ahle Bait (a.s) are next in line in having the greatest rights upon the creatures. As a result, the realisation of justice necessitates the fulfilment of their (a.s) rights and the worldwide propagation of Shiaism. After Allah, the Prophet (s.a.w.a), and the Ahlul Bait (a.s), come the individuals' rights on one another. In this domain, justice requires that no one unduly violates the lives, property, or honour of the people after the Imam's (a.s) reappearance.

⁵⁰ Mikyalul Makarim, vol 1, pg 119

This will be completely realised in the age of reappearance, Inshallah.

The believers who are waiting for the realization of such a day are suffering and afflicted by the oppression and crimes that occur on earth, even if that oppression and crime are not inflicted on them. Essentially, a believer, due to his faith and religious zeal, cannot see Allah's servants on earth to benefit from His blessings by disobeying Him. A believer does not consent to the occurrence of any sin in the world and suffers from the fact that the divine religion does not rule on earth. So, the scope of the believers' sufferings encompasses every oppression, crime and injustice that occurs anywhere on earth.

A faithful person cannot bear to witness disobedience to Allah from anyone or anywhere and suffers to the extent of his religious zeal from the fact that during the occultation of the Imam (a.s), the rights of Allah, the Prophet ((s.a.w.a)), the Ahlul Bait (a.s) and the rights of the oppressed are violated.

Sins and injustices are "reprehensible acts" (munkaraat). And 'Forbidding evil' (نهي عن المنكر) is a duty that the believers are obligated to carry out so that by observing its necessary conditions, they stand firm against the occurrence of oppression and sin. The first stage of forbidding wrong, which is the basis of the subsequent stages, is disapproval by the heart. This is the same thing that is related to the believer's heartfelt pain and suffering from the committing of sin. The stronger a person's faith, the more he suffers from witnessing injustice and the more afflicted he becomes.

Here we will cite an example of this kind of suffering and sorrow vis-à-vis the perfect exemplars and models of faith -

the Imam (a.s). This will make it clear that the greater a person's religious zeal, the greater his suffering and affliction in the face of oppression and crime.

A person named Bashhar narrates, 'In Kufa, I came to meet Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s). A tray of dates was placed before him (a.s) and he (a.s) was eating from it. Imam (a.s) said to me, 'Come and join me'. I said, 'May Allah make it pleased with you. On the way here I saw an incident that aroused my anger and pained my heart and had a profound effect on me' - alluding to the fact that I had no appetite to eat. Imam (a.s) said, 'By the right that I have over you, come near and eat.' I joined Imam (a.s) and began to eat. He said, 'Tell me what you saw.'

I said, 'I saw one of the government security guards beating a woman and dragging her to prison, and the woman was crying out loudly, **الْمُسْتَعَاثُ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ** ('By Allah and His Messenger, help!') But no one came to her rescue. 'The Imam said, 'Why did they treat her like that?'

I said, 'I heard from the people that this woman tripped and fell to the ground. While falling she had said, **لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ ظَالِمِيكَ يَا فَاطِمَةُ** ('May Allah curse your oppressors, O Fatemah!') That is why she was being treated in this manner.'

On hearing this incident, Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) stopped eating and began to weep, to the point that his handkerchief, beard, and chest were drenched with tears. Then he said, 'Bashhar, get up! Let us go to Masjid Sahla to supplicate to Allah and pray for this woman's freedom.' At the same time, he sent one of the Shias to the government office and instructed that if

anything happened to the woman, he should come to him and inform him.

Bashhar says, 'I went with the Imam (a.s) to the Sahla Mosque and both of us prayed two-unit prayers. Then the Imam (a.s) raised his hands toward heaven and supplicated, 'O Allah...' (Bashhar did not narrate the supplication). And after the supplication, he (a.s) went into prostration, and in prostration, I heard nothing but the sound of his breathing. Then he raised his head from prostration and said to me, 'Get up. The woman has been freed.'

Bashhar says, 'We came out of the mosque along with Imam (a.s). On the way, we met the same person whom the Imam (a.s) had sent to the government office. Imam (a.s) asked, 'What is the news?' He said, 'The woman was freed.' He (a.s) asked, 'How did they free her?' He said, 'I don't know, but I was standing by the door when the guard came out and called the woman and said, 'What words did you utter?' "She said, "I fell to the ground and then said, 'May Allah curse your oppressors, O Fatemah!' So, they inflicted this punishment on me."

The guard removed two hundred dirhams and offered them to the woman and said, "Take these and forgive the governor." But the woman refused. When the guard saw that she would not accept, he went inside and reported it to his superior. Then he came out and said, 'Go to your home, you are free.' And the woman left.

The Imam (a.s) said, 'She refused to take the two hundred dirhams?' He (the servant) said, 'Yes, even though, by Allah, she needed them.' Then the Imam (a.s) took out a purse from his blessed pocket in which there were seven gold dinars and

said to that person, 'Take these to the woman's house and convey my greetings to her and give her these dinars.'

Bashhar says, "We went together and conveyed Imam's (a.s) greetings to that woman. She said, "I implore you by Allah! Did Jafar ibn Mohammed (a.s) send greetings to me?" I said, 'May Allah have mercy on you! By Allah! Imam Jafar ibn Mohammed (a.s) has sent greetings to you.'

The woman, out of intense love, tore her collar and fainted. We waited until she regained consciousness and she said, 'Repeat what you said once more.' We repeated our words and again conveyed the Imam's (a.s) greetings to her until we had conveyed the Imam's(a.s) greetings to her thrice and each time she fainted.'

Then we said to her, 'Take it (dinars). The Imam has sent these for you. Glad tidings to you!' She took the money and said, "Ask the Imam (a.s) to seek forgiveness for me from Allah. For I know of no better wasilah (means) to Allah than him and his fathers."

Bashhar says, "We returned to the Imam (a.s) and related the events to him. The Imam began to weep and prayed for the woman. And I said,

لَيْتَ شِعْرِي مَتَى أَرَى فَرَجَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ،

*'Would that I knew when I will see the Faraj of the family of Mohammed ((s.a.w.a))!'*⁵¹

We have narrated this story in full due to its informative points. Bashhar was one of the companions of Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s).

⁵¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 47, pg 379 - 381

When he witnessed the beating of that oppressed woman, he was so deeply moved that he was unable to accept the Imam's (a.s) invitation to eat dates. When the Imam himself (a.s) became aware of the story, he was even more affected than Bashhar and wept until tears moistened his face and chest.

Witnessing oppression and crime is painful for Imam (a.s), who possesses غيرة الله - especially when this oppression has been perpetrated against one of the Imam's followers. The love between Imam (a.s) and the Shia is reciprocal. The woman for whom the Imam (a.s) was so concerned when she heard that he had sent greetings to her, became beside herself. At the same time, she was so wise and understanding that she conveyed to her master the best and most necessary of her needs.

Bashhar's last words in this story express the heartfelt sentiment of all believers, especially the Shias of the era of occultation: "Would that we knew when we will see the relief of the Ahlul Bait (a.s)." Seeing the affliction and suffering rekindled the fire of longing in Bashhar's heart and ignited the fire of "awaiting Faraj" in him.

When a believer sees the suffering and sorrow of the Shia, and above that, the grief and anguish of his Imam for the sufferings of his friends (awliya), the pain of waiting for Faraj breaks his heart. Because he feels the depth of the afflictions and pains more.

Yes, the more a person is afflicted, the more intense his anticipation of relief becomes.

Chapter Two

Awaiting the reappearance of the Muntazar

Awaiting Absolute Solace (Faraj)

The complete narration from Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) about one of his Shia followers regarding waiting for relief (Faraj) is a testimony to the fact that the higher one's faith, the more they suffer from the oppression and sins in the world, and the more distressed they become. And since according to the narrations explained earlier, the greatest worship of a believer is to await divine relief in their difficulties, then certainly the one with more complete faith has a more complete and intense awaiting of relief.

Therefore, the one who has the most intense and complete degree of awaiting relief is the same as the one who has the most complete degree of faith, and currently, no one other than the holy existence of the Imam Mahdi (may our souls be sacrificed for him) possesses this and all believers await his reappearance.

Currently, he endures the greatest suffering and affliction due to the sins and oppression occurring in the world. If we consider that he - unlike other believers who only hear incomplete reports from around the world - witnesses everything happening on earth due to his position of bearing

witness over Allah's creation,⁵² then we will affirm that his affliction and suffering from oppression and crimes in the world is incomparable to others.¹

Sometimes we hear a report and then when we see its image, we feel a huge difference within ourselves. Or if the report is about a crime occurring, reading about it in the newspaper has a very different impact on the reader and viewer compared to seeing its images, let alone witnessing the incident itself.

Perhaps less than half of all the sins and crimes happening on earth get reported. And we may not even become aware of much of what is reported, it could be less than 10% of all such cases that reach us. Moreover, in this small portion as well, it is unclear to what extent the true dimensions of the cases are reflected. Ultimately, we do not gain accurate information about most of the bitter, heart-wrenching, and disturbing incidents, even among the Shias.

It is then that we understand, if we had even a small percentage of the encompassing knowledge of the Imam of our time (a.t.f.s), and we witnessed the oppressive incidents and crimes directly, perhaps with this incomplete faith and limited religious zeal of ours, we would be unable to tolerate such corruption. So let us ponder over how our Imam, behind the veil of occultation, witnesses these distressing events, especially amongst his friends and Shias - what suffering he endures because of this. And how difficult the time of occultation passes for him.

⁵² Refer to the book 'Aftab dar Ghurbat', pg 210 -220 for a detailed discussion on this position

Entrusting the guidance of the creation to Imam (a.s)

These points relate only to one aspect of the existence of Imam Zamana(a.t.f.s), which is his complete faith and religious zeal. Now if we add another aspect of his existence to this, the matter becomes more profound. The second aspect is the grave responsibility of guiding humanity that the Almighty Allah has entrusted to that holy existence. Imam (a.s) is responsible for guiding the creation on behalf of Allah Almighty. In Ziarat Jameah Kabirah, it is narrated by Imam Hadi (a.s),

فَبِحَقِّ مَنْ اٰتَيْنَاكُمْ عَلَىٰ سِرِّهِ وَاَسْتَرْعَاكُمْ اَمْرَ خَلْقِهِ

*'By the right of the One who has made you trustees over His creation and made you responsible for His creatures...'*⁵³

Ri'ayat(رعايت) means protection and care, and raa'i(راعي) means who 'guards or protects'. A shepherd is often called a "raa'i". Allah has made the Ahle Bait (a.s) responsible for protecting the community on the path of servitude to Allah and caring for them. Every Imam (a.s) carries out this enormous responsibility with utmost compassion and affection towards creation—especially the believers.

According to the words of his(a.s) pure ancestors, he is more compassionate towards the Shias than a merciful father, and more affectionate towards them than a mother towards her young child. He is more compassionate to them than they are towards themselves. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) said this to one of his Shia followers,

⁵³ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 102, pg 128

وَاللّٰهُ لَآتَاۗرْحَمُ بِكُمْ مِّنْكُمْ بِأَنْفُسِكُمْ

*'By Allah, I am more merciful to you than you are to yourselves.'*⁵⁴

This expression, stated with a solemn oath to Allah Almighty, indicates the highest degree of spiritual and heartfelt attachment between the Imam (a.s) and his Shias. No matter how concerned we are about ourselves and our loved ones, we must be certain that the Sahebuz Zamana (a.t.f.s) is more concerned about us than we are about ourselves. Therefore, if a Shia faces any difficulty or distress, the Imam (a.s) will certainly be more distressed than the person.

Imam Mahdi's(a.t.f.s) distress due to the difficulties of the Shias

With these attributes, a vast aspect of the grief and suffering of the Imam (a.s) relates to the difficulties faced by his Shias. Just like a compassionate father and loving mother become distressed by the difficulties of their child. No caring parent can remain indifferent when they see their child's troubles and problems. The more understanding and insight they have compared to their child, the better and deeper they comprehend the child's issues and problems, and thus they become more concerned about the child's situation than the child himself. Such parents never consider themselves as strangers to their child's distresses; rather, they strive more than the child to resolve them.

The Imam (a.s), who has more grace and mercy towards his spiritual children (the believers) than any biological parent, never considers himself a stranger to their afflictions. Rather,

⁵⁴ Basairud Darjaat, part 4, Chapter I, H no 15

he endures their problems more than they do themselves. In this context, their spiritual problems concern him more than their material and worldly problems, because the former are more important and play an effective role in one's moral downfall.

From the perspective of some Shias, material problems such as poverty may seem more concerning. Of course, these matters are also worrisome, and certainly, Imam Asr (a.s), who does not consider himself separate from his Shias, is concerned about such difficulties. However, spiritual problems like committing sins or weakness in beliefs are more critical

In many cases, a person does not pay as much attention to their spiritual problems as they worry about resolving their material issues, and they do not consider them grave. This indifference stems from their negligence and inattention. Therefore, a knowledgeable and compassionate mentor is far more concerned about their state and condition than they are about themselves.

Since the Imam (a.s) is more aware of these dangers and problems than anyone else - better than any insightful parent, and deeper than any experienced mentor - he is more distressed and suffers more from the religious and spiritual problems of the believers.

We can see examples of these sufferings in his own statements. When some Shias were engulfed in doubts about fundamental issues (Usool Deen) during the minor occultation, they wrote a letter to Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) and

sent it to him through the first deputy, Usman bin Sa'eed Amri. The Imam wrote back, and commenced his letter in this way,
 إِنَّهُ أَهْبَىٰ إِلَيَّ اِرْتِيَابُ جَمَاعَةٍ مِنْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَمَا دَخَلَهُمْ مِنَ الشَّكِّ وَالْحَيْرَةِ فِي وُلَاةِ أُمُورِهِمْ فَغَمَّنَا ذَلِكَ لَكُمْ لَا لَنَا وَسَاءَ نَا فِيكُمْ لَا فِيْنَا لِأَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَنَا وَلَا فَاقَةَ بِنَا إِلَىٰ غَيْرِهِ

*'I have been informed of the doubt of a group among you regarding the religion, and the scepticism and confusion that has entered them concerning those in charge of their affairs (the Imams). This has grieved us for you, not because of us, and has saddened us concerning you, not concerning ourselves. For Allah is with us, so we do not need for anyone else.'*⁵⁵

The Imam expressed his grief and sadness that a group of Shias had doubts about fundamental beliefs but clarified that this grief is for their sake because he does not need them as Allah is with him.

The letter continues,

وَلَوْ لَا مَا عِنْدَنَا مِنْ مَحَبَّةٍ صَلاَحِكُمْ وَرَحْمَتِكُمْ وَالْإِشْفَاقِ عَلَيْكُمْ
 لَكُنَّا عَنْ مُخَاطَبَتِكُمْ فِي شُغْلٍ

*'And had it not been for our love for your betterment and our mercy and compassion for you, we would have been too occupied to address you.'*⁵⁶

If it were not for the people's need for the Imam and his compassion and affection for them, the Imams would not even

⁵⁵ Ehtejaaj Tabarsi, vol 2, pg 278

⁵⁶ Ehtejaaj Tabarsi, vol 2, pg 279

open the door to addressing people. Their motivation to interact with people is solely due to their (a.s) concern for people's condition.

Doubt in beliefs and weakness in faith are the most important causes of the grief and distress of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) in this era. In another letter to Mohammed bin Hilal Karkhi, the Imam wrote,

يَا مُحَمَّدَ بْنَ عَلِيٍّ قَدْ آذَانَا جُهَلَاءُ الشَّيْبَةِ وَحُقُوقُهُمْ وَمَنْ دِينُهُ
جَنَاحُ الْبَعُوضَةِ أَرْجَحُ مِنْهُ

*'O Mohammed bin Ali! The ignorant and foolish among the Shias, and those whose religion is lighter than a mosquito's wing, have caused us distress.'*⁵⁷

Those whose religion is lighter than a mosquito's wing are ready to abandon their correct beliefs and sell their faith for petty and immoral interests. These are people of weak faith who, due to a lack of understanding of the religion and superficial faith, easily abandon their religious principles (Usool Deen) and get drawn into deviations. The Imam (a.s) states that such individuals suffer the consequences of their ignorance and foolishness, without usually harbouring ill intentions. Yet, due to their lack of wisdom, they fall for the deception of deviant and biased individuals and become deprived of true religiosity. They cause distress, hurt and torment to the holy and pure heart of the Imam Zamana(a.t.f.s), whose heart grieves for each one of them.

⁵⁷ Ehtejaaj Tabarsi, vol 2, pg 289

One must ask, have there been only a few individuals in this prolonged period of occultation who have caused such distress and torment to their compassionate Imam (a.s)? Have we contemplated how much this pure heart has grieved for these calamities so far, and how painful and difficult it has been for him to endure these afflictions?

Now pay attention to another example of the deep connection between the Imam and his followers. The eighth Imam states,

مَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِنْ شِيعَتِنَا يَبْرُضُ إِلَّا مَرَضْنَا لِمَرَضِهِ وَ لَا اغْتَمَّ إِلَّا اغْتَمَّ بِنَا لِغَيْبِهِ وَ لَا يَفْرَحُ إِلَّا فَرِحْنَا لِفَرَحِهِ وَ لَا يَغِيبُ عَنَّا أَحَدٌ مِنْ شِيعَتِنَا أَيَّن كَانَ فِي شَرْقِ الْأَرْضِ أَوْ غَرْبِهَا وَ مَنْ تَرَكَ مِنْ شِيعَتِنَا دِينًا فَهُوَ عَلَيْنَا

*'There is none among our Shias who falls ill except that we fall ill due to his illness, nor is any of them aggrieved except that we become aggrieved for his grief, nor does any of them rejoice except that we rejoice for his joy. And none of our Shias is absent from us, wherever they may be in the east or west of the earth. And if any of our Shias leaves a debt behind, it is upon us.'*⁵⁸

The grief and distress of the Imam's nation grieves the Imam himself. This spiritual connection from an Imam towards the Shias is so strong that he falls ill when they fall ill. The Imam's sense of responsibility towards his friends is so intense that he

⁵⁸ Fazail Ashoor Salasa, Kitab Fazail Ramazan, pg 105, H no 95

considers their debts as his obligation. Can human empathy and attachment be deeper than this?

The noble tradition explicitly states that the condition of a Shia, wherever they may be, is not hidden from the eyes of their Imam. Therefore, although the Imam (a.s) is out of sight of the Shias during occultation this invisibility is not a barrier to the Imam's(a.s) awareness and knowledge of the condition of the Shias. Thus, wherever the Imam (a.s) may be on earth, he supervises the lives of the people and feels a special responsibility towards the believers, causing their sorrows to grieve him.

In any case, the purpose of mentioning these examples is to make every Shia appreciate the fact that one of the most important aspects of the difficulties faced by Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) in this time relates to the problems, sufferings, and hardships of his Shias.

Of course, since the Imam (a.s) is a manifestation of divine power, he can deliver each of his friends from their difficulties and relieve them of their sufferings and problems through his special blessing. However, it should be noted that he only uses this divine power in cases that are acceptable to Allah.

It has been and continues to be the will of the Almighty Allah to test the Shias with afflictions and calamities throughout the ages, especially during the occultation of the twelfth Imam. Therefore, except in specific and limited cases based on particular wisdom, the Imams refrained from displaying their divine power. Even in instances where they faced severe hardships, such as the harsh prisons and torture of Imam Moosa ibn Jafar(a.s), or the tribulations and adversities of

Imam Husain on the Day of Ashura, they generally did not wield their power to preserve the tradition of divine test and other wisdom unknown to us. They did not usually alter the normal course of life for people, except in exceptional cases.

The only time Allah grants the Imam complete permission to demonstrate such power is when the period of trials ends and the time comes for rewarding the believers and punishing the disbelievers in this world. This time is the era of the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) when Allah grants him permission to deliver the believers from all their difficulties and make the obstinate disbelievers taste the consequences of their oppression and crimes.

Thus, the realization of rights for the Imams themselves will take place after the reappearance of the Twelfth Imam (a.s), as well as before or after the Raj'at (Return). Divine retribution against the killers of Sayyedush Shohdah (a.s) (Chief of Martyrs) will also occur after the reappearance of his (Imam Husain's) son. Therefore, the reappearance of the Imam is not only his relief but also the relief of all his friends and Shias.

For this reason, Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) awaits divine permission for his relief, which is, in fact, the relief of all believers, during the period of his occultation. Since his hardship during this time is greater than that of all believers and he is at the highest level of faith, he performs the greatest act of worship for a believer, which is awaiting divine relief, at its most sublime degree.

In the traditions of the Ahle Bait (a.s), the Promised Mahdi is not only called "the Awaited One" (Muntazar) but also "the

Awaiter” (Muntazir). One instance is in a supplication recited upon leaving the house to perform the Eid al-Fitr prayer,

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى وَلِيِّكَ الْمُنتَظِرِ أَمْرَكَ الْمُنتَظِرِ لِفَرَجِ أَوْلِيَاءِكَ

‘O Allah, send blessings upon Your Guardian who awaits Your command, and awaits the relief of Your friends.’⁵⁹

In this noble supplication, Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) is described as awaiting two things: first, the command of Allah which is the permission for his reappearance, and second, the relief and deliverance of Allah's friends, who are the believers. These two matters are connected and will be realized together. The comprehensive and general relief of Allah's friends, not in specific individual cases, will only be actualized through divine permission for the uprising of Imam Mahdi, which is the ultimate relief. The Imam himself awaits this time so that the difficulties of the Shias, which constitute a major part of his difficulties, are removed, along with the removal of his difficulties.

In a supplication that Imam Jafar Sadiq recited in prostration after the morning prayer on the 21st of Ramazan, it is stated,

أَسْأَلُكَ أَنْ تُصَلِّيَ عَلَيَّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ وَأَنْ تَأْذِنَ لِفَرَجِ مَنْ
بِفَرَجِهِ فَرَجُ أَوْلِيَاءِكَ وَأَصْفِيَاءِكَ مِنْ خَلْقِكَ

‘I ask You...to send blessings upon Mohammed and his progeny, and to grant permission for the relief of the one through whose

⁵⁹ Iqbalul Aamal, Chapter 37, pg 284

*relief comes the relief of Your friends and chosen ones from Your creation.*⁶⁰

From this tradition as well, one can understand that the relief of the past believers, not just during the occultation era of Imam Mahdi, is also achieved through the 'Faraj' of the Imam himself. This solace will take place by divine permission for his reappearance.

Another instance in the traditions where the Imam is referred to as 'Muntazir' is a supplication issued by Imam (a.s) himself through his special deputy during the Major Occultation. One part of the supplication states:

اللَّهُمَّ... وَتُبِّئْنِي عَلَى طَاعَةِ وِلِيِّ أَمْرِكَ الَّذِي سَتَّرْتَهُ عَنْ خَلْقِكَ
فَبِإِذْنِكَ غَابَ عَنْ بَرِيَّتِكَ وَأَمْرِكَ يَنْتَظِرُ

*'O Allah...make me steadfast in obedience to the Master of the Command whom You have concealed from Your creation. By Your permission, he is absent from Your creatures, and he awaits Your command.*⁶¹

The conclusion is that the hidden Imam himself is among those awaiting his relief, and based on the above explanations, it can be said that the most intense and severe degree of awaiting relief (Faraj) belongs to this "Awaiting Imam."

⁶⁰ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 98, pg 158

⁶¹ Jamalul Usboo, Chapter 47, pg 316

The Supplication of Tears (دَعَا عَبْرَات)

To illustrate the intensity and nature of the difficulties faced by Imam Mahdi, it is good to refer to one of his supplications in which he unveils his indescribable burning desire to remove the hardships of the oppressed and weak and the extent of his heartfelt emotions during the occultation period. This supplication is known as the Supplication of Tears (Dua Abaraat).⁶²

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ يَا رَاحِمَ الْعَبْرَاتِ وَيَا كَاشِفَ الْكُرْبَاتِ

*'O Allah, I ask You, O Merciful to the tears, O Remover of deep sighs and distresses...'*⁶³

Since the dua commences with the mention of tears, sighs and distress, one can conclude that the Imam began the supplication with weeping and lamentation. Some excerpts are quoted here, while encouraging the devotees to refer to the full text:

إِلَهِي إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ قَدْ هَالَ فَهَوْنُهُ وَخَشْنٌ فَالْنُهُ فَإِنَّ الْقُلُوبَ كَاعَتْ
فَطَبْنَهَا وَالنُّفُوسَ اِزْتَاعَتْ فَسَكْنَهَا إِلَهِي تَدَارِكُ أَقْدَامًا زَلَّتْ وَأَفْهَامًا
فِي مَهَامِهِ الْحَيْرَةِ ضَلَّتْ

⁶² This blessed supplication has been narrated by Marhoom Shaikh Kafami in 'Baladul Ameen', pg 333 from Imam Mahdi (a.s). Similarly, Marhoom Sayyed Ibn Taoos, in his book Mohijjud Dawaat in two ways (pg 405 & 411) and we will ignore the differences between the two manuscripts.

⁶³ Dua Abaraat, Mohijjud Dawaat, pg 411

*'My Allah! The matter has become formidable, so make it easy; and rough, so make it lenient. The hearts have become anxious, so put them at ease; and the souls have become terrified, so calm them...My Allah, My Allah, save the slipping feet and the thoughts wandering in the wilderness of confusion!'*⁶⁴

These phrases reflect the types of concerns of Imam (a.s) as well as their intensity and difficulty.

أَنْتَ الَّذِي لَا يُخَيِّبُ أَمْلَكَ وَلَا يُرَدُّ سَأْلَكَ... إِلَهِي إِلَهِي أَيْنَ رَحْمَتِكَ
الَّتِي هِيَ نُصْرَةٌ الْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ وَأَيْنَ أَيْنَ كِفَايَتِكَ الَّتِي هِيَ
جُنَّةُ الْمُسْتَهِدِّينَ لِحُجُورِ الْأَيَّامِ إِلَيَّ إِلَيَّ بِهَا يَا رَبِّ نَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ
الظَّالِمِينَ إِنِّي مَسْنِي الضُّرِّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

*'You are the One from Whom the hopeful one is not disappointed, and from Whom the seeker is not turned away...My Allah, My Allah, where is Your mercy that assists the oppressed people? Where is Your self-sufficiency that is a shield for those targeted by the injustices of time? Grant it to me, O Lord, and save me from the wrongdoing of people. Harm has afflicted me and You are the Most Merciful of the merciful.'*⁶⁵

Here, the Imam seeks Allah's help in assisting the oppressed and saving the persecuted, considering himself as their leader. He has become so distressed by the oppression and persecution that he describes himself as "harm has afflicted me" and seeks salvation from Allah.

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ Ibid

مَوْلَايَ تَرَى تَحْيِيرِي فِي أَمْرِي وَتَقْلُبِي فِي ضُرِّي وَانْطَوَايَ عَلَى حُرْقَةٍ
 قَلْبِي وَحَرَارَةِ صَدْرِي فَصَلِّ يَا رَبِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَجُدْ لِي يَا
 رَبِّ بِمَا أَنْتَ أَهْلُهُ فَرَجًا وَمَخْرَجًا يَسِّرْ لِي يَا رَبِّ نَحْوَ الْبُشْرَى مِنْهَا

'My Master! You see my confusion in my affair, my tossing in my ordeal, my being immersed in the burning of my heart and the heat of my breast. So, bless, O Lord, Mohammed and the progeny of Mohammed, and appoint for me, O Lord, by that which befits You, a relief and an exit, and ease for me, O Lord, a way towards the glad tidings'

It is observed that the Imam has expressed his sorrows and heartaches with the most painful expressions. **تَقْلُبُ** (Taqaallub) is from the word of **قلب** (heart). This Arabic word for the "heart" means moving up and down (implying that the heart experiences multiple sentiments – joy/sorrow, hope/fear, doubts/certainty.) Our Imam's (a.s) troubles are to the extent that, in his own words, they turn him in a painful state. Imam's pain and sufferings are the same as the sufferings and calamities of the oppressed and the wronged Shias, only more profound. The anguish is so deep that it has engulfed Imam's (a.s) holy heart in the flames of sorrow and grief.

Above all is the expression of **تَحْيِيرٌ** "tahayy or" which means bewilderment and perplexity. Imam (a.s) is perplexed by his responsibility (فِي أَمْرِي). What is his responsibility? His responsibility is protecting and taking care of the oppressed, the downtrodden, and the believers. However, this purpose is only fully and comprehensively realized with the permission of zuhoor (reappearance) from Allah. During the occultation, the

Imam witnesses and observes the sufferings and oppression of the people, especially his Shias. At the same time, he possesses 'Divine Power (قدرة الله) and the status of 'Hand of Allah' (يد الله). But the divine permission for the 'complete deliverance' of the afflicted Shias through Imam (a.s) has not yet been decreed, and the time of issuance of this permission is also unknown. Since Imam (a.s) does not do anything except with Allah's consent, this is why that beloved "veiled one", the "elixir of existence" is in anguish and perplexity. His pain, agony, and discomfort, while awaiting the divine permission for reappearance, is intensifying by the day.

Of course, as previously mentioned, during this time too, the Imam (a.s) helps many believers in distress and affliction with his divine power. But this succour - vis-à-vis what he (a.s) can and intends to do inshallah throughout the world- is not enough to be a balm for their great sorrows.

If we have understood the meaning of "tahayy or" correctly in the words of the Imam (a.s), we can say that this meaning necessitates the deep and intense eagerness and anticipation of the Imam (a.s) for his own appearance and deliverance - which is also the deliverance of the world. If, by Allah's grace, we feel an iota of Imam's (a.s) pain and restlessness, we will truly be on the path of Intezaar. At the end of this supplication, the Imam has said,

يَا مَنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ يَا كَاشِفَ ضُرِّ أَيُّوبَ يَا رَاحِمَ عِبْرَةَ
يَعْقُوبَ افْتَحْ لِي وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْفَاتِحِينَ وَالطُّفُّ بِي يَا رَبِّ وَبِجَمِيعِ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ

*'O One who answers the desperate when they call upon Him, O Remover of the affliction of Ayyub! O One who had mercy on the tears of Yaqub ... Grant me victory, for You are the best of those who grant victory and bestow Your grace upon me and all believing men and women....'*⁶⁶

In conclusion, the difficulties of the Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) during the occultation are greater than any believer's calamities, and since the highest degree of faith belongs to him, he is at the forefront of those awaiting his reappearance. (i.e. he is the greatest Muntazir)

⁶⁶ Baladul Ameen, pg 336

Chapter Three

Grades of Intezaar

The value of an action is according to the intention

A particular action, depending on the different conditions and states of the doer, can have different values in the sight of Allah. Various factors influence the value of an action, the foremost of which is the intention behind it. If a particular action is performed with different intentions, it essentially becomes a different action, each with a value distinct from the others.

Intention is the motive and driving force of the subject (فَاعِل) in acting. In reality, it can be said that every action has an outward form and body, which is its apparent aspect that others see, but the “spirit” of the action is the intention and purpose of the doer in carrying it out. The more valuable that intention is in the sight of Allah, the more valuable the action becomes, and the lower the intention, the more useless the

action will be. Therefore, the degrees and levels of an action depend on the intention behind performing that action.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) has a beautiful saying about the importance and role of "intention" in an action. He says,

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ وَلِكُلِّ أَمْرٍ مَّا نَوَى فَمَنْ غَزَا ابْتِغَاءَ مَا عِنْدَ
اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ فَقَدْ وَقَعَ أَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَمَنْ غَزَا يُرِيدُ
عَرَضَ الدُّنْيَا أَوْ نَوَى عِقَالًا لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ إِلَّا مَا نَوَى

*'Actions are judged by intentions, and each person will get what they intended. So, whoever migrated for the sake of Allah and His Messenger, their migration was for Allah and His Messenger. But whoever migrated for worldly gain or to marry a woman, then their migration was for what they migrated for.'*⁶⁷

Participating in war against the enemies of Allah is an action that can be performed with different intentions. If the participant's intention is to seek proximity to Allah Almighty, their reward for fighting will be the pleasure of the Lord and a great reward. However, if one goes to war to seize the spoils of war, the value of their fighting will be limited to the worth of those spoils. In general, each person benefits from an action to the extent of the intention behind performing it, and the value of actions goes back to the intentions behind them.

⁶⁷ Wasailush Shia, vol I, Chapter 5, H no 10

The intention of seeking Allah’s proximity

Now that we know that the value of every action depends on the intention behind it, we must examine the factors that constitute intention, the most important of which is the intention of seeking “nearness to Allah”. Seeking nearness means that the doer's intention and motive in performing the action is to attain Allah’s pleasure and proximity. Such an intention makes the value of the action vastly different from when the doer performs it for someone “other than Allah” (ghairullah). The action of someone who fights for Allah's sake will be completely different in spirit and value from someone who fights to acquire the spoils of war.

Thus, the intention of seeking nearness exists when the person's motive for the action is to obey Allah and comply with His command. Only then can the action be considered an act of worship. Whether an action counts as worship depends on the intention of seeking divine proximity. Some actions - like prayer - are inherently acts of worship, and their validity depends on having the intention of seeking nearness to Allah. If they are performed without this intention, it is as if they were not performed at all. If someone does not pray with the intention of obedience to Allah's command, they have not prayed. However, not all of the Lord's commands are like this. For example, the command for believers to visit one another (تَزَاوَرُوا)⁶⁸ - even if carried out without the intention of seeking divine proximity, it is still valid. Believers who visit each other with or without that intention have acted upon this divine

⁶⁸ Al-Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chp of Remembering the brothers, H no 2

command. However, whether the action counts as worship depends on having the intention of seeking nearness to Allah.

When two believers visit each other, whoever of them has the intention of obeying Allah's command and seeking nearness to Him through this action, it will be considered an act of worship for him. But the one without that intention will not have performed an act of worship, even though he visited the other believer. One may have worshipped Allah through this while the other, lacking that intention, will have missed out on that worship.

The difference in these two cases is that if the doer has the intention of seeking nearness in performing the action, they will be eligible for the rewards and recompense that Allah has assigned for that action. Whereas if they lack that intention, they will not be included in the divine promises and will not deserve those rewards. Yet, Allah may grant them a reward - small or big - for performing that action out of His grace and kindness toward them, but without them deserving it.⁶⁹

In general, the account of Allah's "grace" (فضل) is separate from His promises (وعد). It may be that some receive nothing at all, while others are graced with more than those who were promised. Of course, this does not conflict with Allah's justice, because divine grace is not based on an individual's merit.

⁶⁹ Sometimes, Allah rewards a servant for a action even if it was performed without the intention of seeking divine pleasure. As can be seen in this hadees of Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) who said, 'The one who abstains from drinking wine even without the intention of pleasing Allah, he will be given to drink from Paradise' (Kafi, vol 6, pg 430, H no 8. We will overlook such traditions which are small.

Another point about the intention of seeking nearness is that a person may have two or more intentions in performing an action. In this case, two scenarios are possible: either the intentions are parallel, where each constitutes an independent part of the doer's motive; or one is the primary, real motive while the others are secondary and subordinate to that main intention. In the latter case, the independent motive in doing the action is the 'primary' intention, while the secondary motives play no independent role in the doer's intention for the action.

For example, someone fasting may have two motives: obeying Allah's command to fast and gaining health benefits for the body. If these two intentions are parallel, constituting respective portions of the person's motive, then, in reality, both become primary intentions. For an action like fasting, whose validity depends on the intention of seeking nearness, having another intention alongside that negates the act. However, if the primary, real motive is to obey Allah's command, and the health benefits are considered a secondary, supplementary outcome and benefit of fasting, then this secondary motive does not negate the sincere intention for Allah's sake, because in reality this supplementary intention is not independently present for the person at all, and does not influence their primary intention even to a small degree. So, their fast would be valid.

The opposite of this second case is also possible - that the person's primary motive for fasting is health benefits, and the intention to obey Allah's command is the secondary aim. In this case, what constitutes the person's intention is that primary, original motive - such that if they did not have that motive, they would not fast. For this reason, it can be said that

they are not performing the action for the sake of Allah's obedience and thus their fast is invalid.

In conclusion, in cases where the doer has two or more intentions, the intention of seeking divine proximity is realized in one of two ways: either their sole motive of that action is to attain Allah's pleasure and obey His commands, without any other intention; or they may have another intention, but it is subordinate and supplementary, not independent - so what independently constitutes their intention is still obedience to Allah's command, and thus the intention of "seeking nearness" is not compromised.

Degrees of the intention of seeking proximity

The intention of seeking nearness (to Allah) has degrees and levels, some of which take precedence over others. In general, the intentions of 'seeking nearness' are not at the same level or rank. The purer one's intention of 'seeking nearness', the higher its value and rank. Just as having the intention of 'seeking nearness' ensures that an action is considered worship, having a purer intention elevates the value of that worship. This is an important factor in the realization of different forms of worship.

Pay attention to this narration from Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) regarding the levels of intention and worship.

إِنَّ الْعِبَادَ ثَلَاثَةٌ قَوْمٌ عَبَدُوا اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خَوْفًا فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْعَبِيدِ
وَقَوْمٌ عَبَدُوا اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى طَلَبَ الثَّوَابِ فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْأَجْرَاءِ وَ

قَوْمٌ عَبَدُوا اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ حُبًّا لَهُ فِتْلِكَ عِبَادَةُ الْأُحْرَارِ وَهِيَ أَفْضَلُ
الْعِبَادَةِ.

*'Verily, the worshippers are of three types: a people who worshipped Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, out of fear. That is the worship of slaves. A people who worshipped Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, seeking reward. That is the worship of wage earners. And a people who worshipped Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, out of love for Him. That is the worship of the free, and it is the most superior worship.'*⁷⁰

In this narration, three levels of the intention of 'seeking nearness' in worship are mentioned, each giving rise to a degree of worship. In a statement from Ameerul Momineen (a.s), the motives for worshipping Allah are presented as follows.

إِنَّ قَوْمًا عَبَدُوا اللَّهَ سُبْحَانَهُ رَغْبَةً فِتْلِكَ عِبَادَةُ التُّجَّارِ وَقَوْمًا عَبَدُوهُ
رَهْبَةً فِتْلِكَ عِبَادَةُ الْعَبِيدِ وَقَوْمًا عَبَدُوهُ شُكْرًا فِتْلِكَ عِبَادَةُ الْأُحْرَارِ

*'Verily, a people worshipped Allah out of desire (for reward). That is the worship of traders. And a people worshipped Allah out of fear (of punishment). That is the worship of slaves. And a people worshipped Him in gratitude. That is the worship of the free.'*⁷¹

Here, instead of the motive of "love," the motive of gratitude for divine blessings is mentioned. In another statement from the Chief of the Monotheists, Ameerul Momineen (a.s) in his supplication to the Lord, he prayed,

⁷⁰ Usool Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of Ibadat, H no 5

⁷¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 78, pg 69, H no 18

مَا عَبَدْتُكَ خَوْفًا مِنْ نَارِكَ وَلَا شَوْقًا إِلَى جَنَّتِكَ وَ لَكِنْ رَأَيْتُكَ أَهْلًا
لِلْعِبَادَةِ فَعَبَدْتُكَ

*'I did not worship You out of fear of Your Fire, nor out of desire for Your Paradise, but I found You worthy of worship, so I worshipped You.'*⁷²

Here, another expression is presented, which is that a servant has found Allah worthy of worship. It is necessary to pay attention to two points in this discussion:

First: Fear of divine punishment, desire for Allah's reward, and gratitude for the Lord's blessings do not conflict with one's intention of seeking nearness to Allah through worship. Someone who worships Allah so as not to be afflicted by the fire of His wrath is worshipping Allah, but their motive for this worship is fear of His punishment. So, the main and independent motive for them is to obey Allah's command and worship Him, but the motive upon this motive and the reason for this motive is fear of divine punishment. This 'fear' is pleasing and appreciated by Allah and in line with worshipping Him and is not something that conflicts with their intention of seeking nearness in worship.

Similarly, the motivation to attain divine reward and recompense can also be an incentive for worshipping Allah. And if someone worships Allah with this desire, they have not departed from the realm of Tauheed and worship of Allah. It is observed that in the mentioned traditions, the worshippers of Allah (عِبَادُ اللَّهِ) are divided into three groups. So, it is evident that they all worshipped Allah, but their

⁷² Miraatul Uqool, vol 8, pg 89, Chapter of Intention

motivations for worshipping Him differed, and this difference led to differences in the degrees and levels of their worship. Certainly, one who worships Allah to express gratitude for His blessings is of a higher rank, and his worship is more valuable than one who worships due to the desire for divine reward. However, a higher rank of worship does not mean that the lower rank is not worship of Allah and that the act is excluded from being termed as 'worship'. Different motivations for worshipping Allah create different levels of proximity to Him, the lowest being the fear of punishment and desire for reward, and the highest being the worship described by Ameerul Momineen (a.s) about himself, which is to find Allah worthy of worship. In any case, all of these constitute the worship of Allah, but each has a different degree.

Second: Every degree of worshipping Allah can be combined with lower degrees. For example, someone who worships Allah out of gratitude for His blessings may also have the fear of divine punishment and the desire for paradise, and this is generally the case. Yes, his incentive for worshipping Allah is not fear, but he also fears divine punishments.

Similarly, someone who worships Allah because he has found Him worthy of worship may also have the fear of hell and the desire for paradise, but these may not be his incentives for worship. The supplications and whispered prayers (munajat) that have reached us from Ameerul Momineen (a.s) and other Imams (a.s) are clear testimonies that those great ones (a.s) worshipped Allah because they found Him worthy of worship, but they feared divine punishment, and they desired His promises and rewards, and this is not incompatible with their high degree of worship. In general, no one needs to worship

Allah out of fear of the fire and desire for paradise. This does not mean that he should not fear the fire or desire paradise.

In the blessed Dua Kumayl, we read from the words of Ameerul Momineen (a.s) with which he addresses Allah,

يَا إِلَهِي وَسَيِّدِي وَرَبِّي، أَتُرَاكَ مُعَذِّبِي بِنَارِكَ بَعْدَ تَوْحِيدِكَ

*'O my Allah, my Master, and my Lord, would You punish me with Your fire after I have professed Your Unity?'*⁷³

If there were no fear of punishment in the fire of hell, Ameerul Momineen (a.s) would never have made such a supplication. In another supplication known as the Supplication of Abu Hamza Somali, which is narrated from Imam Zainul Abedeen(a.s), we read:

أَجْرُنِي مِنَ النَّارِ بِعَفْوِكَ. وَأَدْخِلْنِي الْجَنَّةَ بِرَحْمَتِكَ. وَزَوِّجْنِي مِنَ
الْحُورِ الْعَيْنِ بِفَضْلِكَ

*'Protect me from the Fire by Your pardon, and admit me to Paradise by Your mercy, and wed me to the wide-eyed maidens by Your grace.'*⁷⁴

It is observed that Imam Sajjad (a.s) sought refuge from the fire of divine wrath through His pardon, requested admission to Paradise through His mercy, and expressed his desire for the rewards of the hereafter in his supplication to the divine court. In these statements and their likes, the fear of the fire due to divine wrath, the desire for paradise and the blessings of the Lord are visible.

⁷³ Misbah-ul-Mutahjijid, pg 844

⁷⁴ Iqbalul Aamaal, pg 75

Of course, one should not interpret these words of the infallible to mean that the Imams (a.s) feared the fire of divine wrath because they committed sins. This is never the case. These great ones possessed such a degree of purity and infallibility that they did not even entertain the thought of committing sins, let alone committing them. What caused the fear in these sacred and radiant ones was certainly not what afflicts sinners. Rather, they were and are at a level where they considered certain non-sinful matters as sins for themselves, and other factors caused their fear of divine punishment, which is entirely different from the prohibited sins against Allah.

We are not here to explain and justify this matter. However, we want to conclude that, as Ameerul Momineen (a.s) stated, they were at a level where they worshipped Allah not out of fear or desire for reward, but because they found Him worthy of worship. This does not imply that they did not fear the fire due to the Lord's wrath or desire the rewards of the hereafter. In essence, the intention of seeking proximity to Allah in worshipping Him has degrees and levels, and each person, based on their ranks of faith, knowledge, and sincerity in worshipping Allah, finds themselves in one of these degrees, although all of these are ultimately the worship of Allah, and the higher levels can be combined with the lower degrees.

The intention of seeking proximity during Intezaar of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s)

What has been discussed from the beginning of this chapter is a preface to the discussion of awaiting the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) and its levels. In an initial division, we can

consider awaiting the reappearance of the Imam (a.s) to have two ranks: to seek divine proximity and without the intention of seeking divine proximity. If this awaiting is done to seek proximity and to obey the divine command, it is considered worship; otherwise, it is not worship.

The first discussion that arises here is whether it is possible to await the reappearance without the intention of seeking proximity. If someone does not consider 'Intezaar-e-Zuhoor' in their difficulties, especially those arising from the occultation of the Imam (a.s), as obedience to the divine command, is he called a "Muntazir-e-Zuhoor"? Is there any proof that the command for this action can be fulfilled without the intention of seeking proximity?

The next question is whether such a person is included in the virtues and rewards that Allah Almighty has promised to those awaiting the reappearance.

In response to these two issues, it seems that, as the author of the noble book Mikyalul Makarim has stated,⁷⁵ if someone does not become hopeless of Allah's mercy and assistance in their difficulties and does not despair of the divine spirit, he can be considered a 'Muntazir' of Allah's Faraj, even if they do not have the intention of seeking proximity and obeying the divine command in this action. However, this constitutes the lowest level of Intezaar-e-Zuhoor.

The reason cited in the book Mikyalul Makarim is a noble hadees from Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s). When Abu Basir asked him, متى الفرج (When is the Faraj?) Imam (a.s) replied,

⁷⁵ Mikyalul Makarim, vol 2, pg 155

يَا أَبَا بَصِيرٍ، وَأَنْتَ مِمَّنْ يُرِيدُ الدُّنْيَا؟ مَنْ عَرَفَ هَذَا الْأَمْرَ فَقَدْ فَرَّجَ

عَنْهُ بِالنَّظَرِ

*'O Abu Basir, are you among those who desire this world? Whoever recognizes this matter (i.e. the Imamate and the reappearance of the Imam) has found Faraj by awaiting it.'*⁷⁶

Essentially, the Imam's statement to Abu Basir meant that for someone like you, it is not befitting to await the reappearance of Imam (a.s) for worldly comforts and ease. Your aim - in doing Intezaar - should be spiritual and for seeking the rewards of the Hereafter. Essentially, while Imam (a.s) has accepted that the reappearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) will bring solace to the entire world, he does not deem it appropriate for someone like Abu Baseer to have this aim. Yet, such a person cannot be called the one who has abandoned the Intezaar of Faraj even if their intention is solely to solve their difficulties. However, the 'Intezaar' of such an individual cannot be termed as 'worship' of Allah because an action is deemed as 'worship' only if it is accompanied by the intention of seeking divine proximity.

Due to this, he will not be included in the rewards of the Hereafter ('Ukhravi' rewards) that Allah has ordained for those awaiting the reappearance of the Imam (a.s), although he will benefit to some extent from the worldly effects and virtues of "Muntazir-e-Zuhoor". The minimum benefit that this Intezaar has for him is that he does not become hopeless in his difficulties and problems. This is the least degree of solace (Faraj) for the 'Muntazir'. However, this noble act of

⁷⁶ Usool Kafi, Kitabul Hujjah, Chapter of the one who recognises the Imam he will not be harmed.

awaiting the reappearance has extraordinary effects, results, and rewards in this world and the Hereafter, which can only be attained by achieving its higher degrees.

So, awaiting the reappearance without the intention of seeking proximity to Allah is acceptable, yet it is not worship. However, if this same act is done to seek proximity, it will be the worship of Allah, and in fact, it will be the greatest and most virtuous of worships. So far, "Intezaar-e-Zuhoor" has two general ranks: the first rank is Intezaar without the intention of seeking proximity, and the second rank is Intezaar to seek proximity.

In "Intezaar-e-Zuhoor" without the intention of seeking proximity, the primary motive of the individual is not the obedience of divine command. He does not focus on the pleasure of Allah and proximity to Him. Rather, either there is no notion of Allah for him at all, or if it is present, it is secondary and minor. The first state applies to someone who awaits the reappearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) for the sake of being relieved from the difficulties and hardships of this world for himself or others and attain the joys of the time of reappearance, and he has no divine or godly motive. The second state is that his primary motive is the same worldly pleasures, and in addition to that, he also intends to obey Allah's command. For such a person, obeying Allah's command and worshipping Him is not the primary focus. In this regard, he is no different from the first state.

So, in neither of these two states can we consider Intezaar of Imam (a.s) as worship of Allah. Thus, the divine promises regarding the rewards of the Hereafter, vis-à-vis Intezaar do not include these two groups. However, by His grace (فضل)

and generosity, Allah may grant them some of the rewards of the Hereafter. Yet, it will not be because of any merit. Rather, it will be solely due to His kindness and magnanimity.

This was regarding Intezaar without the intention of seeking proximity. As for awaiting the reappearance to seek proximity, two cases can be assumed: one in which the motive of the Muntazir is solely to obey the divine command and seek Allah's pleasure, and he has no intention or desire for the worldly effects and blessings of the reappearance of the Imam (a.s). The second case is that those worldly effects and blessings are also in his mind, but secondary to obeying Allah's command, and which accrue because of seeking proximity to Him.⁷⁷

The common aspect of these two cases is that the Muntazir desires the reappearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) for the sake of Allah's pleasure, while the worldly effects and blessings of the reappearance have no independent influence on his intention. So, it can be clearly said that both individuals, by awaiting the reappearance, are worshipping Allah. Based on the level of purity of intention (خُلُوص), there can be multiple grades each of which constitutes a grade of Intezaar-e-Zuhoor. What has been discussed about 'intention' and the 'intention of seeking proximity' also applies here. All the types of worshipping Allah- out of fear of punishment, desire for reward, or for the sake of Allah being worthy of worship – are

⁷⁷ You can refer Mikyalul Makarim, vol 2, pg 155 for more information on the two types of Intezaar.

also applicable in the case of Intezaar, which, is the highest worship of the Lord.

The issue of worshipping Allah out of fear of punishment or desire for reward is considered a valuable form of worship concerning Intezaar. But the highest level is worshipping out of "gratitude" or "love for Allah". Yet higher than all is worshipping Allah because He is "worthy of worship". This also is relevant over here.

So far, we have examined the levels of awaiting the deliverance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) considering the intention of seeking proximity to Allah. We can also look at this issue from another perspective to open a new dimension. That perspective is: 'While awaiting the appearance of the Imam (a.s), whose deliverance are we truly awaiting in our hearts? The more valued and noble a person or persons are before Allah, and the more beloved their Faraj is to the Lord, the greater value is attached to his/their Intezaar. Consequently, the Intezaar of Imam Asr (a.s) becomes a higher degree of worship in the eyes of Allah.

Awaiting whose Faraj?

The reappearance of the Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) is the deliverance of not only the believers in the world but also the oppressed and even the non-humans (birds, animals etc). From whom one awaits deliverance through the appearance of the Imam makes a world of difference and creates different levels of 'Intezaar'

The first level is that a believer has become weary of his difficulties and awaits divine deliverance from them, caring only about his own deliverance, without any thought or care

for others' suffering. Although asking Allah for relief from one's difficulties and considering the reappearance of Imam Asr (a.s) as that relief is very valuable and a sign of high faith, since this person only thinks of himself and his own happiness, it does not have a high level in this regard.

The second level is that a believer awaits the appearance of Hazrat Baqiyatullah (a.t.f.s) for the relief of the difficulties of all believers on the face of the earth. Such a person is certain that the complete salvation of the believers from the hardships and troubles of the occultation can only come through the appearance of the Hidden Imam (a.s). Therefore, the sufferings and difficulties of all believers cause him pain, and he awaits the deliverance for them by awaiting the appearance of his Master. This state is at a higher level than the previous one, and the reward for this person is greater than someone who only thinks of his problems.

The third level is that the believer not only pays attention to the problems and difficulties of the people of faith but also thinks of all the oppressed and weak ones in the world and seeks their deliverance with the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s). Imam Asr (a.s) belongs to all mankind and is not only the Imam of the Shias. It is true that non-Shias neither know Imam Asr (a.s), nor think of his appearance for their deliverance, but the believers know that with his appearance, the Imam (a.t.f.s) will not only deliver the Shias but all the oppressed and suffering humans from the oppression and aggression of the arrogant and oppressive ones in the world. In the very beautiful supplication called 'Dua Ahad' taught by Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s), we read,

وَجْعَلُهُ اللَّهُمَّ مَفْزَعًا لِبِظْلُومِ عِبَادِكَ وَنَاصِرًا لِمَنْ لَا يَجِدُ لَهُ نَاصِرًا

غَيْرِكَ

*'O Allah! Make him (Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s)) a refuge for Your oppressed servants and a helper for those who have no helper other than You.'*⁷⁸

In these statements, the Imam (a.s) has prayed for all of Allah's oppressed servants - whether believers or non-believers - and for those who have no helper except the Lord of the worlds. He has sought their deliverance from the oppression and injustice inflicted upon them through the appearance of Imam Asr (a.s). So, he has raised his demand beyond just the believers. A believer must have the expectation of the deliverance of all the oppressed ones in the world with the reappearance of his Master, Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s). This level of awaiting deliverance is higher than the previous two levels.

An even higher level is that a believer does not only think of the deliverance of the oppressed humans of the world but seeks the appearance of his Imam for the relief of all creatures, including humans and non-humans. Non-humans include angels, jinn, animals, plants and inanimate objects. It is the definite belief of the Shias that the appearance of the Imam ((a.s)) is the deliverance for all of them.⁷⁹ In the hadees that I quoted at the beginning, it was stated that both the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth would be pleased with his appearance.

⁷⁸ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 102, pg 112; Dua Ahad

⁷⁹ Of course, in the case of sane and free creatures – like man – those who are oppressors and deniers of Wilayat, the reappearance of Imam (a.s) will not be a relief. Rather, it will be a punishment.

Another example from the sayings of Ameerul Momineen (a.s) is as follows:

لَوْ قَدِ قَامَ قَائِمُنَا لَأَنْزَلْتُ السَّمَاءُ قَطْرَهَا وَ لَأَخْرَجَتِ الْأَرْضُ
نَبَاتَهَا... وَ اصْطَلَحَتِ السَّبَاعُ وَ الْبِهَائِمُ

*'If our Qaem (from Ahle Bait (a.s)) rises, the sky will pour down its rain...and the earth will grow its plants...and the predatory and tame animals will reconcile with one another.'*⁸⁰

The situation will reach a point where the earth will become illuminated by the light of the existence of Imam Asr (a.s), and people will become needless of the light of the sun. The Almighty Allah states (in the Quran)

وَأَشْرَقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِنُورِ رَبِّهَا

*'The earth shall be illuminated by the light of its lord'*⁸¹

Imam Jafar Sadiq ((a.s)) has explained this noble verse,

رَبُّ الْأَرْضِ يَعْنِي إِمَامَ الْأَرْضِ

*'The Lord of the earth' refers to the Imam of the earth.*⁸²

Here, Imam ((a.s)) is described as 'the Lord of the earth.' 'Rabb' in Arabic means the one in authority and guardian. The meaning of "Lord of the earth" in this noble verse is the one in authority over the earth, who is none other than

⁸⁰ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 52, pg 316, H no 11

⁸¹ Surah Zumar, v 69

⁸² Tafseer Ali Ibrahim Qummi, vol 2, pg 224

Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s). Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) further explained this blessed verse, saying,

إِنْقَائِمَنَا إِذَا قَامَ أَشْرَقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِنُورِ رَبِّهَا وَاسْتَغْنَى الْعِبَادُ عَنِ ضَوْءِ
الشمسِ وَذَهَبَتِ الظُّلْمَةُ... وَتُظْهِرُ الْأَرْضُ كُنُوزَهَا حَتَّى تَرَاهَا النَّاسُ
عَلَى وَجْهِهَا

*'When our Qaem (from the Ahle Bait (a.s)) rises, the earth will be illuminated by the light of its Lord, and the servants (of Allah) will become needless of the light of the sun, and the darkness will be removed...And the earth will reveal its treasures, such that people will see them lying around on the earth'*⁸³

So, the reappearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) will illuminate the earth and the sky. The world and its inhabitants will be blessed. If a believer awaits the appearance of his Maula (Master) from Allah for the deliverance of the entire world and the realm of existence, he has performed a great act of worship. Such a level of Intezaar-e-Faraj is higher than the previous levels. Such a believer does not only think of himself, other believers, and the oppressed of the world but also considers the deliverance and happiness of all of Allah's creatures.

Up to this point, we have discussed four levels of awaiting the deliverance by Imam Asr (a.s).

- For oneself
- For the believers

⁸³ Irshad Mufeed, vol 2, pg 381

- For the believers and unbelievers
- For all humans and non-humans.

In each of these levels, we can consider the intention of seeking nearness to Allah or lack thereof, as well as the different degrees of this intention. This results in many different categories in this great act of worship.

However, we can have a fifth level in awaiting the deliverance of Imam Asr (a.s) which is the highest and most honourable level of Intezaar-e-Faraj. While encompassing all the previous levels, it is considered an even more magnificent act of worship. This level can be regarded as the finest degree of awaiting deliverance for believers, and it is more perfect and valuable in the sight of Allah.⁸⁴

This level belongs to the one who seeks the deliverance of Imam Asr (a.s) for the sake of the Imam himself and awaits the relief for Imam's (a.s) own difficulties. If the blessed existence of the Imam is compared with any believer, or even the sum of all other believers apart from the other thirteen infallible ones(a.s), his rank and status are higher, and his blessed existence is more revered and honoured in the sight of Allah than all others. Therefore, awaiting his deliverance and the joy and happiness of his eminence (a.t.f.s) is considered a more virtuous act of worship before Allah compared to the deliverance of others.

⁸⁴ Over here we mean the common man and not Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) himself whose degree of Intezaar is higher than the common man. We have discussed about his Intezaar for his own Zuhoor in the earlier chapter

If we consider the oppressed and downtrodden on the face of the earth, we cannot find anyone more oppressed and persecuted than the Ahle Bait (a.s) - and in this era, Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s). The severity and dreadfulness of an injustice are measured vis-à-vis the right that has been violated against the oppressed. The greater the right that has been wasted and ruined of a person, the greater the oppression against them. So, after Allah Almighty - who has the greatest rights over His servants - no one other than the Ahle Bait (a.s) have a greater right over all humans and even all creatures.⁸⁵ And it would not be an exaggeration to say that their rights are greater than the sum of all the rights that all humans have over one another. Therefore, it can be understood that Hazrat Baqiyatullah (a.t.f.s) - as the only remaining member of the infallible Ahle Bait (a.s) - stands at the head of all the oppressed individuals of the world because the oppression inflicted upon him is greater than all other oppressions in the world. In the Ziyarat of Imam Ali ((a.s)), we read from the words of Imam Abul Hassan (a.t.f.s),

السلام عليك يا وليَّ الله. أَشْهَدُ أَنَّكَ أَنْتَ أَوَّلُ مَظْلُومٍ وَأَوَّلُ مَنْ
غُصِبَ حَقُّهُ

*'Peace be upon you, O friend of Allah. I bear witness that you are the first oppressed one and the first one whose right was usurped.'*⁸⁶

The word "first" (أَوَّلُ) in the statement of the infallible Imam (a.s) does not mean first in time, because before him the

⁸⁵ A detailed discussion can be found in the book Aaftab dar Ghurbat, in the early part of section 3.

⁸⁶ Kamiluz Ziaraat, Chapter 11, H no 2

prophets (a.s), awliya, and the Last of Prophets (s.a.w.a) had suffered great oppression and persecution. Rather, "first" here means at the "head" of all of them, the "highest rank", indicating the greatest degree of being oppressed. In this rank, there is no difference between Imam Asr (a.s) and the rest of the Ahle Bait (a.s), although each of them has faced oppression in different ways during their respective times. Imam Asr (a.s) has inherited the oppression from all the prophets and awliya in this regard. He has inherited the persecution from his oppressed forefather, Ameerul Momineen (a.s). Therefore, just as Ameerul Momineen (a.s) was the first oppressed one (أَوَّلُ مَظْلُومٍ), the Imam is the first (greatest) oppressed one in this time.

The greatest form of injustice is when someone is deprived of their basic rights, and it is portrayed as if they never had any rights. Unfortunately, such injustice has been done to the Prophet (s.a.w.a) and his Ahle Bait (a.s) throughout history. Therefore, these holy beings (a.s) have not only been oppressed but are considered "downtrodden" (mustazafeen). Weak means powerless, but "downtrodden" is different from "weak". The 'mustazafeen' (مستضعفين) are those who have been made powerless. The twelve Imams (a.s) were not weak, but they can be called 'mustazafeen' because throughout history they were denied their rights and made helpless. They were deprived of their rights by the oppressors and treated as if they had no rights. Hence, they were treated like the downtrodden. Therefore, while they cannot be considered weak, they have been called "downtrodden". This expression has been used for them in the Holy Quran,

وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضِعُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً
وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ

*'And We wished to bestow a favour upon those who were considered weak in the land, and to make them leaders and make them the inheritors.'*⁸⁷

This verse is mentioned in the story of Bani Israel in the Quran, but as Imam Zainul Abedeen (a.s) has stated, it refers to the Household (Ahle Bait) of the Prophet (s.a.w.a) and their followers.

وَالَّذِي بَعَثَ مُحَمَّدًا بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا، إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ مِنَّا أَهْلًا لِبَيْتِ
وَشِيعَتِهِمْ بِمَنْزِلَةِ مُوسَى وَشِيعَتِهِ. وَإِنَّ عَدُوَّنَا وَأَشْيَاعَهُمْ بِمَنْزِلَةِ
فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَشْيَاعِهِ

'I swear by the One who sent the Prophet (s.a.w.a) as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner, indeed the righteous ones from us Ahle Bait (a.s) and their Shias are at the status of Moosa and his followers, and our enemies and their followers are at the status of Firaon and his followers.

Similarly in the explanation (tafseer) of the noble verse, Ameerul Momineen (a.s) says,

هَمَّ آلُ مُحَمَّدٍ يَبْعَثُ اللَّهُ مَهْدِيَّهُمْ بَعْدَ جَهْدِهِمْ فَيُعِزُّهُمْ وَيُذِلُّ
عَدُوَّهُمْ

⁸⁷ Surah Qasas, v 5

*'The downtrodden in the verse are the Family of Mohammed (s.a.w.a), for whom Allah will appoint their Mahdi after a period of hardship and difficulty. Then He will honour them (a.s) and debase their enemy.'*⁸⁸

Many narrations have been mentioned on this subject. Interested readers can refer to the interpretations mentioned alongside this verse.

In any case, if one awaits the relief of the downtrodden, one must realize that at the head of them is the sacred existence of Imam Asr (a.s). If Faraj reaches him from Allah, it will herald the Faraj of all the downtrodden people of the world. To summarise, one can say that the relief of Imam Asr (a.s) is the relief of the celestial and earthly beings, including the angels, jinn, animals, plants, and inanimate objects. So, whoever awaits his relief at this level (the fifth level), in reality, possesses all the previous levels and performs a worship superior to all worships.

The question is: How can one attain this degree of Intezaar-e-Faraj for the sake of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s)?

The highest level of Intezaar corresponds to the highest level of Maarefat and love

In general, what can elevate a believer to the highest ranks of anticipation for deliverance (Faraj) is the depth of their knowledge and the intensity of their "love" for their Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), although love itself arises from knowledge. The relationship between knowledge and love has been

⁸⁸ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 24, pg 167

discussed elsewhere. Here, we discuss the relationship between love and the anticipation of deliverance.

In the realm of love, there is a principle by which the intensity and weakness of love can be tested. That principle is: the more intense one's love for another, the more one forgets oneself and makes more room for the beloved in one's heart. In other words, the more attached the lover is to the beloved, the more the lover moves away from self-interest. Conversely, the more one pursues his interests, the less affection he has for the beloved.

Thus, the lowest degree of love is when one loves the beloved for personal gains. They love their beloved because they love themselves. Many friendships are based on such love. But the deeper their friendship becomes, the more they forget themselves and their interests and think about their friend. Two people can be friends in such a way that one or both love the other not for their interests but for the sake of the other person themselves. The best and most common example of such love is a parent's love for their child.

As mentioned, parents typically do not wish or aspire to bask in their child's success. Rather they love the child for the child's own sake. And certainly, for Imam Asr (a.s), who is the most loving father in the world, this quality exists more than any other father, and undoubtedly his love for the believers is the purest and most intense. So why is it that when some of the children of this "Compassionate Father" beseech him (a.s) to resolve their difficulties, and when they do not attain what they desire, as it may not be in their interest, they become unkind towards their 'father' and forget all his kindnesses and love just because their 'loving father' did not fulfil their wants

in a few cases? Is our criterion for love and friendship with our Imam based on personal gains? Do we want him only to solve our worldly problems? It may well be that what we desire is not favourable to our welfare. Should we sulk with our 'Wise and Loving Father' - like a child who is fond of something, but the parents do not provide it because they love the child?! It is even possible that Imam (a.s) does not provide what we asked for so that we may knock once more at his door and place our head on their (a.s) sacred threshold and pour out the yearning of our heart with "O Mahdi! Assist me" and "O Succourer! O Sahebuz Zamana!"

This point is one of the secrets that exist in the Valley of Love. Sometimes the beloved does not give the lover what they want, because they know that if the lover's wish is fulfilled, the lover, who has not yet become perfect and mature in the valley of love and is still a kindergarten child on this path, will no longer seek the beloved and will become complacent with what they have attained, and will remain deprived of the main goal. The goal is that the attention of the 'orphans' (Shias) of Aale Mohammed (a.s) towards their "Father" (Imam), - who is hidden from their eyes by the veil of occultation (Ghaibat) – increases in scanty so that they perceive his occultation like witnessing him.

How is this lofty goal and ultimate purpose attained? Those who have sincerity in their love for their Imam never become disheartened or cold-hearted towards him just because he(a.s) did not solve their problems. They understand well that sometimes these very difficulties and hardships cause a person to establish a perfect spiritual connection, a heartfelt bond and affection with their beloved.

"Blessed is the pain whose cure is you. Blessed is the path whose destination is you."

Therefore, personal hardships and difficulties are trivial compared to what they gain through these troubles. Thus, not only do they seek proximity to their Imam (a.s), but also patiently endure the calamities and sufferings that paved the way for their greater connection, without discontent or hopelessness.

The one who, in their difficulties, sees the greatest refuge and strongest support in Hazrat Baqiyatullah-ul-Aazam (a.t.f.s) and beseeches his blessed assistance for their removal, should realise that in this difficulty, they have taken steps towards their Imam and have become closer to him than ever before - something that would not have been attained had that difficulty not arisen. In this way, they appreciate what they have gained, and do not distance themselves from their Imam due to their shortcomings and discomforts. Rather the more shortcomings they have, the more devotion and attention they give to their Imam Asr and thank the Almighty Allah for this blessing of a stronger connection with the Imam (a.s).

So according to the principle explained, the weakest and lowest degree of love is when the believers love Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) for their interests and benefits. The more they can set aside their own selves, the purer love they will attain. This love reaches a point where the believer loves their Imam only for the Imam's own sake, and not a shred of selfishness or self-love remains in them. However, this is a very lofty and subtle degree that is not easily attained by humans, and very few individuals reach this degree.

To reach 100% pure love and friendship with Imam (a.s), a person must first fully understand the value of such love, and then, to attain this great elixir, beseech the in the court of Allah Almighty. Simultaneously, he must completely adhere to his duties towards the Imam, so that he may be graced with such infinite favour. It should not be forgotten that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) considered the "degree of love" as a condition for complete faith.

لَا يُؤْمِنُ عَبْدٌ حَتَّىٰ أَكُونَ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ نَفْسِهِ وَتَكُونَ عِزَّتِي إِلَيْهِ أَعَزَّ مِنْ عِزَّتِهِ

*'A servant does not attain faith until I become more beloved to him than himself, and my progeny household becomes more beloved to him than his own progeny.'*⁸⁹

According to this narration, if someone has not yet reached the stage where they love the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) more than themselves and his Household (a.s) more than their own family, they have not attained complete faith. They still need to strive and purify their love until they gradually approach this level, to reach a point where they do not want the Prophet (s.a.w.a) and the Imams (a.s) for themselves, but rather want themselves for them (a.s), and truly and whole heartedly say to their Imam Zamana (a.s):

يَا أَبِي أَنْتَ وَأُمِّي وَنَفْسِي لَكَ الْوِقَاءُ وَالْحِصَى

*'May my father and mother be sacrificed for you, and may myself be your protector and shield,'*⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Elalush Sharee, vol 1, pg 140

⁹⁰ Dua Nudbah,

In this way, they derive the pleasure of worshipping Allah by throwing themselves into difficulties for the sake of Imam Asr (a.s)

Among the companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.a) and the Imams (a.s), some individuals were their sincere lovers. Sincere love has signs that naturally manifest from the lover. One of these signs is that the lover cannot bear being separated from their beloved. An example of this is a person from the Ansar who one day came to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a) and said, "I cannot bear being separated from you. I enter my house, but when I remember you, I abandon my garden and property and come to you so that I can catch a glimpse of you." In response to this person's expression of love, the Prophet promised him that on the Day of Resurrection, he would be with the prophets, the truthful ones, the martyrs, and the righteous.⁹¹

Yes, the more intense the love, the more the pain of separation from the beloved torments the lover. Another sign of a sincere lover is that the lover cannot see their beloved in difficulty and hardship, and if their beloved is in trouble, the beloved's difficulty becomes their own difficulty. The stronger the bond of love between the lover and the beloved, the more the lover feels troubled by the difficulties of their beloved. An appropriate example of this is a child who sincerely loves their father and mother. If they see their father in trouble, they become troubled themselves and cannot separate themselves from their father. They love their father so much that they

⁹¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 17, pg 14, H no 29

wish they could take his place and suffer the hardship so that their father can be free from it.

Now, if a believer - according to the narration from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) - loves Imam Asr (a.s) more than his biological father, he cannot remain indifferent in his (a.s) difficulties. Rather, to the extent of his love for Imam (a.s), he will truly be troubled by the difficulties of his Master (a.s). More than being restless and impatient in his personal difficulties, he will be restless and worried about his difficulties. Such a person truly forgets himself and his troubles and problems, and only thinks of his Master and his difficulties. To the point where his pains and hardships do not hurt him because they have forgotten themselves and their heart is occupied only with their Imam.

The true muntazir of Imam Asr (a.s) reaches this lofty rank from two aspects: one is the pain of separation from the Imam (a.s) and being deprived of the sight of their beloved. The second is seeing their Imam in great difficulty during the occultation and loving him so much that when he witnesses the difficulties of the Master, he forgets his troubles.

In the previous chapter of this same book, we briefly explained the severity of the afflictions of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) in this time. According to the narrations quoted, it became clear that the primary affliction of Imam (a.s) is related to his devotees and Shias. Since he cannot separate himself from his children, the problems, and distresses of the believers during the occultation - especially their spiritual afflictions - have severely afflicted and tormented Imam (a.s).

Therefore, the 'muntazir' of the reappearance of Imam (a.s), due to his intense love and affection, awaits the reappearance of his Master more than his own solace (Faraj). And he seeks

the Imam's (a.s) advent more than anything else to deliver him from the afflictions and difficulties of the time of occultation. He knows that the Imam's 'Faraj' is his own 'Faraj' and of all believers, all oppressed humans, and ultimately the solace (Faraj) of the entire world. He knows that what has afflicted him is not his affliction or that of others. He has forgotten everyone and is only thinking of his Master. How beautifully the true muntazir of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) has described the signs of awaiting the reappearance: 'His separation from the Imam so pains the muntazir that he neglects everything related to preserving himself. And he does not feel the agonizing pains and dreadful hardships that afflict him. Rather, he does not feel the second aspect (himself) at all.'⁹²

If we add the aspect of pure love for the Hidden Imam (a.s) to this state, it becomes much more intense, and this sign manifests itself better. Until one does not have this pure love and affection for the Awaited Imam (a.s), one cannot reach this level of Intezaar-e-Faraj. Until we completely ignore matters related to ourselves, our own distresses and difficulties, our pains, and sufferings and are only pained by our separation from Imam (a.s) and witnessing his afflictions, we won't ever reach the fifth level of Intezaar. I implore the holy existence of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) to grant us a drop, or rather an ocean, of this love to all who love and are infatuated with him, and not to deprive us of tasting this level of awaiting the reappearance and understanding this unmatched worship of the believers.

Now, to become aware of another aspect of the sorrows and distresses of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) during the occultation, so

⁹² Mikyalul Makarim, vol 2, pg 152

that we may hopefully develop a greater sense of Intezaar for his reappearance, we pay attention to the supplication that the Imam's great father made regarding him.

Dua of Imam Askari (a.s) in Qunoot for the reappearance of his son

Sayyed Ibn Taoos, in the blessed 'Mohijjud Dawaat' - in the chapter of "Qunoot prayers of the Imams (a.s)" - narrates a dua. Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) used to recite this supplication in the qunoot of his prayer. When the people of Qum complained to Imam (a.s) about the oppressive ruler of their time - Moosa ibn Bugha, the tyrant agent of Abbasid caliph Mutawakkil - Imam (a.s) advised them, to recite this supplication after '*Salat of the oppressed*'⁹³ to get relief remove their affliction and oppression. People acted upon the Imam's advice, and soon that oppressive ruler was afflicted with divine punishment and the people of Qum were saved from his oppression.

In the advice that Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) gave for the removal of the affliction of the oppressed people, he prayed in a relatively detailed manner for the hastening of the advent of his noble son (a.s). This itself is a lesson for all those awaiting the reappearance, that in the times of their afflictions, more than anything and before anyone else, they should beseech Allah for their oppressed Master (a.s) and the hastening of his reappearance. So that by the blessing of this supplication, Allah may also deliver them from their own afflictions.

⁹³ A few ways of reciting this prayers has been discussed in the famous book, Mikyalul Makarim, vol 2, pg 86, 87

The supplication begins with extolling the blessings of Allah and asking for their increase. After this munajat, a part of the hardships and afflictions of the Imams and their Shias is mentioned. Then it asks Allah to take revenge on the oppressors. The supplication regarding Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) begins with this phrase:

(اللَّهُمَّ) وَأَسْفِرْ لَنَا عَنْ نَهَارِ الْعَدْلِ وَأَرِنَاهُ سَرْمَدًا لَا ظُلْمَةَ فِيهِ وَنُورًا لَا شَوْبَ مَعَهُ

*'O Allah! Make apparent for us the day of justice...and show it to us forever as light without darkness.'*⁹⁴

Then he (a.s) reaches this part of the supplication where he (a.s) states,

فَكَمَا نَصَبَ نَفْسَهُ غَرَضًا فِيكَ لِلْأَبْعَدِينَ وَجَادَ بِبَدْلِ مُهْجَتِهِ لَكَ فِي الدِّبِّ عَنْ حَرِيمِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَعَ مَا يَتَجَرَّعُهُ فِيكَ مِنْ مَرَارَاتِ الْغَيْظِ الْجَارِحَةِ بِحَوَاسِ الْقُلُوبِ وَمَا يَعْتَوِرُهُ مِنَ الْغُومِ وَيَفْنَعُ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَحْدَاثِ الْخُطُوبِ وَ يَشْرَقُ بِهِ مِنَ الْغُصَصِ الَّتِي لَا تَبْتَلِعُهَا الْحُلُوقُ وَلَا تَحْنُوا عَلَيْهَا الضُّلُوعُ مِنْ نَظَرَةٍ إِلَى أَمْرٍ مِنْ أَمْرِكَ وَلَا تَنَالُهُ يَدُهُ بِتَغْيِيرِهِ وَرَدِّهِ إِلَى مَحَبَّتِكَ فَاشْدُدِ اللَّهُمَّ أَرْزُهُ بِنَصْرِكَ

'O Allah, just as he (the Imam) has exposed himself to the strikes and attacks of vile people for Your sake and has sacrificed his noble soul in defending the sanctities of the believers for Your

⁹⁴ Mohijud Dawaat, pg 145

*sake...along with the bitter anguishes he endures for Your pleasure, and the sorrows that overwhelm him, and the fresh calamities that pour down upon him, and the choking distresses that no one can bear - when he sees one of Your commands being violated but his hand cannot reach to change it and return it to what pleases You, so (since he is in such a state) O Allah, strengthen his back with Your support...'*⁹⁵

In these phrases, the intensity and severity of the sorrows and distresses that Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) endures during the occultation for the pleasure of Allah are fully reflected. He is an exceptionally affectionate father (a.s) who has sacrificed his precious life to protect his children from calamities and events that could uproot their foundations, and through the heartaches, he (a.s) endures for the believers during the occultation, he strives to protect them. For Allah's pleasure, the Imam endures many distresses and swallows many bitter anguishes that, as the expression goes, do not go down the throat. When they want to say that enduring something is extremely difficult, they use this expression so that it does not go down the throat. The source of these bitter distresses and choking sorrows is that the religious commands are being disregarded, and the believers - who are his beloved children - are drowning in the valley of misguidance and sins and distancing themselves from Allah's Pleasure and Satisfaction and His pleasure, and he is forced to be a mute spectator. Since the divine permission for his reappearance has not yet been issued, he does not see himself as being able to change the affairs and reform them and return them to the path that pleases the Lord, and thus he has no choice but to endure.

⁹⁵ Mohijud Dawaat, pg 147, 148

In the previous chapter, it was explained that Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) endures these bitter calamities both due to his perfect faith and because of the responsibility he feels towards Allah's creation. He suffers the most anguish from the occurrence of sins in the world, and for this reason, the most painful state of awaiting the reappearance exists within him.

Two examples of Imam Zamana (a.s) praying for his early reappearance

In one of the supplications from the (a.s) of his (a.s) prayer, he (the Imam) relates about his burning and anguished heart from awaiting (the reappearance) in this way,

فَإِنَّكَ اللَّهُمَّ قُلْتَ وَ قَوْلِكَ الْحَقُّ فَلَبَّا آسَفُونَا انْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ وَإِنَّ
 الْغَايَةَ عِنْدَنَا قَدْ تَنَاهَتْ وَإِنَّا لِبِغْضِكَ غَاضِبُونَ وَإِنَّا عَلَى نَصْرِ الْحَقِّ
 مُتَعَاصِبُونَ وَإِلَى وُرُودِ أَمْرِكَ مُشْتَاقُونَ وَإِلَّا نَجَازِ وَعُدِّكَ مُرْتَقِبُونَ وَ
 لِحُلُولِ وَعِيدِكَ بِأَعْدَائِكَ مُتَوَقِّعُونَ

So, O Allah! You Yourself have said, "Then when they angered Us, we punished them." And indeed, the respite and opportunity (for the oppressors and tyrants) with Us has ended, and We are angry in (support of) Your wrath, and We are allies in aiding the truth, and We are eager for the issuance of Your command, and We are awaiting the fulfilment of Your promise, and We are watching for the realization of Your threats against Your enemies.'

The fact that the Imam stated in the supplication that the respite for the oppressors has ended, does not mean - God forbid - that he intends to hasten matters ahead of Allah's command, or that he expresses dissatisfaction with the divine

decree concerning his occultation. No believer would slip into such a grave mistake, let alone Imam (a.s) who is the manifestation of perfect faith and Allah's unmatched servant in the present time. They possess the highest and most complete degree of submission and satisfaction about Allah's will and His command.

This statement of the Imam is an expression of his state, the pains he has in this time - of course, accompanied by satisfaction - with his tongue of complaint. When he tells Allah that the opportunity has ended from our perspective, he intends to express - of course for the sake of Allah and His pleasure - the pains they endure, and he continues by stating that their wrath is Allah's wrath, while simultaneously eagerly awaiting the issuance of the divine command for his reappearance.

In another supplication narrated from the noble existence of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) regarding hastening his own reappearance, it is stated,

يَا نُورَ النُّورِ يَا مُدَبِّرَ الْأُمُورِ يَا بَاعِثَ مَنْ فِي الْقُبُورِ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَ
 آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَاجْعَلْ لِي وَلِشِيعَتِي مِنَ الضِّيقِ فَرَجاً وَمِنَ الْهَمِّ مَخْرَجاً
 وَأَوْسِعْ لَنَا الْمَنْهَجَ وَأَطْلِقْ لَنَا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ مَا يُفْرِجُ وَافْعَلْ بِنَا مَا أَنْتَ
 أَهْلُهُ يَا كَرِيمَ

“O Light of Lights! O Regulator of Affairs! O Raiser of those in the graves! Send blessings upon Mohammed and the family of Mohammed. Grant me and my Shias relief from distress, a way out from sorrow, and widen our path. Bestow upon us from Your

bounty what brings relief, and treat us with Your generosity, O Most Generous."⁹⁶

The term (ضيق) which means 'restrict' or 'narrow' or 'difficult' aptly demonstrates the state of the Imam (a.s); especially since he has asked Allah for himself and his Shias to be taken out of difficulties and delivered from sorrows and distresses. This alludes to the reality that the compassionate Imam becomes aggrieved and afflicted by the difficulties and sufferings of his children (Shias).

The highest rank of Intezaar of Imam Asr(a.s)

From whatever has been stated till now in this chapter we can conclude that the sufferings and hardships of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) during the occultation - for the pleasure of Allah and the sake of the believers - are more than anyone else's. And since his rank and status before Allah is higher and superior to all creatures, therefore, if someone awaits Imam's (a.s) reappearance for Imam's (a.s) sake, he has performed the highest degree of this great worship. According to the Sunnah narrations that exist from the Prophet regarding Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), relief comes after hardship.

Imam Sajjad (a.s) said,

فِي الْقَائِمِ مِنَّا سُنُّنٌ مِنَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ... وَأَمَّا مِنْ أَيُّوبَ فَأَلْفَرَجُ بَعْدَ
الْبَلْوَى

⁹⁶ Misbah Kafami, pg 305

*'There is Sunnah of (past) prophets in our Qaem.... As for the sunnah of Ayyub, it is the coming of relief after a period of tribulations.'*⁹⁷

Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), like Prophet Ayyub, spends his occultation in hardship, and each day is accompanied by sufferings and pains, the endurance of which is very difficult for him - rather greater than Hazrat Ayyub (a.s). Yet, Imam (a.s) patiently endures all these calamities. Now, if a Shia person's faith reaches such a level that he wants the reappearance of his Imam more than anything for the Imam's deliverance from his sufferings and hardships, this awaiting of the reappearance will be the highest degree of love for Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s).

This state is indeed the fruit and outcome of one's faith that grows on the tree of knowledge and love. One cannot expect to attain this state without deep and complete knowledge, for then it would be like a fruit that belongs to another tree but has been artificially hung on this tree.

So, the highest degree of awaiting the reappearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) is, in fact, the highest worship of someone who possesses the highest degrees of faith. In its place, it has been proven that the extract of religion is nothing but knowledge, love, and awaiting the reappearance, which has emerged from this very essence of religion.⁹⁸ One who has not yet reached this degree of deep knowledge should strive for deeper knowledge and, consequently, more intense love for Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), and along with acting upon the recommended advice in this regard, gradually elevate himself to this rank.

⁹⁷ Kamaluddin, Chapter 31, H no 3

⁹⁸ Refer to the book Maarefat Imam Asr, Section I, Chapter 3

In the well-known supplication that the first deputy of the Imam has advised to recite, we read,

أَنْتَ يَا رَبِّ الَّذِي تَكْشِفُ الضُّرَّ وَتُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاكَ وَتُنَجِّي مَنْ
الْكُرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ فَاكْشِفِ الضُّرَّ عَنِّي وَلِيِّكَ

*'O Lord! You are the One who removes hardship and difficulty and answers the call of the distressed when they call upon You and saves from sorrow and grief, so remove the hardship and distress from Your Wali.'*⁹⁹

ضُرٌّ in the Arabic language refers to bodily or spiritual harm. Every kind of spiritual harm and distress falls under its meaning. In this supplication, we ask Allah to remove this "ill state" from Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) and make him happy with the permission of his reappearance.

This is a teaching that elevates the people of knowledge to the highest level of awaiting the reappearance of their Imam. Yes, one who loves his Imam One who loves the Imam more than himself, more than awaiting his own relief, awaits the Imam's reappearance, and in his own difficulties, he suffers more from the fact that his Imam is distressed for his sake, than from his hardship.

Like a child who loves his parents for their own sake, if he falls into severe hardship - for example, if he develops a difficult illness - although he suffers from it, out of the love he has for his parents, he tries to hide his distress from them. Because he knows that they will be more distressed by their child's

⁹⁹ Jamalul Usboo, pg 319

hardship than he is himself, and for him to endure his suffering is easier than the distress his parents feel for him.

On the same basis, a true lover of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), in his difficulties, is more distressed for the sake of his Master than for himself. The hardship and suffering that the Imam (a.s) endures due to the difficulties of the Shias is more severe and heavier for him than the suffering he endures in his hardships.

So, in all calamities, whether related to himself or other believers, or even other creatures, more than anything, it is the sorrow and grief of his Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) that saddens and distresses him. For this reason, awaiting the relief and reappearance of his Imam is more important to him than awaiting the relief of others, and he preoccupies himself with this matter. Of course, as mentioned before, he knows that the reappearance of the Imam is in reality the relief of all people, but the intention of awaiting his reappearance for the sake of nearness to Allah is the highest and purest of intentions.

Such an intention stems from the pure love for Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), which itself is for the sake of Allah and His pleasure. The purer and more intense the love for the Imam (a.s) is, the purer and more intense is the love for the Lord, and vice versa. So, the highest degree of awaiting the reappearance of the Imam (a.s) belongs to one who has the most sincere and intense love for him, and this itself is a sign of the highest degrees of faith in Allah and the peak of servitude. May Allah grant the Muntazirs (those awaiting the reappearance) of that 'Noble one' the ability to comprehend this lofty rank in worship and servitude.

SECTION 3

CONTINUOUS INTEZAAR

Chapter One

The possibility of Bad'a concerning the time of reappearance and its signs

One of the topics that profoundly impacts Intezaar of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) is the reality that it (reappearance) may happen anytime, and a person can never feel hopeless concerning it. Therefore, the hope and anticipation of reappearance should be continuous. If someone truly believes this reality, it will greatly impact the intensity of his Intezaar. The basis and foundation of this belief lie in paying attention to the possibility of change (bad'a) in the time of the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s).

No definite time has been specified for the reappearance.

The principle of the reappearance of Imam Asr (a.s) is a definite matter and a divine promise that will undoubtedly actualize, and there will be no change in it per se. However, the time of this blessed event, based on numerous narrations that have reached us from the infallible Imams (a.s), may be preponed or postponed. In other words, there is no fixed or pre-determined time for it. It is possible that a time, or times, have been specified for it so far, but before its occurrence, it has been delayed.

This change, according to "bad'a" (divine revision), is completely possible for the Shias who believe in the right of bad'a for Allah. This is done by Allah Himself through His wisdom, and it does not suggest ignorance about the future

on His part. Whatever happens, Allah is aware of it before its occurrence, and if there is any advancement or delay, Allah is also aware of it. But the 'Will' (Iradah) of the Lord is different from His Knowledge (Ilm).

The Almighty Allah knows what will happen and when, but He may decree its realization at an earlier time, and based on this decree, He arranges the affairs accordingly. However, before the time of its occurrence, "bad'a" may take place, and the actualisation of that thing may be delayed. It means that the divine decree is changed by Allah Himself.

Although Allah has known this change from before through His inherent knowledge, this knowledge does not prevent the initial decree and its change, and both that decree and this change are completely according to divine wisdom. The same applies if the occurrence of something is brought forward. So, in summary, the advancement or delay of something is considered "bad'a."

Another possible situation regarding bad'a is that Allah may not have decreed anything regarding the time of occurrence of something. In other words, the decree of its time may be simultaneous with its occurrence and not precede its realization.

In this case, one cannot say that there has been a change in the destinies since there was no prior decree at all. However, one can say that Allah has initially decreed it, meaning that He has created a decree that did not exist before. So, this decree is a new one, and this newness is a common aspect with the previous situation, where there was a prior decree that Allah changed. Therefore, what exists in both cases of "bad'a"

regarding the time of the reappearance of Imam Asr (a.s) is that both situations can be assumed. A time may be specified for it before the reappearance, yet before its realization, the time was changed by Allah Himself (the first case). It is also possible that its time is decreed simultaneously with the reappearance itself (the second case). In both cases, the decree of the time of reappearance will be a 'new decree'.

Regarding the time of the appearance of Imam Zamana(a.s), both scenarios are possible. It is possible that a time is determined for it before its occurrence, but before it is realized, its time is altered by Allah Himself (the first scenario). It is also possible that its time is decreed simultaneously with its appearance (the second scenario).

So, it can be said that the appearance of Imam Zamana does not have a definite and fixed time. Either no time has been decreed at all, or if it has been decreed, it is subject to change. Of course, when we say it is subject to change, it does not necessarily mean that it will surely change. A decree may occur without any change. The crucial thing is that there is no fixed decree regarding the time of appearance.

In the traditions that have reached us from the Ahle Bait (a.s), there are established and reliable narrations vis-à-vis bad'a for the time of reappearance of Imam Asr (a.s) However, whether a time is specified before the actualisation of reappearance, which is subject to change, or whether no time is decreed at all - both possibilities exist.

Here, without intending to prove one possibility and reject the other, we refer to a well-known tradition from Imam

Mohammad Baqir (a.s) as a confirmation of the second possibility.

The narrator of this tradition is Abu Hamza Somali. He says to Imam Baqir (a.s): Ameerul Momineen (a.s) (Ali ibn Abi Talib) said, *إلى السبعين بلاء* (Until the year 70 AH there will be affliction.) And he (a.s) said, *وبعد البلاء رجاء* (After the affliction, there will be relief.). But the year 70 AH has passed, and we have not seen any relief or ease. Imam Baqir (a.s) said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى قَدْ كَانَ وَقَّتْ هَذَا الْأَمْرَ فِي السَّبْعِينَ فَلَمَّا أَنْ قُتِلَ الْحُسَيْنُ صَلَوَاتُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ اشْتَدَّ غَضَبُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى عَلَى أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ فَأَخَّرَهُ إِلَى أَرْبَعِينَ وَ مِائَةٍ فَحَدَّثْنَاكُمْ فَأَدْعُتُمُ الْحَدِيثَ فَكَشَفْتُمْ قِنَاعَ السِّتْرِ وَ لَمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ وَقْتًا عِنْدَنَا وَ يَبْحُوا اللَّهَ مَا يَشَاءُ وَ يُثَبِّتُ وَ عِنْدَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ

"Indeed, Allah, the Exalted, had appointed this matter (the relief of the Shias) in 70 AH. But when Husain (a.s) was killed, the wrath of Allah towards the people of the earth intensified. So He postponed it to the year one hundred and forty. We informed you, but you spread the narration and removed the veil of secrecy. So, Allah postponed it further and did not set a time for it with us after that. 'Allah erases what He wills and affirms (what He wills), and with Him is the mother of the Book'¹⁰⁰¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Surah Raad, v 39

¹⁰¹ Ghaibat Tusi, H no 417

This noble tradition, speaks of the Faraj (relief) and comfort for the Shias that could have been realized, even in a limited and partial way before the reappearance of the Twelfth Imam (a.s).

The deliverance of the Shias from the difficulties and tribulations imposed upon them is only achieved through the relief brought by the Ahle Bait (a.s). And the complete and comprehensive relief of the Ahle Bait (a.s) only comes with the reappearance of the Sahebuz Zamana (a.t.f.s). However, in a more limited way, even before that, the Almighty Allah had decreed it twice, but both times it was subject to bad'a (divine change of decree) due to the mistakes of the people themselves and was postponed. The first time was because people gathered to kill Sayyedush Shohada (a.s) (Imam Husain). Others didn't participate but agreed with what befell Imam Husain (a.s). The second time bad'a materialised because of revealing the time of Faraj. So, the two times that bad'a occurred regarding the time of relief, there was a change in the divine decree. However, after these two times, no other time for relief was set by Allah as Imam (a.s) has explicitly stated in this tradition - **وَلَمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ وَقْتًا** (He did not determine a time for it with us after that)

From this statement, it is understood that after Allah had twice decreed ease and relief for the Ahle Bait (a.s) and their Shias, and the evil actions of the people caused Allah to postpone their relief, He no longer specified a time for it. Thus, technically speaking, did not make a decree regarding its time. Therefore, since no decree was made regarding it, even Imam Zamana himself (a.t.f.s), who is 'Imam-e-Mubeen' (The

Manifest Imam)¹⁰² and Kitab-e-Mubeen (The Manifest Book)¹⁰³ does not have its knowledge.

According to several traditions, the Imam (a.s) has knowledge of all the created things, but if something has not yet been created, only Allah has its knowledge through His inherent knowledge.¹⁰⁴ So if the Imam (a.s) does not know it, it is not a deficiency in his knowledge. If we say that after the two postponements of relief, Allah no longer specified a time for it, the implication is that the knowledge of it would not be with the Imam (a.s) either, because if it had been decreed, the Imam Mubeen would have certainly known it.

Therefore, one can conclude from the apparent statement of the Imam (a.s) when he said: "He did not set a time for it with us after that," that the Ahle Bait (a.s) themselves are not aware of the time of their own relief. Of course, in the noble hadees, those two postponed predicted times (70 AH & 140 AH) are not related to the reappearance of the Twelfth Imam (a.s). However, the wording of the hadees refers to times when the Imams (a.s) and their Shia followers are in difficulty. The reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s) is also one of the

¹⁰² Surah Yasin, v 12. Refer to the Tafseer under the verse.

¹⁰³ Surah Dukhan, v 1,2. Refer to the Tafseer under the two verses.

¹⁰⁴ In the traditions, two types of knowledge are mentioned for Allah, and there is no real association between them. The first is the knowledge specific to Allah Almighty, and the second is the knowledge given to the angels, prophets, and Imams.

The first knowledge is that since the Sacred Essence (zaat) of Allah is free from all defects, therefore attributing ignorance to Him is not permissible, and this is called the Essential Knowledge (علم ذاتي) of Allah. The second is the knowledge that is a creation of Allah and all the knowledge of creatures falls into this category. (Refer to Usool Kafi, Kitab Tauheed, Chapter of Bad'a, Hadees 6 and 8.)

manifestations of relief, and since the determination of the time regarding it has been generally negated, the general ruling extends to the specific case.

Therefore, based on this hadees, one could infer that Hazrat Baqiyatullah (may our souls be sacrificed for him) does not know the time of his reappearance and the 'ultimate relief'. As has been mentioned, this is not considered a flaw or deficiency in his knowledge. It is just like when an Imam (a.s) informs about the occurrence of something in the future, but then bad'a (a change in Allah's will) takes place, and that thing does not happen according to the Imam's (a.s) statement.

Such a thing has precedence among the past prophets (a.s) & Imams (a.s) and does not contradict what the Shias believe about their (a.s) knowledge of the unseen. If a reliable report is transmitted from an infallible Imam (a.s) but does not correspond to reality, we never doubt the truthfulness of the Imam's(a.s) statement. Instead, we say that it happened in a different context, and this does not imply any deficiency in the Imam's 'perfect' knowledge. It is possible that Allah, in His wisdom, did not teach them (a.s) about certain events that would occur.

Regarding matters for which no specific decree has been made, the same principle applies. Therefore, if no specific time has been determined for the appearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s), it is natural that he may not be aware of it.

Another relevant hadees on this discussion (that the time of reappearance is not known to the Imams (a.s) comes from

Imam Baqir (a.s). When asked¹⁰⁵ about the timing of Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s) appearance, he responded:

إِنَّهُ لَمْ يُوَقَّتْ لَنَا فِيهِ وَقْتُ وَلَكِنْ إِذَا حَدَّثْنَاكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ فَكَانَ كَمَا نَقُولُ
فَقُولُوا صَدَقَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَإِنْ كَانَ بِخِلَافِ ذَلِكَ فَقُولُوا صَدَقَ اللَّهُ وَ
رَسُولُهُ تُوَجَّرُوا مَرَّتَيْنِ

*'Indeed, a specific time has not been granted to us. However, if we inform you of something and it happens as we say, then say, 'Allah and His Messenger have spoken the truth.' But if it turns out differently, still say, 'Allah and His Messenger have spoken the truth,' and you will be rewarded twice.'*¹⁰⁶

This statement indicates that the Imams (a.s) have not specified a time for the appearance of Imam Mahdi. Therefore, we cannot claim that they (a.s) know the exact time but are concealing it.

The explanation is that there is a possibility of bad'a regarding all the reports that have reached us from the Imams (a.s). It is not necessary that in every report from the infallible Imam, there is a mention of the possibility of bad'a regarding that report. As a rule, they have informed us that some of the things we convey to you may not necessarily come true. In such cases, know that we have spoken the truth, but Allah has

¹⁰⁵ From the continuation of the response of the Imam that is not mentioned in the text, it can be understood that the mentioned question and answer was regarding the time of the reappearance and Faraj of the Imams. The continuation of the statement is: *"But when the need becomes severe and poverty prevails, and people deny one another, then at that time expect this matter (the reappearance) morning and evening."*

¹⁰⁶ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 52, pg 185, H no 9

decreed otherwise. This general principle applies to all ahadees.

However, if the infallible Imams (a.s) have definitively stated an event, we can consider it certain and not subject to bad'a. Therefore, the principle remains that there is a possibility of 'bad'a' in reports from the Imams (a.s) unless they explicitly exempt a particular matter. However, this general principle does not apply to predicting the exact time of Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s) reappearance. The Imams have never specified a time for this event. It only applies to limited and partial knowledge that the Imams (a.s) shared with the Shia before the final and complete reappearance, which will occur with the advent of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s). One such instance is the narration from Abu Hamza Somali who asked Imam Baqir (a.s) about the prediction made by Imam Ali (a.s). The Imams (a.s) have not determined a specific time for Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s) appearance. The proof of this assertion is the narration of Abu Baseer who says, 'I asked Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) about Hazrat Qaem (a.s). Hazrat (a.s) replied

كَذَّبَ الْوَقَاتُونَ إِنَّا أَهْلُ بَيْتٍ لَا نُوقِتُّ.

'Those who fix a time are liars. We, the Ahle Bait (a.s), do not specify a time (of reappearance).'¹⁰⁷

Hence, Imams (a.s) – as per their assertion – have never determined a time for reappearance. The reason is that Allah Himself has not designated or decreed a specific time for it. We may consider one possibility more likely, yet the other possibility remains plausible.

¹⁰⁷ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Hujjah, Chapter of Disliking of fixing a time, H no 3

In these narrations, the term 'time' refers to an absolute and fixed time. Therefore, if any predictions have been attributed to the infallible Imams (a.s) regarding the timing of Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s) appearance or his specific characteristics and signs, all of them are subject to bad'a (divine alteration), and none can be considered definitive.

This principle holds even as we discuss the concept we are currently attempting to prove irrespective of the time being specified or unspecified. What is certain is that an exact and unalterable time for the emergence of Imam Asr (a.s) has not been determined.

For this reason, some supplications about hastening his reappearance include references to bad'a. Indeed, if the time of Imam's (a.s) emergence were not subject to bad'a, such prayers would be ineffective. However, since this matter is indeed subject to bad'a, the infallible Imams (a.s) themselves prayed for its hastening, and encouraged their followers to do the same. One such supplication is attributed to Imam Moosa bin Jafar (a.s) during the Asr prayers

أَنْتَ اللهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ مِنْكَ الْمَشِيئَةُ وَإِلَيْكَ الْبَدَاءُ... أَنْتَ اللهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ تَمْحُو مَا تَشَاءُ وَتُثْبِتُ وَعِنْدَكَ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ... أَنْ تُصَلِّيَ عَلَيَّ مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَأَنْ تُعَجِّلَ فَرَجَ الْمُنتَقِمِ لَكَ

'You are Allah; there is no god but You. From You is the Masheeyat and from You is bad'a... You are Allah; there is no god but You. You erase what You will and establish what You will. With You is Ummul Kitab... I ask You to send blessings upon Mohammed and

*his family and to hasten the reappearance of the 'Avenger' against Your enemies.*¹⁰⁸

This supplication acknowledges the concept of bad'a and the right of Allah to alter His decrees. Therefore, the request for hastening Imam Mahdi's reappearance is based on the belief in bad'a. The reality we are currently seeking to establish remains consistent - whether we say that the time is unspecified or that it has been specified but is subject to change.'

The signs of the appearance (of the Imam) are also subject to bad'a.

According to the general rule taught by the Imams (a.s) - except for what they have specifically exempted - in their IIm Ghaib, the possibility of bad'a exists. Believing in this matter has a profound impact on how one deals with the preliminaries and signs mentioned in the traditions about the appearance of the Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s).

As an example of such traditions that refer to some characteristics of the day of the appearance of the Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), we narrate from Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s),

لَا يَخْرُجُ الْقَائِمُ (ع) إِلَّا فِي وَتْرٍ مِنْ السِّنِينَ سَنَةً إِحْدَى أَوْ ثَلَاثٍ أَوْ
خَمْسٍ أَوْ سَبْعٍ أَوْ تِسْعٍ

*'The Qaem (a.s) will not appear except in an odd year - the first, or the third, or the fifth, or the seventh, or the ninth year.'*¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 86, pg 81

¹⁰⁹ Irshad Mufeed, vol 2, pg 378

If the time specified in this noble tradition for the appearance of the Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) is not subject to bad'a, then it would be meaningless to await his appearance in even-numbered years. However, the general rule - that what they have foretold is subject to revision - also applies here. So, if the Imam (a.s) appears in an odd year, the statement of Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) is correct. And if he rises in other than those years, we must still acknowledge it, because he has narrated this news from Allah and the Prophet (s.a.w.a), and has not lied, but Allah has revised it.

Another tradition from Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) states:

يُنَادَى بِاسْمِ الْقَائِمِ ع فِي لَيْلَةِ ثَلَاثٍ وَعِشْرِينَ وَ يَقُومُ فِي يَوْمِ
عَاشُورَاءَ وَ هُوَ الْيَوْمُ الَّذِي قُتِلَ فِيهِ الْحُسَيْنُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ ع لَكَأَنَّيْ بِهِ فِي
يَوْمِ السَّبْتِ الْعَاشِرِ مِنَ الْمُحَرَّمِ قَائِمًا بَيْنَ الرُّكْنِ وَ الْمَقَامِ جَبْرَائِيلُ
ع عَنْ يَدِهِ الْيَمْنَى يُنَادِي الْبَيْعَةَ لِلَّهِ فَتَصِيرُ إِلَيْهِ شِيعَتُهُ مِنْ أَطْرَافِ
الْأَرْضِ تُطْوَى لَهُمْ طَيًّا حَتَّى يُبَايِعُوهُ فَيَمْلَأُ اللَّهُ بِهِ الْأَرْضَ عَدْلًا كَمَا
مُلِئَتْ ظُلْمًا وَ جَوْرًا

'The name of the Qaem will be called out in the night of the twenty-third and he will rise on the Day of Ashura, the day on which Husain ibn Ali (a.s) was martyred. It is as if I see him standing upright between the corner (of the Kaaba) and Maqam Ibrahim on Saturday, the 10th of Moharram, with Jibrael on his right, calling out: 'Allegiance is of Allah.' Then his Shias will come to him from the corners of the earth, the earth being folded up for them until they pledge allegiance to him. Then Allah will fill the

earth with equity and justice through him, just as it had been filled with oppression and injustice.’¹¹⁰

The celestial call on the night of the 23rd of Ramazan is one of the signs mentioned for the reappearance of the Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), sometimes referred to as the "scream" (صيححه)

Another sign mentioned in the tradition is that the day of the Imam's (a.s) appearance will be a Saturday that coincides with the 10th of Moharram (Ashura). This timing is subject to bad'a according to the rule stated by the Imams (a.s) themselves. In any case, we must confirm the truthfulness of Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s), whether the day of the reappearance of the Imam Asr (a.s) is Saturday the 10th of Moharram or not.

Due to the importance of this subject, we refer to another tradition that states the general rule. When Fuzail ibn Yasar asked Imam Baqir (a.s) whether a specific time had been appointed for the reappearance, he replied:

كَذَبَ الْوَقَّاتُونَ كَذَبَ الْوَقَّاتُونَ كَذَبَ الْوَقَّاتُونَ إِنَّ مُوسَىٰ عَ لَمَّا خَرَجَ
وَإِفْدًا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ وَاعَدَهُمْ ثَلَاثِينَ يَوْمًا فَلَمَّا زَادَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى الثَّلَاثِينَ عَشْرًا
قَالَ قَوْمُهُ قَدْ أَخْلَفْنَا مُوسَىٰ فَصَنَعُوا مَا صَنَعُوا فَإِذَا حَدَّثْنَاكُمْ
الْحَدِيثَ فَجَاءَ عَلَىٰ مَا حَدَّثْنَاكُمْ بِهِ فَقُولُوا صَدَقَ اللَّهُ وَإِذَا حَدَّثْنَاكُمْ

¹¹⁰ Irshad Mufeed, vol 2, pg 379

الْحَدِيثَ فَجَاءَ عَلَى خِلَافِ مَا حَدَّثْنَاكُمْ بِهِ فَقُولُوا صَدَقَ اللَّهُ تَوَجَّرُوا

مَرَّتَيْنِ

*'Those who determine a time are liars. Those who determine a time are liars. Those who determine a time are liars. When Moosa (a.s) went to the meeting with his Lord, he made a covenant with his people for thirty days. But when Allah added ten more days to that, his people said: 'Moosa has broken his promise to us,' so they did what they did. Therefore, when we narrate a tradition to you, if it happens according to what we narrated, then say: 'Allah has spoken the truth.' And if it happens contrary to what we narrated, then say: 'Allah has spoken the truth,' so that you may be rewarded twice.'*¹¹¹

Based on the incident stated by Imam Baqir (a.s), it may happen that what occurred seems to contradict the one who gave that information. However, since the possibility of bad'a (alteration) exists for it, we do not have the right to reject the reliable report. Rather, we should consider it from Allah and believe that for certain wisdom, Allah commanded His Proof to state that information, and then did bad'a before its fulfilment.

The conclusion is that all the characteristics of the time of the reappearance of the Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) are subject to revision and are not definitive. The same applies to the signs and indications narrated as precursors to the reappearance, such as the celestial call on the night of the 23rd of the month of Ramazan. Sometimes the narrated signs also seem to

¹¹¹ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Hujjah, Chapter of Disliking of fixing a time, H no 5

contradict each other. For example, regarding the day of the reappearance of the Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), in the Ziarat of Friday narrated by the late Sayyid Ibn Taoos, it is stated,

يَا مَوْلَايَ يَا صَاحِبَ الزَّمَانِ... هَذَا يَوْمُ الْجُمُعَةِ وَهُوَ يَوْمُكَ الْمَتَوَقَّعُ
فِيهِ ظُهُورُكَ

*'O my Master, O Sahebuz Zamana (a.t.f.s)... Today is Friday, and it is your day. In which your reappearance is awaited...'*¹¹²

If this statement is from an infallible Imam (a.s), then what is the day of reappearance, Friday, or Saturday? It is possible that one of these two reports will be revised and the other will occur, or each could refer to one of the stages of the reappearance and uprising of the Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s). In any case, our duty is that if a report is authentic and reliable, we should confirm it, and if something is not exempted from bad'a, we should consider it changeable.

Another point is that regarding some signs of the reappearance, the term 'inevitable' (مَحْتُمٌ) has been used. The question is whether this term implies that they are not subject to revision (bad'a). For example, the appearance of Sufyani is considered one of the 'certain' signs. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) said,

السُّفْيَانِيُّ مِنَ الْمَحْتُمِ وَخُرُوجُهُ مِنْ أَوَّلِ خُرُوجِهِ إِلَى آخِرِهِ خَمْسَةَ
عَشَرَ شَهْرًا

¹¹² Jamalul Usboo, pg 42, Marhoom Sayyed ibn Taoos, Ziarat of Friday

*'Sufyani is among the certain occurrences and his emergence, from its beginning to its end, will last fifteen months.'*¹¹³

However, regarding this same Sufyani, when Abu Hashim Dawood ibn Qasim Jafari asked Imam Mohammed ibn Ali Jawad (a.s)

هَلْ يَبْدُو لِلَّهِ فِي الْمَحْتُمِ قَالَ نَعَمْ .

'Does Allah change the 'certainties?' The Imam replied, 'Yes'. After that, when he expressed his fear that Allah may change even the principle of the reappearance of the Qaem (a.t.f.s), Imam (a.s) stated,

إِنَّ الْقَائِمَ مِنَ الْبَيْعَادِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْبَيْعَادَ

*'Indeed, the rising of the Qaem is a promised event, and Allah does not break His promise.'*¹¹⁴

In reconciling these traditions, the great scholar Majlisi has given two possibilities: First, the term 'inevitable' has different meanings, some of which may be subject to revision. Second, that the occurrence of the "certain" (مَحْتُمٍ) itself may not be subject to revision, but its characteristics could be revised.¹¹⁵

The explanation of Allamah Majlisi's statement is, firstly, that the word 'inevitable' (مَحْتُمٍ) does not necessarily mean that it is not subject to bad'a (revision), but may have a meaning that allows for bad'a.¹¹⁶ And secondly, it is possible that while

¹¹³ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 52, pg 248, H no 130

¹¹⁴ Ghaibat Nomani, Chapter 18, H no 10

¹¹⁵ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 52, pg 251

¹¹⁶ One of meanings concerning the reconciliation of 'bada' with 'certain' has been explained in the book Maarefat Imam Asr, pg 277, 278

its occurrence itself is not revised, some of its associated characteristics may be revised. For example, regarding Sufyani, one could say that his emergence itself will occur, but bad'a may take place in the duration of his emergence, which is stated as fifteen months in the tradition. This period may become so short that it could be considered concurrent with the reappearance, rather than a preliminary event.

The great Shia scholar, Allamah Mirza Husain Nuri, in his book Najmus Saaqib, regarding the signs of the reappearance, has stated:

'It should not be overlooked that the occurrence of the day of reappearance of Imam Asr (a.s) being Friday, Nowruz, or Ashura, is not an obstacle that one cannot await the Faraj during the many years when they do not coincide. For everything other than the reappearance and rising of Hujjat ibn Hasan (a.t.f.s) - whose noble life has now passed more than a thousand and forty years and which will certainly occur since it is a promise of Allah and there will be no change or breaking of the promise for him –everything else that has been narrated about the signs before the reappearance and concurrent with it, are subject to change, revision, advancement, delay, and interpretation as something else. This is clear from the narrations received from the infallible Ahle Bait (a.s). Even those that have been mentioned among the 'inevitable'. Indeed, the apparent meaning of 'inevitable' in those reports is not that they can never change, and it must come to pass as stated in that exact manner. Rather, the meaning, and Allah knows best, is a degree of emphasis in expression, which does not contradict change in its occurrence. And supporting this view is what Shaikh Nomani has narrated in his book Ghaibat

from Bani Hashim and Dawood ibn Qasim Jafari, who said...'¹¹⁷(hadees is mentioned above)

His statement is approximately the same as what Allamah Majlisi had stated. Here, the late author of Mikyal has objected to Mirza Nuri's words,¹¹⁸ but this objection, whether valid or not, does not undermine the main issue that we are pursuing here. Our primary aim in the current discussion is not to consider the reappearance of the Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) as having preliminaries and signs in a way that accepting them would contradict awaiting his reappearance every morning and evening. This is something that the late author of Mikyal himself has very beautifully and logically discussed in his noble book.¹¹⁹ Inshallah, later while continuing the same discussion, we shall refer to the book for more clarification.

Whoever holds such a belief in awaiting the 'Faraj' of the Imam Asr (a.s) must, in any case, accept the 'certain' signs, such as the emergence of Sufyani, in a manner that does not undermine that belief. We will pursue this subject in the next chapter. We will conclude this chapter by quoting another statement from the tradition of Imam Baqir (a.s), who said, 'Do not fix a time for our reappearance'.¹²⁰ Towards the end of the hadees he (a.s) says,

تَوَقَّعُوا هَذَا الْأَمْرَ صَبَاحًا أَوْ مَسَاءً

¹¹⁷ Najmus Saqib, pg 832

¹¹⁸ Mikyalul Makarim, vol 1, pg 388 - 392

¹¹⁹ Mikyalul Makarim, vol 2, pg 157 - 162

¹²⁰ The first part of this hadees has been mentioned earlier

*'Await this matter (the reappearance of Imam Zamana) morning and evening.'*¹²¹

¹²¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 52, pg 185, H no 9

Chapter Two

The sudden advent of Imam (a.s)

In general, in the traditions of the Ahle Bait (a.s), the appearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) is mentioned as a sudden and unexpected event that does not require any prerequisites or necessary conditions. This matter has been stated in various ways.

The reformation of the issue of appearance in a single night.

One narration on this is that Allah will reform the matter of the appearance of Imam Asr (a.s) in one night. The reformation in one night implies that the permission for his appearance will be granted to him without any prior groundwork or precedent. This is completely acceptable, considering what has been said about the possibility of the time of appearance being subject to change (bad'a). The following narration from Imam Jawad (a.s) indicates this point.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى لَيُصْلِحُ لَهُ أَمْرَهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ كَمَا أَصْلَحَ أَمْرَ كَلْبِيهِ
مُوسَى ع إِذْ ذَهَبَ لِيَقْتَبِسَ لِأَهْلِهِ نَارًا فَرَجَعَ وَهُوَ نَبِيٌّ مُرْسَلٌ ثُمَّ قَالَ
ع أَفْضَلُ أَعْمَالٍ شَبِعْتَنَا أَنْتَظَرُ الْفَرَجَ

'Verily, Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, will reform his (Imam Mahdi's) matter in one night, just as He reformed the matter of His Kalim (Moosa (a.s)) when he went to seek fire for his family

and returned as a Messenger and Prophet... The best deeds of our Shia are to await the reappearance.¹²²

The analogy used in this noble tradition clearly illustrates the intended meaning. The story of Allah's conversation with Prophet Moosa (a.s) and his subsequent prophethood is mentioned in the Holy Quran,

وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَى إِذْ رَأَى نَارًا فَقَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ
نَارًا لَّعَلِّي آتِيكُم مِّنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ أَوْ أَجْدُ عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى مَّكِينًا أَتَاهَا نُودِي يَا
مُوسَى إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ إِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى أَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ
فَاسْتَبِعْ لِمَا يُوحَى

'And has the story of Moosa come to you? When he saw fire, he said to his family: Stop, for surely, I see a fire, haply I may bring to you therefrom a live coal or find a guidance at the fire. So, when he came to it, a voice was uttered: O Moosa: Surely, I am your Lord, therefore put off your shoes; surely you are in the sacred valley, Tuwa, And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed.'

¹²³

When Prophet Moosa (a.s) and his family were lost in the dark wilderness, he saw a fire from a distance and, according to the Quran, went towards it to either bring something from that fire for his family or find some guidance about the path from which they had strayed away. Based on apparent signs and ordinary human calculations, even Prophet Moosa (a.s) himself did not perceive any indication that he would be chosen for

¹²² Kamaluddin, Chapter 36, H no 1

¹²³ Surah Taha, v 9 - 13

prophethood on that night. There were no grounds or predictable circumstances. He went towards the fire for a different purpose but returned as a Messenger and Prophet. The similarity between the reformation of Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s) appearance and the reformation of Prophet Moosa's (a.s) prophethood and Messengership lies in this matter, which is referred to as the "reformation of the matter in a single night." The intention is that Allah's permission for the appearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) will also be granted without any prelude and at a time when there is no sign indicating its imminent occurrence.

If a believer deeply believes in this reality, then the Intezaar of Imam's (a.s) reappearance will become very intense and tangible for him since he will see the occurrence of the reappearance as possible and practical at any time and will not despair of its occurrence under any circumstances. For this reason, after the analogy, Imam Jawad (a.s) stated that the best deeds of our Shia are to await the reappearance.

Hence, it can be said that the matter of Imam Asr's (a.t.f.s) reappearance is not contingent upon the existence of any sign or event that would indicate its closeness based on ordinary human calculations. Otherwise, awaiting the reappearance every morning and evening would be meaningless.

In another tradition, Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) has beautifully mentioned this same matter.

كُنْ لِمَا لَا تَرْجُو أَرْجَى مِنْكَ لِمَا تَرْجُو فَإِنَّ مُوسَى بَنَ عِمْرَانَ عَخْرَجَ
لِيَقْتَنِسَ لِأَهْلِهِ نَارَ أَفْرَجَعِ إِلَيْهِمْ وَهُوَ رَسُولُ نَبِيِّ فَأَصْلَحَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَ

تَعَالَى أَمْرَ عَبْدِهِ وَنَبِيِّهِ مُوسَى ع فِي لَيْلَةٍ وَ هَكَذَا يَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَ
تَعَالَى بِالْقَائِمِ الثَّانِي عَشَرَ مِنَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ ع يَصْلُحُ لَهُ أَمْرُهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ كَمَا
أَصْلَحَ أَمْرَ نَبِيِّهِ مُوسَى ع وَيُخْرِجُهُ مِنَ الْحَيْرَةِ وَالْغَيْبَةِ إِلَى نُورِ الْفَرَجِ
وَ الظُّهُورِ .

'Be more hopeful for that which you do not hope for than that which you do hope for. Indeed, Moosa ibn Imran (a.s) went out to seek fire for his family, but he returned to them as a Messenger and Prophet. So, Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, reformed the matter of His servant and Prophet Moosa (a.s) in one night. And likewise, Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, will do with the Twelfth Imam from the Imams (a.s). He will reform his matter in one night, just as He reformed the matter of His Prophet Moosa (a.s), and bring him out from perplexity and occultation to the light of reappearance' ¹²⁴

Sometimes, based on apparent signs, a person hopes for something to happen or becomes hopeless about something happening. What this noble tradition teaches is that if a believer's hope is in the divine reappearance, they should be more hopeful for the occurrence of matters that they are hopeless about based on ordinary calculations than for things they hope for based on ordinary circumstances. The example given for this general rule is that of Prophet Moosa (a.s). Based on apparent signs and ordinary indications, he did not have any hope of becoming a Kalimullah (one who spoke to Allah) and a divine Prophet, nor had he calculated for such an event.

¹²⁴ Kamaluddin, Chapter 6, H no 13

However, when he went towards the fire to obtain it, he became Allah's chosen Prophet.

Allah, the Exalted, will act similarly with Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) and make him emerge at a time when there is apparently no hope for his uprising. Therefore, the duty of the Shia regarding awaiting the reappearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) is that when they have no hope for the emergence of their Imam based on ordinary human calculations, they should have more hope in the reappearance than when they hope for it based on apparent signs. A believing monotheist also has hope in the divine reappearance, and when Allah wants to bestow His mercy upon His servants, He does not need ordinary human circumstances to eventualise it.

A very thought-provoking and noteworthy expression has also been mentioned at the end of this noble tradition. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) said that Allah will bring out His Proof (the Imam) from perplexity and occultation towards reappearance and emergence. The meaning of the Imam's (a.s) emergence from occultation is clear. But what does it mean for him to emerge from perplexity? What perplexity does he have that he will emerge from with the reformation of the matter of reappearance?

Apparently, there is a rhetorical approach in the wording of the tradition, meaning the transition from two states to two other states respectively. From the state of occultation to emergence, and from the state of perplexity to the light of reappearance. Therefore, the state of perplexity of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) is the opposite of his reappearance and relief. Hence, his perplexity is related to the difficulties and hardships he faces during the occultation. Perhaps it can be said that his

unawareness of the time of his emergence is the reason for the bewilderment and confusion of that beloved one (a.s) during the occultation.

On one hand, he sees the believers, the oppressed, and the downtrodden suffering in this world, and he (a.s) knows that their complete and comprehensive relief will be at his (a.s) own blessed hands. On the other hand, he (a.s) does not know when Allah will grant permission for the reappearance and when he (a.s) will be allowed to establish justice on the earth. (Of course, apart from the partial and limited assistance he provides even during this occultation.)

The intensity of his distress and affliction due to enduring all these calamities and hardships on one side, and constantly supplicating before Allah and seeking hastening of the complete and final relief on the other side, while being unaware of the time when this supplication will be answered, causes Imam Asr (a.s) a perplexity that adds to his anguish and suffering. This same meaning has been mentioned in another expression in the 'Supplication of Abarat', which we quoted previously *ترى تحييري في أمري* ('You see my perplexity in my matter') about which a brief explanation was given.

It must be said that the perplexity under discussion is related to Imam Asr (a.s) himself, and the tradition explicitly states that Allah will bring him out from perplexity to the light of reappearance. However, in traditions, another kind of perplexity has also been mentioned, which is related to the people during the occultation, and this perplexity is completely different from what was mentioned regarding Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) during the occultation period. The perplexity of the people arises from losing the right path and

the straight way, by which the recognition (Maarefat) becomes more difficult during the Imam's (a.s) occultation compared to other times. It has been narrated from Imam Askari (a.s):

أَمَّا إِنَّ لَهُ عَيْبَةً يَحَارُ فِيهَا الْجَاهِلُونَ وَيَهْلِكُ فِيهَا الْمُبْطُونَ وَيَكْذِبُ فِيهَا الْوَقَّاتُونَ

*'Surely, there is an occultation for him (my son) during which the ignorant ones will become perplexed, the falsifiers will perish, and those who specify a time (for his reappearance) will lie.'*¹²⁵

This perplexity is related to the ignorant ones and those who do not know their duty during the occultation. Thus, Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) said:

كَيْفَ أَنْتُمْ إِذَا صِرْتُمْ فِي حَالٍ لَا تَرَوْنَ فِيهَا إِمَامًا هُدًى وَلَا عَلَمًا يُرَى
فَلَا يَنْجُو مِنْ تِلْكَ الْحَيْرَةِ إِلَّا مَنْ دَعَا بِدُعَاءِ الْغَرِيقِ

*'How will you be when you find yourselves in a situation where you do not see a guide Imam or a clear sign? No one will be saved from that perplexity except those who supplicate with the supplication of Ghareeq.'*¹²⁶

The "supplication of the drowning person" (Dua Ghareeq) and its content, as well as the importance of reciting it during the occultation, have been adequately explained elsewhere.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 51, pg 160, H no 7

¹²⁶ Ghaibat Nomani, pg 159

¹²⁷ Interested readers can refer to the book Maarefat Imam Asr, pg 208, 209

Here, the discussion is about the perplexity of those who are unaware of their duty during the occultation of their Imam. If they rectify this deficiency, they will emerge from this perplexity. In the traditions related to the time of occultation, in most instances where "perplexity" is mentioned, it refers to this negative meaning. However, sometimes the perplexity is related to the Imam (a.s) himself, the apparent meaning of which has been explained. And Allah knows best.

Despairing of Faraj at the time of Faraj

The occultation of Imam Asr (a.s) is a great test so that the Shias patiently endure the difficulties of this time and do not despair of the divine relief despite the hardships imposed on them. But will all the believers successfully pass this great divine test?

The answer found in the ahadees of the Ahle Bait (a.s) indicates that unfortunately, many Shias lose their patience during the tribulations in the era of occultation and reach a state of despair and disappointment regarding the reappearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s). In other words, the state of Intezaar-e-Faraj is lost in them. However, at the same time, a small number of believers remain who are fully aware of their duties during the occultation of their Imam and act upon them, and therefore, they do not fall into despair of divine relief.

But the important thing is that the condition - for the relief of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) - is that everyone one must fervently await the Faraj. Awaiting Faraj is a duty that the Shias are obligated more than at any other time during occultation. However, irrespective of what they do vis-à-vis this duty, relief will occur. And as we narrated, when the Imam (a.t.f.s)

reappears, the state of despair and disappointment will have engulfed many believers. In other words, when they are despondent of Faraj, it will occur. It is narrated from Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s):

مَا أَحْسَنَ الصَّبْرَ وَانْتِظَارَ الْفَرَجِ... إِنَّمَا يَجِيءُ الْفَرَجُ عَلَى الْيَأْسِ

*'How good is patience and awaiting Faraj!... It is upon you to be patient. Indeed, relief comes after despair.'*¹²⁸

In another hadees, Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) referred to the difficult test of occultation in which many fail:

إِنَّ هَذَا الْأَمْرَ لَا يَأْتِيكُمْ إِلَّا بَعْدَ إِيَّاسٍ، وَلَا وَاللَّهِ، حَتَّى تُمَيِّزُوا؛ وَلَا وَاللَّهِ، حَتَّى تُمَحِّصُوا

*'Surely this matter (relief of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s)) will not come to you except after despair. No, by Allah, until you are separated (good from bad). No, by Allah, until you are purified.'*¹²⁹

Many believers may consider themselves very good and pure, but during severe tests, it becomes clear who can maintain their patience and not become hopeless.

There is another hadees from Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) in which he said,

لَا وَاللَّهِ لَا يَكُونُ مَا تَمُدُّونَ إِلَيْهِ أَعْيُنَكُمْ حَتَّى تُغْرَبُوا لَا وَاللَّهِ لَا يَكُونُ مَا تَمُدُّونَ إِلَيْهِ أَعْيُنَكُمْ حَتَّى تُمَحِّصُوا لَا وَاللَّهِ لَا يَكُونُ مَا

¹²⁸ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 52, pg 110, H no 17

¹²⁹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 52, pg 111, H no 20

تَمْدُّونَ إِلَيْهِ أَعْيُنَكُمْ حَتَّى تُمَيِّزُوا لَا وَاللَّهِ مَا يَكُونُ مَا تَمْدُّونَ إِلَيْهِ
أَعْيُنَكُمْ إِلَّا بَعْدَ إِيَّاسٍ

*'No, by Allah! That which you are looking forward to will not happen until you are sifted. No, by Allah! That which you are looking forward to will not occur until you are separated. No, by Allah, that which you are looking forward to will not occur except after despair.'*¹³⁰

Being “sifted” (غربال) means being purified, just as when the grain is sifted, the small particles fall out and the larger grains remain. During the occultation era, those with a weak faith would fall through the sieve, while those with a firmer faith would remain. And when despair of divine relief casts its shadow over many believers, that is the time of the descent of relief.

Thus, it can be said that before the reappearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), not only are there no grounds or conditions that increase the hope for the occurrence of relief, but rather the opposite - an atmosphere of despair and disappointment - envelops many believers. And it is precisely in these conditions that the reappearance will occur. Therefore, at the height of despair and disappointment, awaiting relief should be greater than at any other time, because according to these narrations, relief will come when the circumstances and conditions of ordinary people do not give hope for the realization of what will be achieved with the reappearance of Imam Asr (a.s).

¹³⁰ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 52, pg 112, H no 23

So, a true believer does not despair of Faraj, and although when they see the conditions and circumstances, they find them despairing and disappointing, it is precisely at this time that they must have the greatest hope in the realization of divine relief. This is, in fact, an explanation of the profound saying of Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s): *كُنْ لِمَا لَا تَرْجُو أَرْجَى مِنْكَ لِمَا تَرْجُو* 'Be more hopeful for what you don't hope than for what you hope'¹³¹

An important lesson derived from these narrations is that during the difficulties and hardships of the occultation era, one must never despair of the relief of Imam Asr (a.s). Rather, the more severe the difficulties become, and harsher the conditions and the more despair envelops people, the more intense the awaiting for Faraj should be.

Of course, it should not be forgotten that the state of despair in a believer is one of the greatest of the major sins, and it should never be accepted under any circumstances. The fact that the ahadees of the Ahle Bait (a.s) have considered the time of reappearance to be concurrent with the predominance of despair among people does not indicate its desirability. A similar meaning has been mentioned regarding the predominance of oppression and tyranny at the time of the Imam's (a.s) reappearance, which is also never praiseworthy or desirable, and a believer should not be satisfied with it. For this reason, despite the predominance of oppression, true believers remain steadfast in their faith and never become afflicted with weakness in belief and practice. It is these very steadfast ones in faith who always preserve

¹³¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 71, pg 134, H no 9

their state of Intezaar and do not become afflicted with despair. However, their number is minuscule compared to the rest of the believers.

The practical impact of these ahadees for believers is that if they ever see the earth filled with oppression and tyranny, and find the shadow of despair and disappointment cast over the people, they themselves should not become despondent, and in those conditions, await the Faraj of their Master more than at any other time. The crux of the matter is that the reappearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) is an instance of "the relief of Allah" (فرج الله) and a divine act, and if the general condition of humanity is disappointing, one should not despair of divine relief.

Reappearance will be sudden

According to what has been narrated from the Immaculate Imams (a.s), the reappearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) will occur unexpectedly and without prior preparation. The Sahebuz Zamana himself (a.t.f.s) has stated in his blessed tawqee' to Shaikh Mufid:

فَإِنَّ أَمْرَنَا يَبْعَثُهُ فَجْأَةً

*'Indeed, our matter (reappearance) will occur unexpectedly.'*¹³²

In another hadees, Imam Ali ibn Moosa Raza (a.s) has narrated that when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) was asked when the uprising one from his descendants would reappear, he (s.a.w.a) replied:

¹³² Ehtejaj Tabarsi, vol 2, pg 324

مَثَلُهُ مَثَلُ السَّاعَةِ لَا يُجَلِّيهَا لِوَقْتِهَا إِلَّا هُوَ... لَا تَأْتِيكُمْ إِلَّا بَغْتَةً

*'His example is like the Hour (Qiyamat), none but He (Allah) will manifest it at its time... It will not come to you but unexpectedly'*¹³³

The terms 'unexpectedly' (فَجْأَةً) and 'suddenly' (بَغْتَةً) indicate that there will be no visible preparation or prelude before the reappearance. This matter will come all at once, taking the world by surprise when the conditions appear furthest from it occurring. So, the reappearance will not be preceded by any apparent mustering of forces, military preparations or prior armed uprising against the rulers. Rather, in a twinkling, the Imam (a.t.f.s) will reappear and the transformation of the global system to his just divine government will commence. The terms 'unexpectedly' (فَجْأَةً) and 'suddenly' (بَغْتَةً) in these two noble ahadees indicate one meaning, which is that the reappearance of the Imam (a.t.f.s) will occur at a time when, from an apparent perspective and based on observable circumstances, its occurrence is not expected and people will not have the preparedness or anticipation for it. 'Unexpected' and 'sudden' are the opposite of 'gradual'. Something that happens gradually first has its grounds and prerequisites prepared, then the conditions for its occurrence are gradually readied, and individuals slowly develop the preparedness for its actualization. However, the reappearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) is not like this - he will reappear without any preamble or prior preparation. Except for a very small number of individuals who await his reappearance, the condition of most

¹³³ Kamaluddin, Chapter 35, H no 6

people and the general circumstances are not such that its impending occurrence can be foreseen or forecasted. This is the meaning of the reappearance of Imam Asr (a.s) being 'sudden' and 'unexpected'.

Now that this is the case, if most people are heedless and despondent of divine relief, will the true believer lose his focus on Intezaar of Faraj? Are we ever permitted, under any circumstances, to be hopeless of the reappearance of our unseen Imam? This is another example of that general principle - "Be more hopeful for what you don't have hope than for what you have hope". It implies that there is much hope in despair.

Another point that is understood from the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) being sudden is that we cannot believe in something called a 'minor reappearance' (zuhoor-e-sughra), as has recently appeared in some writings. They say, 'The necessary analogy of the noble existence of Hazrat Baqiyatullah (may our souls be sacrificed for him) to the sun, as mentioned in numerous narrations, is that just as the sun's light remains for an hour or two after sunset and does not create immediate darkness, preventing the problems that would arise from abrupt darkness. At sunrise too, it does not become bright all at once, but rather its light appears gradually over an hour or two, preventing the harms that would arise from sudden brightness. Just as, Hazrat Baqiyatullah (a.t.f.s), when he became hidden from the people had a 'minor occultation', he must also have a 'minor reappearance', which is our claim.'¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Aaya Zuhoor Nazdeeq Ast, pg 135, 136

In these statements, there is no evidence whatsoever for the existence of a 'minor reappearance'. All that exists are two analogies and two unsupported comparisons:

'One is that since the Imam (a.t.f.s) has been likened to the sun, we must then attribute to him all the same characteristics that the sun has in its rising and setting. This statement has no logic or reasoning behind it, because in any analogy, the speaker intends only one or two aspects of similarity, and the entire characteristics of the compared object are never carried over to the object it is compared to. If the aspect(s) of similarity have been explicitly stated, then it becomes clear, and if the point of comparison is not specified, then usually the prominent and salient qualities of the compared object are understood as the basis for comparison.

For example, if a courageous person is compared to a lion, the intention of the one making the analogy is certainly not to attribute all characteristics of a lion - including its bestiality, predatory nature, etc. Rather, the point of similarity is the prominent quality of courage that exists saliently in the predatory lion. If someone wants to extend another characteristic of the compared object that has not been specified, they must provide clear evidence and rationale.

Now in the analogy of the Imam (a.s) with the sun, and the hidden Imam with the sun behind clouds, the aspects of similarity that are stated in the narrations are not the subject of discussion. However, besides what is explicitly stated, we can only attribute the salient quality of the sun - which is the source of light, heat and life - to the noble existence of the Imam (a.s). We do not have the right, based merely on personal taste and inclination, to prove other characteristics

of the sun for that holy personality (a.t.f.s) without providing definitive evidence and context,

The second analogy, made in the context of the first one, is that since the occultation of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) had two stages of minor and major occultation, therefore his reappearance must also be of two stages. This analogy has also been made using the first one as a basis. Since they saw that the sunrise, like the sunset, is gradual, and the Imam's occultation happened to be in two stages, they have concluded that the Imam's reappearance must also be similarly staged. Such an analogy is unsupported, because even if the Imam's occultation was divided into two stages, why is it necessary that his reappearance must also be divided? Does it require his reappearance to take place in two stages?!

Therefore, the basis of this claim –believing in ‘minor reappearance’ (zuhur sughra) - is without evidence, and this very lack of evidence is sufficient to refute it. If we want to attribute a belief to the religion, we must present valid proof from the Book, the Sunnah, or the innate intellect; otherwise, we have included something in the religion that has no evidence. This is not permissible, even if it is done with the good intention of creating hope and anticipation of deliverance among the people.

The problem with this theory is not only its lack of evidence, but also the existing proofs convey the opposite meaning, and those proofs have the greatest impact in creating hope and a state of anticipation for deliverance among the people. With their existence, there is no need to use incorrect information in this regard.

The proofs that refute this theory are the hadiths that convey the sudden and unexpected nature of the reappearance. If these ahadees have a definite and certain meaning, it is the sudden advent of the Imam (a.s). To complete and confirm this discussion, we refer to another hadees on this subject. Imam Baqir (a.s) said:

يُظْهِرُ كَالشَّهَابِ الثَّقِيبِ فِي اللَّيْلَةِ الظُّلْمَاءِ

*'He (Imam Asr (a.s)) will emerge like a piercing meteor in the dark night.'*¹³⁵

In Arabic, "saqib" (ثاقب) means perforating and piercing. "Shihab Saqib" refers to a celestial rock that suddenly pierces the darkness of the night. Its prominent and distinctive feature is that in absolute darkness, where there is no light, it suddenly radiates light. Thus, the reappearance of Imam Asr (a.s), which is likened to a piercing meteor, will be in the same manner. He will emerge in utter darkness and appear suddenly and abruptly. This simile refutes theories such as the "minor reappearance."

If someone wants to serve others by creating a sense of yearning for deliverance, instead of proposing baseless theories, it is better to explain and elucidate what the Ahlul Bait (a.s) have said for this purpose. There is no need to say something that contradicts the sound religious principles. Additionally, since the time of the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) is subject to change, as mentioned in the previous chapter, even if something called a "minor reappearance" were to occur, there would be no necessity for the complete reappearance to happen afterwards. The very

¹³⁵ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 24, pg 78

author who proposed the theory of the "minor reappearance" has acknowledged this at the end of his words:

'Perhaps this sudden manifestation and these signs and this light that have emerged (God forbid) will result in complete darkness again. For all of these are under the Divine Will, and we know that Allah's hand is open, and He does whatever He wills, and no one can object or question Him.'¹³⁶

Now that this is the case, what benefit, or positive effect could propose this baseless theory have? The manifestations of the sacred light of the Sahebuz Zamana (a.t.f.s) have existed during the major occultation, sometimes less and sometimes more. The frequency of these cannot be considered a definite sign or prelude to the reappearance of the Imam. At the same time, we do not have accurate information about the situation of the past Shias in their connection with Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s). Hence, we cannot claim that the manifestations of the Imam in our time have increased for the Shias. Some evidence suggests that in certain previous times, the connection between the believers and Hazrat Wali Asr (a.t.f.s) was much stronger.

In this regard, we relate an instructive incident through a reliable source, which can be beneficial for those awaiting the Faraj of the Imam in several ways. This incident pertains to the late Haj Shaikh Mahmoud Yaseri, who was among the pious scholars in Tehran and used to lead congregational prayers at the Safina Mosque during his lifetime. It is narrated from him that he said:

¹³⁶ Aaya Zuhoor Nazdeeq Ast, pg 142

'One day, I saw a paper on which a type of supplicatory ritual and its etiquettes were written and attributed to Shaikh Bahai (ra) stating, 'Whoever performs this ritual within ten days, starting on Wednesday and concluding on the second Friday if their request is not fulfilled they may curse me.'

Therefore, due to my need, I performed the ritual but it did not bear any fruit, nor did I see any effect. Then I addressed Shaikh Bahai (r.a), without uttering a word and I merely said in my heart, 'O Shaikh, you are a great person. May my tongue be paralyzed from disrespecting your noble self. But why would something be written that, if it falls into the hands of worthless individuals, they would insult you?!' This was in my heart, but I never expressed it to anyone.

My son had a friendship with the Marhoom Janani. Aqa Janani Hamdani resided in Tehran and possessed esoteric knowledge like controlling the souls, and so on. One day he (my son) came home and said, 'Shaikh Baha'i has a message for you and has summoned you. Get ready so he can speak to you.' When I heard this from my son, I began trembling and was dumbfounded. Then my son added, 'Janani says he has not been successful in summoning the Shaikh, let alone the Shaikh speaking to him. Now he is happy that since you are going to his house, an opportunity will arise for him from your presence to be able to contact Shaikh Baha'i and benefit from it.'

Then my son mentioned something from Janani about Ayatullah Haji Aqa Hujjat Kooh Kamari: 'Today I summoned the souls, and they said: We are not prepared for a meeting today. We have been assigned to welcome the pure soul of

Aqa Hujjat.' Janani asked, 'Which Hujjat?' They said, 'That gentleman who is honoured to meet the Hazrat Wali Asr, Baqiyatullah (may our souls be sacrificed for him), once a week.'

Aqa Yaseri said, 'Since Aqa Hujjat had been bedridden for some time, upon hearing this, I became saddened and distressed. A short while later, news came from Qum that Grand Ayatullah Hujjat had passed away. Additionally, Radio Tehran interrupted its broadcast and aired this news as breaking news.

Janani insisted that I go to his house sooner so that Janani could also benefit, so my son was assigned to follow up with me daily, and I kept postponing. Finally, one day I went to his house. He prepared the incense burner and began reciting the necessary prayers and invocations according to his routine. What I observed was that his method of deriving benefit was through a mirror, and whoever had any matter had to write it down and hold it in their hand, and the answer would be written on the mirror.

When he intended to summon Shaikh Baha'i, he told me, 'Write down any questions you have and conceal them in your palm.' He placed several pens, paper, and ink in front of me and said, 'Whatever I read from the mirror, immediately record it, for I cannot record everything and commit it to memory.'

One of the souls appeared. Janani asked, 'Who are you?' He said, 'Sayed Mohammed Tabatabai.' Janani said, 'I did not summon you.' He said, 'I have come on behalf of Shaikh Baha'i to inform you that he will be present in a minute.' Janani turned the mirror and breathed on it. We smoked and then got ready.

The revered Shaikh arrived and Janani would read what was written on the mirror. He said: "The Shaikh conveys his greetings to you." Yaseri said: "And upon him be peace and the mercy and blessings of Allah." Then he said: "He inquires about your well-being." I said: "If your favour encompasses me, I will be delighted." He said: "If no favour was to encompass you, I would not have endeavoured to correct that ritual." He continued: "There has been a distortion in its narration. (It is 'on Sunday') not 'on Friday.' You are aware that each day has its effects and influence. Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday - and Friday is Dua Nudbah."

Aga Yaseri said, "I was surprised on hearing about the arrival of Marhoom Hujjat." The late Shaikh Bahai, being aware of my heart, said: "O Shaikh! You were not present in our time. In that era, many people attained the honour of meeting the Master, (may our souls be sacrificed for him). The people of this time are occupied with sins. Tell the people to abandon sin, or else a calamity will descend!" Then, he answered one by one the questions I had written down until he bid farewell, and I (Janani) did not derive benefit.

Shaikh Bahai's ritual: Starting from Friday, for ten days until the end, which is Sunday, recite one hundred times daily:

'In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.
O Helper of those who seek help! Fulfil my need, O my Lord.
O Responder to those who cry out! O Turner of hearts and insights, O Guide of the perplexed, respond to me, by the great glory of Allah and His immense power. May Allah bless Mohammed and his household, and there is no power or strength except with Allah, the Highest, the Great.'¹³⁷

¹³⁷ Ghanjinah-e-Danishmandan, vol 4, pg 594 - 597

Our proof and to the narration of this incident is the statement of the late Shaikh Bahai to Aqa Yaseri at the end.

What about the definite signs of reappearance?

Regarding the suddenness of the reappearance, an objection may arise: Since the definite signs of the reappearance of the Imam (a.t.f.s) have been mentioned, how can we believe in its abruptness? If those signs surely occur, then the reappearance cannot be sudden, rather its indications must appear first, and until those indications do not occur, there cannot be any hope for the reappearance. If even the definite signs become apparent, they will be a prelude to the reappearance, and it cannot be considered a sudden matter then. The revered author of the valuable book Mikyalul Makarim has raised this objection and provided two answers to it. We shall respond to this objection, inspired by his statements and using the discussion of the possibility of bad'a (alteration of divine will) occurring in the signs of reappearance. In this regard, two possibilities can be given:

The first possibility: Perhaps in the occurrence of these signs, bad'a takes place, and calling them definite does not contradict the occurrence of bad'a regarding them. We have discussed this topic in the previous chapter.

The second possibility: Even without accepting bad'a regarding those signs, we can accept the suddenness of the Imam's reappearance (a.t.f.s). The solution to this problem is to consider the Imam's sudden reappearance along with the occurrence of its signs. We cannot reject this possibility, even if we accept bad'a regarding the signs of reappearance. Because when something is subject to bad'a, it cannot be said

that it will not occur. The possibility of bad'a is different from its actual occurrence.

In the discussion of the signs of reappearance, we proved the possibility of bad'a regarding them, not the necessity of its occurrence. Therefore, bad'a may not occur in some signs, whether definite or non-definite, yet the Imam's reappearance still be abrupt and sudden. The key point is that we should consider the signs of reappearance as very close, or rather concurrent with the reappearance itself. In this case, we can accept the occurrence of some signs of reappearance while not considering the principle of reappearance as gradual.

It may be said that in the narrations, a time has been specified for some signs of reappearance, which is incompatible with their occurrence being close or concurrent with the reappearance itself. For example, regarding the emergence of Sufyani, the period mentioned in some narrations is fifteen months, and this period is not compatible with its closeness and is concurrent with the actual reappearance.

This question can be answered as follows: 'Based on the possibility mentioned by the late Allamah Majlisi in the previous chapter, perhaps bad'a does not occur in the actual emergence of Sufyani, but it occurs in the duration of his emergence. And the fact that it is stated in the hadith that the possibility of bad'a exists even in a definite matter, maybe it is a reference to bad'a occurring in the characteristics of a sign like the emergence of Sufyani.'

In any case, if the occurrence of a sign from the signs is very close to the actual reappearance, it does not harm its suddenness. For example, regarding the killing of "Nafs Zakia,"

which is considered one of the definite signs of reappearance,¹³⁸ it is narrated from Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s):

لَيْسَ بَيْنَ قِيَامِ قَائِمِ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَبَيْنَ قَتْلِ النَّفْسِ الزَّكِيَّةِ إِلَّا خُمْسَ
عَشْرَةَ لَيْلَةً

*'There is no gap between the uprising of the Qaim of the Progeny of Mohammed (a.s and his progeny) and the killing of Nafs Zakia except fifteen nights.'*¹³⁹

This gap does not affect the suddenness of the reappearance. If this happens, these two events will be considered concurrent by convention. Moreover, it is also possible that bad'a occurs about these fifteen nights concerning the killing of 'Nafs Zakia.'

The same applies to the نداء (call) or صيحة (scream), which is also counted among the definite signs,¹⁴⁰ but bad'a may occur regarding the time of its occurrence. For example, it is stated that the 'Nida' will occur on the 23rd night of Ramazan, and the uprising of the Imam will be on the Day of Ashura, with a gap of more than three months between them. It is possible that bad'a does not occur in the original Nida and heavenly call, but bad'a occurs in the period between it and the reappearance.

In any case, all these possibilities are plausible, and therefore, the occurrence of all the signs, along with some of them, can

¹³⁸ Isbatul Hudah, vol 7, pg 422, H no 99, from Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s), 'And the 'call' (Nida) is from the certain signs... And the killing of Nafs Zakiyah is from the certain signs

¹³⁹ Kamaluddin, Chapter 57, H no 2

¹⁴⁰ Kamaluddin, Chapter 57, H no 2

be reconciled with the suddenness of the reappearance. What should be considered as an established and definite principle in this discussion is that the expectation of the reappearance of the Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) should not cease in a believer. Every year, every month, every week, every day, and even every hour and every moment he must fervently expect and anticipate the advent of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s). This is a principle that should not be violated in any way.

The slightest despair is unacceptable.

A very important consequence of believing in the possibility of change (bad'a) regarding the time of reappearance (Zuhoor) and its suddenness is that the reappearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) is not contingent upon the fulfilment of a prerequisite. Therefore, there should be no despair about the reappearance at any time, no matter how short. Rather, the state of awaiting the reappearance (Intezaar) should always exist in a believer at every moment. This meaning has been mentioned in traditions with different expressions. Imam Hadi (a.s) has said:

إِذَا رُفِعَ عَنكُمْ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَظْهُرِكُمْ فَتَوَقَّعُوا الْفَرَاجَ مِنْ تَحْتِ أَقْدَامِكُمْ

*When your emblem (Imam) is taken away from among you, then expect the relief (Faraj) from under your feet.*¹⁴¹

The term "emblem" (عَلَمٌ) means "banner" and the Imam (a.s) is called the "علم" because he is the sign of faith, monotheism, piety, etc. And the path of guidance is known only through him. The taking away of this sign from among the people could mean the occultation of the Imam (a.s) from the sight of

¹⁴¹ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Hujjah, Chapter of Ghaibat, H no 24

people. However, even during occultation, the issues of the Imam (a.s) being a sign are not negated, only a part of it is taken away. Awaiting the relief (Faraj) from under the feet, according to the explanation of the late Allamah Majlisi, maybe a metaphor for the sudden reappearance. Because when it is said "from under your feet," it means to expect the relief (Faraj) right where you are standing. Be ready for the reappearance right wherever you are without taking a step. Therefore, this noble tradition indicates the obligation of awaiting the reappearance at all times and in all places.

Another tradition is from Imam Baqir (a.s), the first part of which was explained in the previous chapter. The continuation is as follows:

إِذَا اشْتَدَّتِ الْحَاجَةُ وَالْفَاقَةُ وَأَنْكَرَ النَّاسُ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا فَعِنْدَ ذَلِكَ
تَوَقَّعُوا هَذَا الْأَمْرَ صَبَاحًا أَوْ مَسَاءً

'When poverty and need intensify, and people deny one another, then at that time, expect this matter (the reappearance) morning and evening.'

Expecting morning and evening means that if the Imam (a.s) does not reappear in one night, one should await his reappearance the following day. And if he does not reappear during the day, the possibility of his reappearance exists that very night. It is not such that if the reappearance does not occur one night, one can become hopeless until the next night. And if it does not occur during the day, one cannot say that there is no possibility of reappearance that night, before the next day.

The narrator says: "We understood what poverty and need mean. But what does it mean when people deny one another?" The Imam (a.s) said,

يَأْتِي الرَّجُلُ أَخَاهُ فِي حَاجَةٍ فَيَلْقَاهُ بِغَيْرِ الْوَجْهِ الَّذِي كَانَ يَلْقَاهُ فِيهِ وَ
يُكَلِّمُهُ بِغَيْرِ الْكَلَامِ الَّذِي كَانَ يُكَلِّمُهُ.

*'A man approaches his brother (in faith) for a need, but he (the brother) does not receive him with the same countenance as before, and he does not speak to him in the same way as he used to.'*¹⁴²

This means that the relationships between believers become so cold that when one of them has a requirement from the other, the other does not receive him well, unlike how he used to receive him before when there was no wish or need. This shows that material matters have more value than the religious and faithful relationship. In such conditions, one should await the reappearance morning and evening. The expression "morning and evening" is similar to "night and day," conveying the continuity of awaiting the reappearance.

In summary, despair from the Divine relief and the reappearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) is one of the greatest major sins, which is not acceptable from a believer, neither permanently and generally, nor temporarily and partially, even for an hour or a moment. Additionally, the traditions that have deemed the specification of a time for the reappearance as unlawful also indicate this purpose. As the late author of Mikyal has stated, if someone denies the reappearance of the

¹⁴² Behaarul Anwaar, vol 52, pg 185, H no 9

Imam (a.s), for example, saying that the reappearance will not occur in the next few years or months, he has effectively specified a time for it. And the consequence of being hopeless about the reappearance during a particular time is the same as this.

SECTION 4

BLESSINGS OF INTEZAAR

Introduction

We have explained the concept of Intezaar and its levels. In the previous section, we also explained the characteristic of it being an ongoing state of the heart. Now, in the last part of the book, we must speak about the effects and blessings of Intezaar for the muntazir. We will discuss the benefits and rewards of this great and matchless worship.

These effects can be summarized in a comprehensive word, and that word is "Faraj" (relief). This expression is reported in a noble hadees, which is considered among the "brief knowledge" (جَمْعِي جَمْلِي)¹⁴³ of the Ahlul Bait (a.s), and is narrated from Imam Zainul Abdeen (a.s):

أَنْتَظَرُ الْفَرَجَ مِنْ أَعْظَمِ الْفَرَجِ

*'Awaiting for Faraj is one of the greatest forms of Faraj.'*¹⁴⁴

The same statement has also been narrated by Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s):

مَنْ عَرَفَ هَذَا الْأَمْرَ، فَقَدْ فَرَّجَ عَنْهُ لِأَنْتِظَارِهِ

*'Whoever knows this matter (i.e., Imamate and its appearance), has already found relief through his Intezaar.'*¹⁴⁵

The word "Amr" (matter/issue) in many traditions of the Ahlul Bait (a.s) refers to Imamate and its appearance, which will find its complete manifestation with the Faraj of Imam Asr (a.s).

¹⁴³ جَمْعِي means "condensed", and جَمْلِي means "summarized". And جَمْعِي جَمْلِي means highly condensed and summarized, which despite its conciseness, encompasses the entire subject matter.

¹⁴⁴ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 52, pg 122, H no 4

¹⁴⁵ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Hujjah, Chapter of the one who recognizes his Imam, H no 3

The first hadees uses the expression "waiting for the Faraj," and the second hadees uses the expression "waiting for the matter," and both refer to the same.

In any case, according to the statements of our leaders, apart from the Faraj of Imam Asr (a.s), which is the ultimate Faraj for the friends of Allah, the Prophets, and the believers, the very act of Intezaar is a Faraj for the muntazir. It can be said that after the Faraj of Imam Asr (a.s), which is the greatest Faraj for all the believers, the highest Faraj for the muntazir is this very act of Intezaar.

This expression is very profound and contains very important points that, by the grace of Allah, should be made clear to man so that he may recognize the path of his own Faraj during the time of occultation, before the reappearance (Zuhur).

In one sentence, it can be said that before the reappearance of Imam (a.s), the thing that saves the believer from all the dangers, anxieties, misguidances, and slips is this very act of Intezaar. And in this section, we intend to explain the various aspects of this Faraj to the extent of our ability.

We will pursue this topic in two parts.

PART I

The effects and blessings of Intezaar during the time of occultation

To better understand the effects and necessities of Intezaar in the waiting person, the most appropriate way is to draw on what we have said in the first part about the definition of Intezaar through its necessities. There, we identified the four most important factors that create Intezaar, the second of which is very influential in the present discussion.

The second factor was that the closer we believe the occurrence of what we are awaiting, the more intense our Intezaar becomes. Therefore, the best way to recognize the effects and blessings of Intezaar is to assume that we have become certain that the Faraj of Imam Asr (a.s) has become very near, and then examine what necessities and effects this state of Intezaar causes in this short interval until the Faraj of Imam (a.s). Then, since we have been highly recommended to consider the Faraj of Imam (a.s) to be near, we can extend the effects and necessities of this hypothetical state to all periods.

The effects of considering reappearance (Zahur) to be near

First, let us assume that the time of the appearance of Imam (a.s) is very near, to see the effects this belief will have on the one who is waiting for the appearance. If we are told that your Imam Asr (a.s) will certainly appear by tomorrow, and we are certain of the truthfulness of this news, how will our life be on that one day? Everyone can answer this question by referring to their conscience.

At the first level, it can be said, 'Firstly, it can be said that on this one day, more than anything else and anyone else, the remembrance of Imam Asr (a.s) and his appearance will fill our hearts, and we will be so preoccupied with thinking about him that no other thought will occupy us. Additionally, on this one day, we will certainly not do anything that displeases Allah and Imam Asr (a.s). And if any mistake or sin has been committed by us during this interval, we will devote our utmost effort to repentance and making amends.

If there is any right of others remaining upon us, or if we have committed any injustice against someone, we will quickly take steps to seek forgiveness. And if we had made a covenant and promise with our Imam, but were lax in fulfilling it, in this one day we will make our utmost effort to act upon it.

Our worship and devotions will also gain more spirituality and sincerity during this interval. Our prayers on this one day will be different from the past and will be with a greater presence of heart. During this short period, it is impossible that we would spend more than the necessary amount of our life on worldly affairs. Not only will the idea of sinning not cross our minds, but it will seem inappropriate to us to engage even in permissible matters on this one day.

Our entire effort will be to make the maximum use of this short period to acquire the pleasure of Allah and to gain the noble attention of Imam (a.s). Our highest concern is that when His Highness comes, he may not ignore us, or God forbid, turn away from us. To prevent such a situation, we try to prepare ourselves in a way that we are worthy of welcoming that great personality.

Our highest desire is to be met with the smile of his satisfaction upon meeting him, and to hear him say, 'Well done! May Allah bless you! You have diligently fulfilled your duties in my absence. I am grateful to you.'

In addition to all this, we eagerly await to assist him (a.s) in accomplishing his sacred goals. We say to ourselves: "What we have longed for all our lives and have lived with the hope of reunion, we will witness with our own eyes in a day, and how sweet are those moments."

We ensure, to ourselves, that we have prepared in advance to assist him, and we create all the conditions and circumstances within ourselves to join him and be among his best supporters. We thank Allah that we are alive and well, and Allah willing, we will sacrifice our wealth, honour, life, and our very existence for the arrival of our beloved, who is dearer to us than our soul.

Then we turn to other believers and prepare them like ourselves for the reception and companionship of their Imam (a.s). If we see that some of them do not show any eagerness and interest in this matter, out of compassion and kindness, we try to make them share our beliefs, as we cannot bear the thought that they may miss such a golden and exceptional opportunity. We do not want that tomorrow when the sun of Imam (a.s) rises, some believers may hide in dark and narrow corners and, knowingly or unknowingly, be deprived of the warmth and light of this sun.

In short, we try to the best of our ability to spread the fervour of anticipation that Allah has graciously bestowed upon us to other believers as well. In the hope that the fire of longing that, by the grace of Allah and the attention of Imam (a.s), has

engulfed our existence may also envelop the heedless ones and that we may all rush together to welcome and assist the beloved of Fatemah (s.a). We gather all the lovers and admirers of that being of existence and tell them, ‘Let us thank Allah hundreds of thousands of times that the time for reciting these prayers will be over in one more day.’

هَلْ يَتَّصِلُ يَوْمَنَا مِنْكَ بِغَدِهِ فَنَحْظِي؟ مَتَى نَرِدُ مَنَا هِلَكَ الرِّوْيَةَ
 فَتَرَوِي؟ مَتَى نَنْتَفِعُ مِنْ عَذْبِ مَائِكَ فَقَدْ طَالَ الصَّدي؟ مَتَى
 نُغَادِيكَ وَنُرَاوِحُكَ فَتَقَرَّرَ عَيْونُنَا؟ مَتَى تَرَانَا وَنَرَاكَ وَقَدْ نَشَرْتَ
 لِيَوَاءِ النَّصْرِ تُرِي؟ أَتَرَانَا نَحْفُ بِكَ وَأَنْتِ تَوُمُّرُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ وَقَدْ مَلَأْتَ الْأَرْضَ
 عَدْلًا؟

‘Will our day ever be joined to its tomorrow by you so that we may attain happiness? When will we come to your fresh springs to quench our thirst? When will we benefit from your sweet water, for the thirst has been prolonged? When will we come to you morning and evening so that our eyes may be delighted? When will you see us and we see you while you have unfurled the banner of victory to show us? Will you see us surrounding you while you lead the multitudes, having filled the earth with justice?’¹⁴⁶

And the era of *نَحْنُ نَقُولُ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ* (And we shall say, “All Praise to Allah, the Lord of the worlds”) will arrive. Such a praise of Allah will not be in our present lives. This worship and laudation will eventualize some day in the future.

¹⁴⁶ Dua Nudbah

All that has been described assumes that we are certain of the appearance of Imam (a.s) within the next twenty-four hours. But if this time interval becomes longer, the more it is prolonged, the less the previous fervour will be, and it will tend towards lethargy and inaction.

For example, if instead of one day we become certain that he will reappear in another week, in this assumption almost all the states that we mentioned will be for the human, but with a little less excitement and fervour. Our eagerness will be a little less intense, and this difference in the intensity and weakness of anticipation will be the source of differences in our behaviour in these two assumptions. For example, on that one day, we could say that we would not sleep, but that is not the case in this one week. Our previous anguish and excitement will also diminish in this new assumption. On that one day, we certainly wouldn't spend our lives in vain and useless things. But in this one week, we may waste some moments or hours in idleness. In general, the precision and efforts that we put forth in the first assumption to make a better and more complete use of the remaining opportunity will not be equal in intensity in the next assumption.

Now, if one week turns into one month, and, we become certain that he will not reappear before another month, in that case, our excitement and eagerness in anticipation will become less and weaker. Consequently, everything that was mentioned will become laxer and more faded. In this assumption, the probability that we will waste more of our precious life and lose the opportunity in vain is much greater than the previous assumption. If on that one day and one week we only engaged in worldly and material affairs to the extent

of necessity, in this one month it does not matter so much to us that we lose some of the remaining opportunity until the appearance of our Master. If in that one week, we were hastening to compensate for the rights of others that were upon us, in this one month we are not in much of a hurry and postpone today's work until tomorrow and the day after. If our prayers and other acts of worship had an extraordinary state and clarity in that one week, in this one month they do not have that presence of heart, and ...

In general, the more we perceive the time to reappearance to be greater, these effects and signs will gradually fade, and for this reason, if this distance goes from one month to one year, the effects will usually be less. Certainly, the heedlessness of the believers in this state will be greater, and it may be that hours, days, or even weeks will pass for some without remembering Imam (a.s) without feeling remorseful or penitent. They will not feel a sense of loss or harm from this. That fervour, zeal, and excitement of the previous assumptions will be much weaker in this assumption, and a muntazir will become more lax in fulfilling his duties.

Therefore, if we want to experience the effects and necessities of anticipating the relief (Faraj), we must see ourselves in those hypothetical conditions so that their necessities become more tangible for us, and we find their practical effects within ourselves. The most effective factor in creating this state is the belief in the truth that the matter of the relief (Faraj) of Imam Asr (a.s) has the possibility of occurrence every morning and evening, or rather in every moment and hour, and we have proven this point by referring to some evidence in the previous chapter. The deeper a person's faith in this truth, the more the mentioned effects will

naturally manifest. So the practical conclusion of the present discussion is that to reach those desired necessities, we must proceed through creating the cause of it, which is the aforementioned belief.

We also, in this writing, address the effects and blessings of Intezaar during the occultation of Imam (a.s). We can categorize these effects into four stages.

Necessities of Intezaar

First stage

Living with the remembrance of Imam (a.s) and according to his pleasure

If we once again assume the imminent reappearance of Imam (a.s) within a day for ourselves, we will confirm that the first and most effective necessity of that is the prominence of the remembrance of Imam (a.s) and not being heedless of him in any hour or minute of our life. The true muntazir of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) cannot be heedless of his remembrance while awaiting his advent. This is not something that is artificially created in the believer, but rather his knowledge, love and anticipation bring him naturally to this state. It is good to express this characteristic in the words of a true muntazir of the reappearance - the late Sayyed Mohammed Taqi Musawi Isfahani (r.a):

'As for the complete heartfelt Intezaar, it is achieved when the believing person is not empty and free from the remembrance of his Imam and the anticipation of his blessed advent in any state, time, or place. Rather, even when he attends gatherings and assemblies and converses with the people of the world, his heart is with Imam (a.s), awaiting him, imagining him, and longing for union with him. Like a person whose has only one child, and that one is adorned with all perfections, and his existence has all kinds of benefits and advantages for this person, and he has gone on a journey, and this father does not know his whereabouts - does he go out of his imagination for an hour? Does he neglect to search for him? Never! Rather,

night and day, in fact at all hours and states, movements and stillness, his beloved is represented before his eyes, as the poet has said,

'O you who are absent from my two eyes, yet so present in my heart,

The sound of your speech reaches me when you open your lips...'

And when the heartfelt Intezaar reaches this degree of perfection, its outward effects also reach the degree of perfection.' ¹⁴⁷

Living with the remembrance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) is highly constructive from an educational aspect, and many blessings and benefits reach the muntazir through this path. The remembrance of Imam (a.s) and constant attention to him causes a person to act according to his (a.s) wishes in all aspects of his life and to regulate his activities and leisure according to his pleasure.

Considering him (a.s) as the witness over all affairs, whether hidden or manifest, causes the muntazir to refrain from wrongdoings and always take the path that assures him of earning the pleasure of his Imam (a.s). Protecting religion is more important for this person than any other issue, and he is not willing to disregard earning the pleasure of his Imam at any cost or for the sake of attaining worldly or personal pleasures, because he knows that the pious are loved by his Maula the Master. He strives to refine himself from moral vices and spiritual corruptions, and he cannot imagine himself in a state where, if his Master were to reappear, he would feel ashamed and embarrassed to meet him (a.s). Therefore, he always fashions himself in such a way that he

¹⁴⁷ Raaz Niyaeesh Muntaziraan, pg 29 & 30

hopes to see the smile of contentment on his Maula at the very first instance of meeting him (a.s).

It is here that engaging in self-refinement and knowing its ways becomes particularly important for the muntazir. In this regard, we point to three essential axes of spiritual training that play an important role in the development of human beings.

I. Observing Taqwa (piety) and Wara' (abstinence)

Performing the obligatory acts and abstaining from the prohibited is the first and most fundamental condition for self-development. A believing muntazir cannot accept missing an obligatory act, and knows that the most beloved deeds to Allah are performing the obligations (faraiz) Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) said:

قَالَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى مَا تَحَبَّبَ إِلَيَّ عَبْدِي بِأَحَبِّ مِمَّا افْتَرَضْتُ عَلَيْهِ

*'Allah the Blessed and Exalted said: 'My servant does not endear himself to Me with anything more beloved than performing what I have made obligatory upon him.'*¹⁴⁸

Surely, being committed to performing the obligations is difficult and does not conform to the animalistic and comfort-seeking nature of the human self. But the true muntazir exercises patience in this matter and obliges himself to perform them against his carnal desires. Regarding the noble verse

¹⁴⁸ Al-Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of Fulfilling the obligations, H no 5

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

'O you who believe! Be patient and excel in patience and remain steadfast, and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, that you may be successful ¹⁴⁹

Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) said,

إِصْبِرُوا عَلَى الْفَرَائِضِ

'Be patient in performing the obligatory acts.' ¹⁵⁰

If performing the obligations did not involve hardship and difficulty, the expression "be patient" would not be suitable for it. One must put himself through some hardship and tribulation to attain this station so that he becomes habituated to performing acts of obedience, and the initial difficulty and bitterness - which may exist for some individuals - gradually turn into ease and sweetness. The true muntazir reaches a degree of faith where success in fulfilling the obligations becomes sweeter for him than any other pleasure, and elevating to the ranks of the pious makes him happier than anything else. He knows that the highest degree of piety is attained through performing his obligations. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) said,

اعْمَلْ بِفَرَائِضِ اللَّهِ؛ تَكُنْ أَتَقَى النَّاسِ

¹⁴⁹ Surah Aale Imran, v 200

¹⁵⁰ Al-Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of Fulfilling the obligations, H no 2

*'Perform the obligations of Allah, and you will be the most pious of people.'*¹⁵¹

He (s.a.w.a) also said,

أَعْبَدُ النَّاسِ مَنْ أَقَامَ الْفَرَائِضَ

*'The most devoted worshipper is the one who fulfils the obligatory acts.'*¹⁵²

They do not consider recommended acts to be the best form of worship of Allah. The most devoted person is not the one who performs the most recommended acts. However, the value of performing recommended acts and their effect in elevating the rank of worship is undeniable.

Along with performing the obligations, abstaining, and refraining from the prohibitions of Allah are equally important. The muntazir of Imam Zaman (a.t.f.s) seeks a way to make himself closer to him, so that at the time of welcoming his Master, he may be among his loved and dear ones. According to the narrations, proximity to Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) is only possible through closeness to Allah, and the best way to become close to the Lord is to maintain a boundary with regards to prohibitions, which is termed as "wara' (وراع). Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) said,

¹⁵¹ Al-Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of Fulfilling the obligations, H no 4

¹⁵² Behaarul Anwaar, vol 71, pg 206, H no 13

فِيهَا نَاجَى اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِهِ مُوسَى عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: يَا مُوسَى، مَا تَقَرَّبَ
إِلَيَّ الْمُتَّقِرُّونَ بِشَيْءٍ الْوَرَعِ عَنِ مَحَارِمِي

'Among the whispered prayers (munajat) of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, to Moosa (a.s) was: "O Moosa! Those who seek closeness to Me do not attain closeness through anything like wara' (abstinence) from My prohibitions.' ¹⁵³

"Wara'" is perfection in a person that creates the ground for abstaining and even fleeing from sins, such that he dreads approaching them, and out of fear of falling into the prohibited, he does not even go near its limits. This is why we have used the term "to refrain and restrain" for its translation. ¹⁵⁴

If there is no taqwa and wara', there is no hope in one's good deeds, because they are subject to ruin and loss. Regarding the noble verse,

وَقَدِمْنَا إِلَىٰ مَا عَمِلُوا مِنْ عَمَلٍ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ هَبَاءً مَّنْثُورًا

And We will proceed to what they have done of deeds, so We shall render them as scattered floating dust, ¹⁵⁵

Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) said:

أَمَّا وَاللَّهِ إِنْ كَانَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ أَشَدَّ بَيَاضًا مِنَ الْقَبَاطِيِّ وَ لَكِنْ كَانُوا إِذَا
عَرَضَ لَهُمُ الْحَرَامُ لَمْ يَدَعُوهُ

¹⁵³ Al-Kafi, Kitab Imam wa Kufr, Chapter of leaving the prohibited, H no 3

¹⁵⁴ For a better explanation of 'Wara'" refer to the book 'Aftab dar Ghurbat' part 4 in Section 4

¹⁵⁵ Surah Furqan, v 23

'By Allah, though their deeds were whiter than fine Egyptian linen, whenever they encountered the prohibited, they would not leave it.'¹⁵⁶

Those whose deeds became "scattered dust" according to the noble verse, as per Imam Jafar Sadiq's statement, their deeds were very good and brighter than white Egyptian linen. Yet the reason their good deeds were ruined was that they lacked taqwa, and if they were faced with a prohibited act, they could not refrain from it. They did not have enough self-control and self-restraint to protect themselves from being polluted by sin. According to the clear statement of the Quran, Allah only accepts good deeds from the pious. He says,

إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

'Indeed, Allah only accepts from the pious.'¹⁵⁷

If there is no taqwa, there is no hope that good deeds will be accepted, and lack of taqwa destroys the good as well. Taqwa causes the remembrance of Allah to be revived in the pious believer when faced with sin, and it is this remembrance that prevents him from committing the sin. It is narrated from Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s):

مِنْ أَشَدِّ مَا فَرَضَ اللَّهُ عَلَى خَلْقِهِ ذِكْرُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا» ثُمَّ قَالَ: «لَا أَعْنِي
سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ، وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، وَإِنْ كَانَ مِنْهُ؛

¹⁵⁶ Al-Kafi, Kitab Imam wa Kufr, Chapter of leaving the prohibited, H no 5

¹⁵⁷ Surah Maidah, v 27

وَلَكِنْ ذَكَرَ اللَّهُ عِنْدَ مَا أَحَلَّ وَحَرَّمَ، فَإِنْ كَانَ طَاعَةً عَمِلَ بِهَا، وَإِنْ
كَانَ مَعْصِيَةً تَرَكَهَا

*'Among the most difficult things that Allah has made obligatory upon His creation is frequent remembrance of Allah...I do not mean (reciting) 'Glory be to Allah', 'Praise be to Allah', 'There is no god but Allah', and 'Allah is the Greatest', although these are also from the remembrance of Allah. But (the real remembrance of Allah is) when one remembers Allah regarding what He has made lawful and unlawful, so if it is an act of obedience, he performs it, and if it is a sin, he abandons it.'*¹⁵⁸

The lesser the piety (taqwa), the more the heedlessness from the remembrance of Allah, and this provides the ground for committing sins. So Allah's remembrance plays a fundamental and pivotal role in abandoning sin and fleeing from acts of disobedience. Considering that it is stated *إِنَّ ذِكْرَنَا مِنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ* (Surely our remembrance is from the remembrance of Allah)¹⁵⁹ and *إِنَّا إِذَا ذُكِرْنَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ* (Whenever we are mentioned, Allah is remembered),¹⁶⁰ it can be understood that the remembrance of the Ahle Bait (a.s) is inseparable from the remembrance of Allah, and the same effect that is contingent upon remembering Allah also applies to the remembrance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s). Therefore, the life of the true muntazir always passes with the remembrance of his beloved, and thus cannot be devoid of taqwa and being polluted by sins. The more intense the believer's Intezaar, the more he remembers

¹⁵⁸ Al-Kafi, Kitab Imam wa Kufr, Chapter of leaving the prohibited, H no 4.

¹⁵⁹ Al-Kafi, Kitab Imam wa Kufr, Chapter of Tazakur Akhwan

¹⁶⁰ Wasailush Shia, vol 16, pg 345, Chapter 23, H no 21722

his awaited Master, and the more he remembers him, the less his hands and heart will be inclined towards sin.

With taqwa, even if the amount of one's deeds is small, their value in the sight of Allah is great, because the criterion for acceptance of a deed is taqwa. And if a deed is accepted, it will no longer be considered small, even if its outward appearance is considered insignificant in comparison to some other deeds. Imam Baqir (a.s) narrates from Ameerul Momineen (a.s) that he said,

لَا يَقِلُّ عَمَلٌ مَعَ تَقْوَى. وَكَيْفَ يَقِلُّ مَا يُتَقَبَّلُ؟

'No deed is small when accompanied by taqwa, for how can that which is accepted be small?' ¹⁶¹

The abundance of deeds in the sight of the Exalted Lord is measured by the criterion of their acceptance. The more the conditions of acceptance are met, the more abundant and weightier it will be on the Divine Scale.

Mufazzal, who was one of the sincere devotees of Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) said, 'Once in the presence of Imam (a.s), the discussion turned to deeds. I said, "My deeds are so few and insignificant!" The Imam said,

مَهْ! اسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ إِنَّ قَلِيلَ الْعَمَلِ مَعَ التَّقْوَى خَيْرٌ مِنْ كَثِيرِ الْعَمَلِ بِلَا تَقْوَى

'Keep quiet! Seek Allah's forgiveness. Indeed, a small deed accompanied by taqwa is better than abundant deeds without taqwa.'

¹⁶¹ Al-Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of Obedience and piety, H no 5

I asked: "How is it possible to have abundant deeds without taqwa?" Imam replied,

نَعْمُ مِثْلُ الرَّجُلِ يُطْعِمُ طَعَامَهُ وَيَرْفُقُ جِيرَانَهُ وَيُوَطِّئُ رَحْلَهُ فَإِذَا
ارْتَفَعَ لَهُ الْبَابُ مِنَ الْحَرَامِ دَخَلَ فِيهِ فَهَذَا الْعَمَلُ بِلَا تَقْوَى وَيَكُونُ
الْآخَرُ لَيْسَ عِنْدَهُ فَإِذَا ارْتَفَعَ لَهُ الْبَابُ مِنَ الْحَرَامِ لَمْ يَدْخُلْ فِيهِ

*'Yes, like a man who feeds others from his food, is kind to his neighbours, and keeps his home open, but when a door to the prohibited acts opens for him, he enters it. These deeds are without taqwa. And there is another who does not have those (good) deeds, but when a door to the prohibited opens for him, he does not enter it.'*¹⁶²

So what matters is how a person exercises self-restraint and discipline when faced with the prohibited. The value of one's deeds depends on this factor, which is called taqwa. If a person does not have this state regarding even one sin, he should not hope for his good deeds to be accepted.

Abu Basir narrated from Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) that he said,

لَا وَاللَّهِ لَا يَقْبَلُ اللَّهُ شَيْئاً مِنْ طَاعَتِهِ عَلَى الْإِصْرَارِ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِنْ
مَعَاصِيهِ

*'No, by Allah! Allah does not accept any act of obedience while one insists on any of His disobediences.'*¹⁶³

Insisting on sin is a sign of one's lack of taqwa, and this causes Allah not to accept any good deed from someone who insists

¹⁶² Al-Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of Obedience and piety, H no 7

¹⁶³ Al-Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of persistence in sinning, H no 3

on a sin. The meaning of insisting is not that the person repeatedly sins, but if he is complacent and indifferent towards sinning, he is considered as insisting on it. Jabir narrated from Imam Baqir (a.s) regarding the explanation of the noble verse,

وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوْا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

'And they did not persist in what they used to do while they knew'

¹⁶⁴

الْإِصْرَارُ هُوَ أَنْ يُذْنِبَ الذَّنْبَ فَلَا يَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ وَلَا يُحَدِّثُ نَفْسَهُ
بِتَوْبَةٍ فَذَلِكَ الْإِصْرَارُ

*'Persistence means sinning and then not seeking forgiveness from Allah nor making an intention of repenting from it. That is (the meaning of) persistence.'*¹⁶⁵

Repentance (Taubah) means “to turn”. And one who does not intend to repent, in reality, has not decided to turn away from his sin. Therefore, if the opportunity to repeat it arises, he will have no reservations in committing it, and this is the meaning of insisting on sin - which is a consequence of lack of taqwa. A pious person does not have such a state towards any sin - even one sin. And if he does sin or repeats a past sin, after each instance he immediately feels remorse and thinks of repentance and seeking forgiveness and is never indifferent towards it.

¹⁶⁴ Surah Aale Imran, v 135.

¹⁶⁵ Al-Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of persistence in sinning, H no 2

The noble verse which Jabir narrated, part of its explanation from Imam Baqir (a.s) describes the people of taqwa.¹⁶⁶ The purpose of the verse itself, along with Imam's(a.s) explanation, clearly states the relationship between taqwa and not persisting in sinning. In summary, it can be said, "Taqwa is that state of self-restraint and self-control which protects the believing person from sinning when faced with it." A requirement of having this state is that the pious person does not insist on committing any sin - even one sin. And if he does sin, he immediately seeks forgiveness for it and intends to repent.

In this way, it cannot be said that a pious believer never commits any sins. What is certainly not present in him is the state of insisting on sin. Therefore, the sins he occasionally commits are considered lapses (هَلْوَ). A lapse occurs when there is no intention or heartfelt decision involved. Someone whose foot slips while walking and falls to the ground never made the intention from his heart to fall, nor does he walk in a way that his foot slips intentionally.

The pious believer is the same about committing sins. He never has the intention to sin beforehand, and there is no state of recklessness and audacity towards it within him. However, he may sometimes find himself in a situation where his foot slips and he falls into the valley of sin, and if that happens, he immediately feels remorse and resolves to abandon it forever. And if, hypothetically, such an incident were to be repeated, the same consequence would follow. And the pious believer

¹⁶⁶ Refer to Surah Aale Imran, v 133 (And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord; and a Garden, the extensiveness of which is [as] the heavens and the earth, it is prepared for those who guard (against evil))

never permits himself to sin under any circumstances - not even once.

If such a quality exists in a person, there is hope that Allah will accept his good deeds and forgive his sins. But if this quality is not present in someone, he cannot have certainty of being included in Allah's mercy and forgiveness.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this discussion is that those awaiting the reappearance of Hazrat Baqiyatullah (a.t.f.s) must be at the highest level of taqwa and wara', such that among their associates and even the people of their city, they are renowned and famous for their purity and virtue.

Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) said to one of his Shia followers named Isa ibn Abdullah, who was from Qum, when he came to visit him,

يَا عَيْسَىٰ بَنَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ لَيْسَ مِنَّا وَلَا كَرَامَةٌ مِّنْ كَانَ فِي مِصْرٍ فِيهِ مِائَةٌ
أَلْفٍ أَوْ يَزِيدُونَ وَكَانَ فِي ذَلِكَ الْمِصْرِ أَحَدٌ أَوْعَ مِنْهُ

'O Isa ibn Abdullah! He does not belong to us, nor does he have any honour who is in a town of (a population of) one hundred thousand or more, and in that town, there is someone more pious (أَوْعَ) than him.' ¹⁶⁷

A Shia who is truly burning in the Intezaar of the reappearance of his Master must be the most pious believing person in his city. If he is not such, he has no honour and nobility in the sight of Allah and the Ahle Bait (a.s.).

¹⁶⁷ Al-Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of Wara', H no 10

In another narration, Imam Moosa ibn Jafar (a.s) related the same truth from his noble father.

كثيْرًا مَا كُنْتُ أَسْمَعُ أَبِي يَقُولُ لَيْسَ مِنْ شَيْعَتِنَا مَنْ لَا تَتَحَدَّثُ
 الْمُخَدَّرَاتُ بِوَرَعِهِ فِي خُدُورِهِنَّ وَ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَوْلِيَائِنَا مَنْ هُوَ فِي قَرْيَةٍ
 فِيهَا عَشْرَةٌ أَلْفٍ رَجُلٍ فِيهِمْ مِنْ خَلْقِ اللَّهِ أَوْعُ مِنْهُ

*'I frequently heard my father saying: 'He does not belong to our Shia whose piety and wara' is not spoken of by the veiled women in their chambers. And he is not among our friends who is in a village of ten thousand men, among whom Allah a creature of Allah is more pious than him.'*¹⁶⁸

The chastity and purity of the friend of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) must be so intense that even the veiled women, who have no direct contact with na-mahram men, speak of the wara' and integrity of this believer behind their veils. Yes, this is the quality of the muntazir of the reappearance of Imam (a.s).

2. Real Fear and Hope

One of the most fundamental pillars of spiritual development is the issue of fear and hope. According to narrations, faith cannot be realized in a person without fear and hope. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) has said,

لَا يَكُونُ الْمُؤْمِنُ مُؤْمِنًا حَتَّى يَكُونَ خَائِفًا رَاجِيًا وَ لَا يَكُونُ خَائِفًا
 رَاجِيًا حَتَّى يَكُونَ عَامِلًا لِمَا يَخَافُ وَيَرْجُو

¹⁶⁸ Al-Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of Wara', H no 15

*'A believer is not a true believer until he is fearful and hopeful. And he is not fearful and hopeful until he acts according to what he fears and hopes for.'*¹⁶⁹

Fear and hope are inseparable necessities of faith, and they are the spiritual states of a person that require their corresponding action. A believer is not a real believer until he acts according to the requirements of these two states. Since the infallible Imam (a.s) does not speak vain words, we must derive the precise meaning of these two qualities and their necessities from the narrations.

Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) himself has mentioned two things as the sources of fear for a person,

الْمُؤْمِنُ بَيْنَ مَخَافَتَيْنِ ذَنْبٍ قَدْ مَضَى لَا يَدْرِي مَا صَنَعَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ وَعُمْرٍ
قَدْ بَقِيَ لَا يَدْرِي مَا يَكْتَسِبُ فِيهِ مِنَ الْمَهَالِكِ فَهُوَ لَا يُصْبِحُ إِلَّا خَائِفًا
وَلَا يُصَلِّحُهُ إِلَّا الْخَوْفُ

*'A believer is between two fears: a past sin for which he does not know what Allah has done with it, and the remaining life in which he does not know what ruinous deeds he will commit. So he does not wake up except in a state of fear, and nothing reforms him except fear.'*¹⁷⁰

One fear of a believer is related to his past, and the other to his future, and these two fears completely encompass him. The fear of the past is related to the sins he has committed and does not know whether Allah's forgiveness has

¹⁶⁹ Al-Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of Fear and Hope, H no 11

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, H no 12

encompassed them or not. Has he repented all his past sins, or are there some sins that he did not repent for at the time and then forgot them? If he has repented from sins, has his repentance been accepted in the Divine? The believer does not know the answers to these questions and is not certain that his record of deeds has been cleared before Allah. Hence, he is always worried that he may not have received Divine forgiveness and mercy, and this becomes a cause of his fear.

The other fear is related to the future. The believer does not know what pitfalls lie ahead of him and what sins he may commit for the remainder of his life. He is worried that in the future, Allah may leave him to his own devices and as a result, he becomes embroiled in acts of disobedience that perhaps he had not committed in the past, or he repeats his previous bad deeds. This is the second fear that has overwhelmed him and constantly makes him worried. These two fears have gripped the believer from two sides, and thus he is always in a state of fear.

The last sentence of the narration is a profound point regarding human development that requires careful contemplation: "Nothing reforms a human being except fear." Even though one is a believer, he must always have the fear that is mentioned in the narration, so that he does not deviate from the right path. The only way to reformation for a human being is to live with fear, and if this spiritual state is absent in him, there is no hope for his reformation. The conclusion is that in the approaches to human development, the existence of this factor must be taken into account and not be eliminated from the life of a believing person under false pretexts. Eliminating this factor is equivalent to his falling into the abyss of destruction.

So, the condition for faith is the existence of fear in the believer. However, not every kind of fear is desirable here; rather, this fear must have a practical effect on the individual, meaning that the actions of the believing person must be those of a fearful person. If this is not the case, then faith is not realized in that person. What is the sign of the existence of fear in a person? Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) has answered this question as follows,

مَنْ خَافَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ هَرَبَ مِنْهُ

*'Whoever fears something, flees from it.'*¹⁷¹

This saying of Imam (a.s) has a completely conscientious aspect. If a person fears something, he flees from it. So if a believer is truly a person of fear, he will be terrified of his past sins and potential future lapses and will flee from them. Everyone can determine the degree of their faith by this criterion: how much they dread their sins and to what extent they flee from them. If someone does not feel much worry about their past sins and does not have much anxiety and fear about potential future lapses, then according to the saying of Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s), they cannot consider themselves a true believer.

It must be said with deep regret that many believers do not have the fear that is commensurate with the greatness and majesty of the Omnipotent Allah. Most of them, with incorrect and fabricated justifications, pretend that one should not have too much fear of the Generous and Forgiving Allah, and under the pretext that "things are not difficult for the

¹⁷¹ Al-Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of Fear and Hope, H no 6

generous ones," they free themselves from any fear and worry about past sins and future abandonments.

Yes, one should not feel safe of the "Generous Allah" only because He is Generous. Remember that Allah is also Just, and it is His Justice that is the source of fear. Whoever has been tainted by sins should fear that Allah may deal with them according to His Justice. For this reason, in the supplications received from the infallible ones (a.s), this request is emphasized:

إِلَهِي إِنْ عَرَّضَنِي ذُنُوبِي لِعِقَابِكَ فَقَدْ أَدْنَانِي رَجَائِي مِنْ ثَوَابِكَ إِلَهِي إِنْ
عَفَوْتَ فَبِفَضْلِكَ وَإِنْ عَذَّبْتَ فَبِعَدْلِكَ فَيَا مَنْ لَا يُرْجَى إِلَّا فَضْلُهُ وَلَا
يُخَافُ إِلَّا عَدْلُهُ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَامْنُنْ عَلَيْنَا بِفَضْلِكَ وَ
لَا تَسْتَقْصِ عَلَيْنَا فِي عَدْلِكَ

*'O Allah, if You pardon, then it is by Your Grace, and if You punish, then it is by Your Justice. O He besides whose Grace nothing is to be hopefully expected, and besides whose Justice nothing is to be feared, bless Mohammed and the Household of Mohammed, and favour us through Your Grace, and do not deal with us according to Your Justice.'*¹⁷²

Allah is both Just and Gracious (مُفِضِل)¹⁷³. His Justice is the source of fear. When a person commits an act of disobedience to Allah, he deserves to be punished, and justice requires that the sinner receive the punishment that he deserves. In this

¹⁷² Behaarul Anwaar, vol 94, pg 107, from the Munajat of Ameerul Momineen (a.s)

¹⁷³ Mohijjud Dawaat, Dua Sahifah, pg 181

case, no injustice has occurred, because whatever punishment Allah decrees for the person's sin, he deserves it. This punishment can be both worldly and in the hereafter.

Worldly punishment refers to the calamities that befall a person because of their sins, and the worst of them is when Allah abandons the servant and does not stop him from sinning. This punishment is termed **خِذْلَان** (abandonment). The punishment of the hereafter also has various forms, the most severe of which is the Fire of Divine Wrath.

Imam Zainul Abedeen (a.s), in one of his supplications, says to the Almighty Allah,

كَانَ جَزَائِي مِنْكَ فِي أَوَّلِ مَا عَصَيْتُكَ النَّارَ، فَإِنْ تُعَذِّبْنِي فَأَنْتَ غَيْرُ ظَالِمٍ لِي

*'My punishment from You for the first (instance) in which I disobeyed You would be the Fire, so if You punish me, You would not be unjust to me.'*¹⁷⁴

The servant, by beginning to sin, deserves to be punished with the Fire of Divine Wrath and this is the primary reason for fearing Allah. In reality, the believer fears that Allah may want to make him taste the consequences of his evil deeds according to His justice. So in fact, he fears the consequences of his bad actions. In supplication before the Divine Presence, we say,

¹⁷⁴ Sahifah Sajjadiyah, Dua no 16

جَلَّتْ أَنْ يُخَافَ مِنْكَ إِلَّا الْعَدْلُ وَأَنْ يُرْجَى مِنْكَ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَانُ وَ
 الْفَضْلُ فَاْمُنْ عَلَيَّ بِمَا أُوجِبُهُ فَضْلُكَ وَلَا تَخْذُلْنِي بِمَا يَحْكُمُ بِهِ
 عَدْلُكَ

*'You are too Exalted for anything other than justice to be feared from You, and for anything other than grace and bounty to be hoped from You. So favour me with what Your bounty has made incumbent, and do not abandon me to what Your justice has decreed.'*¹⁷⁵

Divine justice entails the abandonment (خِذْلَان) of the sinful person, and the servant fears this, and must fear it! But alas, the ungrateful human¹⁷⁶ does not fear the Omnipotent Allah to the extent that he fears His creatures, and this is a pain that Ameerul Momineen (a.s) has expressed in clear words,

إِنْ هُوَ خَافَ عَبْدًا مِنْ عِبِيدِهِ أَعْطَاهُ مِنْ خَوْفِهِ مَا لَا يُعْطِي رَبَّهُ فَجَعَلَ
 خَوْفَهُ مِنَ الْعِبَادِ نَقْدًا وَخَوْفَهُ مِنْ خَالِقِهِ ضِمَارًا وَوَعْدًا

*'If he is afraid of a servant among Allah's servants, it is more than his fear of his Lord (Allah). So, the fear of the servants is ready-cash (ever-present), but his fear of their Creator is a distant promise and threat (i.e. it is practically not there).'*¹⁷⁷

Every fear has an indication, and the fear of Divine justice also has signs. If those signs are not present, then that fear is

¹⁷⁵ Part of the dua after the namaz of the Ziarat of Imam Raza (a.s) (Behaarul Anwaar, vol 102, pg 54)

¹⁷⁶ Surah Hajj, v 66 (Surely man is ungrateful and a denier)

¹⁷⁷ Nahjul Balagha Fiqhi, pg 504, 505, Sermon 158

defective and flawed, which unfortunately is generally the case concerning Allah.

كُلُّ خَوْفٍ مُّحَقَّقٌ إِلَّا خَوْفَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهُ مَعْلُولٌ

*'Every fear is real except the fear of Allah, for it is flawed.'*¹⁷⁸

It is far from fair that the fear of Allah's creatures should be real while the fear of Allah Himself should be unreal.

When a relies on someone else, he does not upset him to the extent he relies on him and avoids everything that is a cause of his anger. So, if the servant has even an iota of real fear of his Lord, the committing of sins against Him will never be easy, and he will oppose sinning with all his being. Whoever is intelligent and knows Allah, fears His justice, and this fear is a sign of the believer's understanding and insight. One who does not have such fear has neither sound reason nor proper knowledge of the Sublime God.

Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) said,

مَنْ عَرَفَ اللَّهَ خَافَ اللَّهَ وَ مَنْ خَافَ اللَّهَ سَخَتْ نَفْسُهُ عَنِ الدُّنْيَا

*'Whoever knows Allah, fears Allah. And whoever fears Allah, his soul is detached from the world.'*¹⁷⁹

The sign of knowing Allah (Maarefatullah) is fearing Him, and the sign of fearing Him is detaching one's heart from the world. Everyone can assess the extent of their real fear using this criterion.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid

¹⁷⁹ Al-Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of Fear and Hope, H no 4

But in contrast to justice, there is grace, and of course, this grace is not bestowed upon the servant because of any merit on his part,¹⁸⁰ but purely out of Allah's kindness and favour. Therefore, the source of fear of Allah is His justice, and the cause of hope in Allah is His grace. What has been referred to as "hope" alongside "fear" is this very hope in Divine grace and mercy. But it should be noted that real hope differs from vain and baseless hope. Real hope, like real fear, has signs by which it is recognized as acceptable; otherwise, it is of no benefit and is rejected.

Ameerul Momineen (a.s) says about hope,

كُلُّ مَنْ رَجَا عُرِفَ رَجَاؤُهُ فِي عَمَلِهِ

*'Whoever has hope, his hope is recognized in his actions.'*¹⁸¹

A person's actions indicate his hopes. If someone easily and carelessly commits sins assuming Allah's kindness and mercy, this is not real hope, and such a person is not considered among the friends of Imams (a.s). The narrator says: I said to Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s), 'A group of your friends commit sins and say, 'We have hope in Allah's mercy and the intercession of the Ahle Bait (a.s).' The Imam said,

كَذَّبُوا لَيْسُوا لَنَا بِمَوَالٍ، أُولَئِكَ قَوْمٌ تَرَجَّحَتْ بِهِمُ الْأَمَانِيُّ؛ مَنْ رَجَا شَيْئاً عَمِلَ لَهُ

¹⁸⁰ Imam Sajjad (a.s) in dua no 16 concerning the pardon of Allah says, 'For surely this was not due for me based on my right'

¹⁸¹ Nahjul Balagha Fiqhi, pg 504, 505, Sermon 158

*'They are lying; they are not our friends. They are a group swayed by vain hopes. Whoever hopes for something, acts to attain it.'*¹⁸²

In another hadees, about such people, Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) says

كَذَّبُوا الْيُسُورَ بِرَاجِينَ إِنَّ مَنْ رَجَا شَيْئًا طَلَبَهُ

*'They are liars. They are not hopeful. Surely, the one who hopes for something seeks it.'*¹⁸³

Whoever hopes to attain something follows the path to it. One who hopes for sustenance strives to obtain it through proper means. One who hopes for the recovery of his loved one goes to the physician and follows the necessary instructions. If he does not do this, then his hope is not real hope but rather baseless wishes and desires. Thus, Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) has negated those people being truly hopeful and said that since they do not show signs of real hope, they are not actually among the hopeful.

It must be said with utmost regret that people's hopes regarding themselves and worldly affairs are real and correct hopes, but their hopes about Allah's grace and mercy are generally tainted and impure. Ameerul Momineen (a.s) has expressed this bitter truth with this expression,

وَكُلُّ رَجَاءٍ إِلَّا رَجَاءَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى فَإِنَّهُ مَدْخُولٌ

*'Every hope is pure and firm except the hope in Allah the Exalted, for that is tainted and impure.'*¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Al-Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of Fear and Hope, H no 6

¹⁸³ Al-Kafi, Kitab Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of Fear and Hope, H no 5

¹⁸⁴ Nahjul Balagha Fiqhi, pg 504, 505, Sermon 158

This is why, regarding those who think they have hope in Allah and fear Him but do not show any signs of this hope and fear in their actions, Imam (a.s) says,

يَدَّعِي بِزَعْمِهِ أَنَّهُ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ كَذَبٌ وَالْعَظِيمِ مَا بَالُهُ لَا يَتَّبِعُنَّ رَجَاؤُهُ
فِي عَمَلِهِ

*'He claims, by his assertion, that he has hope in Allah. He lies, by the Greatest One! What is wrong with him that his hope does not manifest in his actions?'*¹⁸⁵

Then, to clarify the falsehood of such hope, Imam (a.s) makes a comparison between hope in Allah and the hope in Allah's servants. He (a.s) says

يَرْجُو اللَّهَ فِي الْكَبِيرِ وَيَرْجُو الْعِبَادَ فِي الصَّغِيرِ فَيُعْطِي الْعَبْدَ مَا لَا
يُعْطِي الرَّبَّ فَمَا بَالُ اللَّهِ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُهُ يُقْصَرُ بِهِ عَمَّا يُصْنَعُ بِهِ لِعِبَادِهِ أَ
تَخَافُ أَنْ تَكُونَ فِي رَجَائِكَ لَهُ كَاذِبًا أَوْ تَكُونَ لَا تَرَاهُ لِلرَّجَاءِ مَوْضِعًا

*'He has hope in Allah for major things, and hope in servants for minor things, so he gives the servant (i.e. his hopes) what he does not give the Lord. What is the matter with Allah, Majestic is His Praise, that He is given less than what is done for His servants. Do you fear being a liar in your hope in Him? Or do you not consider Him worthy of hope?'*¹⁸⁶

The greater and more important is a thing for which a person is hopeful, the more intense and greater should be its pursuit. Someone who hopes for a large income will make efforts

¹⁸⁵ Nahjul Balagha Fiqhi, pg 503, narrating from Sharh Qutb Rawandi

¹⁸⁶ Nahjul Balagha Fiqhi, pg 504, 505, Sermon 158

different from someone who hopes for a meagre income. If he strives for a meagre income it can be understood that he does not truly hope for a large income.

By the same analogy, one can say that the effort to attain Divine mercy should be much greater than the effort to obtain material benefits, for the things hoped for from Allah are such that no creature can grant them, and they relate to the eternal felicity of the human being. We are certain that no one is needless of Allah's pardon and mercy, and no one can be saved from Divine punishment and wrath except through the forgiveness of the Lord. Imam Zainul Abedeen (a.s) has explicitly taught this in his supplication.

اللَّهُمَّ... لَا نَجَاةَ إِلَّا بِحَدِّكَ مِنْ أَدْوَانِ عَفْوِكَ

*'O Allah...none of us can attain salvation without Your pardon.'*¹⁸⁷

Felicity in this world and the Hereafter cannot be obtained except by the grace of Allah Almighty. Therefore, to attain this felicity, one must strive through the means that Allah Himself has appointed, and this striving must be far greater than the effort and endeavour made in material and worldly affairs. If the concern for action is not present, it is clear that the hope in Divine grace is not a real and sincere hope, but rather a vain and false one, and such a vain hope will not help the person.

Someone in this state cannot consider himself a lover and muntazir of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) because Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) has explicitly rejected the friendship of such people. The only way to attain a spiritual connection with the Infallible ones (a.s) is to strengthen real fear and hope towards Allah Almighty within us.

¹⁸⁷ Sahife Sajjadiyyah, part of Dua no 10

We will conclude this discussion by narrating a beautiful tradition from Ameerul Momineen (a.s) in which he has compared "fear" with "hope".

خَفُّ رَبِّكَ خَوْفًا يَشْغَلُكَ عَنْ رَجَائِهِ وَارْجُهُ رَجَاءَ مَنْ لَا يَأْمَنُ خَوْفَهُ

*'Fear your Lord with a fear that preoccupies you from hoping in Him. And hope in Him with the hope of someone who is not secure from His fear.'*¹⁸⁸

To understand the depth of the noble saying of Ameerul Momineen (a.s) in this profound tradition, it is necessary to explain it further.

Let us explain the root and source of the fear of Allah in the human being - in addition to what has been discussed before. So far, we have talked about two causes of fear, which were past sins and potential future lapses, and both relate to the human being's actions. However, a deeper root for the fear of the Lord can be found that originates from the human being himself, not from his actions.

This root is nothing but the real poverty and innate wretchedness of the human being about his Allah. If someone truly knows himself, he will indeed realize his deprivation and weakness before his Lord; that is, he will find himself utterly poor and wretched in His presence. Then he will understand that if he can do any good deed, it can only happen through the grace and favour of Allah Almighty. If he is left to himself, he will never move towards goodness, for he has nothing of his own and all his possessions are the grace and bounty of

¹⁸⁸ Ghurar, H no 3713

Allah upon him. Therefore, only by relying on himself, he does not even perform a single act of obedience.

This is the reason why a human being should never rely on or trust himself because he has nothing reliable or dependable of his own, and unless Allah helps him, no good deed will originate from him. So the ability to perform good deeds is solely and only made possible for the human being through Allah's grace, and nothing but weakness and wretchedness results from his self.

Now, if this reality becomes truly internalized for someone, he will indeed fall into fear, for he sees the ground under his feet as hollow and shaky. With his whole being, he fears that Allah may not hold his hand and show him grace, especially since he knows well that Allah's holding his hand is based on grace, not justice since grace is not incumbent upon Allah. This fear is the direct result of 'realisation' (وجدان), and if the human being's innate poverty does not become truly internalized for him, he will not have such fear.

Keeping this profound point in mind, we can understand the meaning of the saying of our Master, Ameerul Momineen (a.s). He has pointed out the difference between real fear and real hope in the human being, the source of which is attention to the human being's innate poverty (فقر ذاتي). A person who has realized his innate wretchedness completely loses hope in himself and in being able to do any good deed relying on himself, and this becomes the source of real fear in him, such that he sees no window towards salvation from destruction on his part. It is here that his fear becomes absolute and all-encompassing, leaving no room for any "hope" at all.

Until the fear reaches this level, its 100% result has not been achieved. For if a person has some hope in himself, he has not yet completely lost hope in himself and is still somewhat reliant on himself. Only when he sees no dependence – on his part – for himself, does complete fear arise for him, and in that case, there is no longer any room for hope. So the fear of Allah is completely beneficial and 100% effective only when it is pure and unmixed with anything other than fear (i.e. hope).

But what is “hope” in Allah? Should there not remain any fear of Allah in the state of hopefulness? Ameerul Momineen’s (a.s) answer to this question in the tradition under discussion is negative. He has said that hope in Allah should be in such a way that it does not make the human being completely heedless of fear towards Him.

The reason for this saying is attention to that same profound reality in the human being's knowledge of himself. The deeper the human being internalizes his innate wretchedness, the more hopeless he becomes of himself. And the more intense his hopelessness in himself becomes, the greater his hope in Divine grace and mercy increases. Hope in Allah only becomes 100% when the human being becomes completely hopeless of himself and sees no refuge or dependence from his side for himself. If this happens, then fear of Allah will remain as well, because the source of fear is nothing but this very realization of innate lack of dependence and refuge. Therefore, the more intense and stronger the hope in Allah is, to that same degree the depth and intensity of the fear of Him will also be greater. His hope in the Lord never decreases the fear of Him.

The crux of this invaluable point is the human being's hope in Allah's grace and mercy, and his fear of his innate

wretchedness and weakness, and that he may not receive Divine grace. Both these realities - Allah's grace and the human being's wretchedness - become internalized simultaneously with the realization that one is inseparable from the other. So understanding one greatly helps in internalizing the other. The conclusion of this discussion is the same point that Ameerul Momineen (a.s) has mentioned – “Hope in Allah must be accompanied by fear of Him, and the hopeful person must not become heedless of fearing Allah.” This is a very subtle yet profound point that only becomes internalized for the human being by the grace of Allah.

3. Despising the world

The third pillar of spiritual development that those awaiting the reappearance of Imam (a.s) should make the foundation and basis of their lives is hatred of the world. A believer's life is organized based on eternal bliss, and unless the love of the world and its manifestations leaves their heart, they will not attain a hereafter-centric outlook. The teachings of the Infallible Ahle Bait (a.s) place great emphasis on this matter. Regarding the love of the world, they have said,

حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا رَأْسُ كُلِّ خَطِيئَةٍ

*'Love of the world is the root of every sin.'*¹⁸⁹

All sins and mistakes are rooted in the love of the world, and until this problem is solved, the roots of other afflictions will not be eliminated. Our infallible leaders did not stop there and said that not only should one not love the world, but one should consider it an enemy. When Imam Zainul Abedeen (a.s)

¹⁸⁹ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of condemnation of the world and adopting ascetism in it, H no I I

was asked which action is more meritorious before Allah Almighty, he said,

مَا مِنْ عَمَلٍ بَعْدَ مَعْرِفَةِ اللَّهِ جَلَّ وَعَزَّ وَمَعْرِفَةِ رَسُولِهِ صَ أَفْضَلَ مِنْ
بُغْضِ الدُّنْيَا

*'After the recognition of Allah the Almighty and the recognition of His Messenger, there is no action more meritorious than hatred of the world.'*¹⁹⁰

This statement clearly illustrates the importance and fundamental nature of hatred of the world. It shows that in contrast to the love of the world, which is the root of every corruption and sin, its hatred is the source of every virtue.¹⁹¹ Therefore, we must pay great attention to the ways of acquiring this hatred.

In the noble book of Nahjul Balagha, Ameerul Momineen (a.s) has considered following the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) as the exemplar in acting upon this important matter, and said,

وَلَقَدْ كَانَ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَ كَافٍ لَكَ فِي الْأُسُوءَةِ وَدَلِيلٌ لَكَ عَلَى ذَمِّ
الدُّنْيَا وَعَيْبِهَا وَكَثْرَةِ مَخَازِيهَا وَمَسَاوِيهَا

*'Indeed, following the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a) is sufficient as a role model for you, and a guide for you to condemn the world, its faults, and the abundance of its disgrace and ugliness.'*¹⁹²

Then he (a.s) said,

¹⁹⁰ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of condemnation of the world and adopting ascetism in it, H no 1

¹⁹¹ Ibid, H no 2

¹⁹² Nahjul Balagha Fiqhi, pg 504, 505, Sermon 158

وَأَحَبُّ الْعِبَادِ إِلَى اللَّهِ الْمُتَأَسِّي بِنَبِيِّهِ وَالْمُقْتَصِّ لِأَثَرِهِ

*'And the most beloved of servants to Allah is the one who emulates His Prophet and treads in his footsteps.'*¹⁹³

Then, in describing the Holy Prophet's (s.a.w.a) attitude towards the world, he (a.s) said,

*'He would eat from the world with just his mouth (meaning he would not take excessive pleasure from the world but would suffice with the bare minimum necessity out of lack of desire). And he would look at it with just his ears (meaning he paid no attention to the world). His side was thinner than the sides of the worldly people, and his belly was emptier than the bellies of those people. The world was offered to him but he refused to accept it... Indeed, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) would eat food on the ground and sit like servants. He would patch his shoes and clothes with his own hands. He would ride a bare-backed animal and would let someone else ride behind him. If he saw figures embroidered on the curtain hung at his door, he would tell his wife, 'Take this away from me and hide it, for indeed when I look at it, I remember the world and its adornments.' Thus, that noble being (s.a.w.a) had turned his heart away from the world and banished its remembrance from within himself. He wished that the adornments of the world be hidden from his sight so that he would not provide for himself a splendid cup from it, nor consider it his permanent abode, nor have the hope of remaining in it forever. So, he expelled the world from his soul, distanced it from his heart, and concealed it from his eyes.'*¹⁹⁴

Then he (a.s) stated a general principle,

¹⁹³ Ibid, pg 506, 507

¹⁹⁴ Nahjul Balagha Fiqhi, pg 507, 509

وَكذَلِكَ مَنْ أَبْغَضَ شَيْئًا أَبْغَضَ أَنْ يُنْظَرَ إِلَيْهِ وَأَنْ يُذَكَرَ عِنْدَهُ وَلَقَدْ
 كَانَ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ص مَا يَدُلُّكَ عَلَى مَسَاوِي الدُّنْيَا وَعُيُوبِهَا إِذْ جَاعَ
 فِيهَا مَعَ خَاصَّتِهِ وَزُوِيَتْ عَنْهُ زَخَارِفُهَا مَعَ عَظِيمِ زُلْفَتِهِ

'Likewise, whoever hates something hates to look at it and hates its mention in their presence. And indeed, in the conduct of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a) some things guide you to the world's faults and defects, for he experienced hunger in it despite his special rank and its adornments were kept away from him despite his lofty station and proximity (to Allah).'¹⁹⁵

Then he added,

"So whoever sees this matter must contemplate whether Allah honoured Prophet Mohammed (s.a.w.a) with this way of life or humiliated him? If one says He humiliated him, I swear by the Honour of Allah, that he has lied. And if he says He honoured him, then he should know that He has humiliated others, for I have opened and prepared the world for them or kept it away from the people closest to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a).'¹⁹⁶

Yes, if the world and its adornments had any value before Allah, He would not have deprived His most beloved creatures (a.s) of them. The world and what is in it was only created to be a means of testing humans and its adornments exist so that Allah may test His servants through them.

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَهَا لِنَبْلُوَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, pg 508 - 511

¹⁹⁶ Nahjul Balagha Fiqhi, pg 511

*'Indeed, We have made that which is on the earth an adornment for it, so that We may test them (to see) which of them is best in action.'*¹⁹⁷

The adornments of the world are those things that attract the human heart. The wise person is the one who sees them only as a means of trial and does not seek true and lasting tranquillity in them. The conduct of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.a) is the best exemplar for the correct view of the world and its adornments. In another part of the same sermon, Ameerul Momineen (a.s) has said,

عَلِمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سُبْحَانَهُ أَبْغَضَ شَيْئًا فَأَبْغَضَهُ وَحَقَّرَ شَيْئًا فَحَقَّرَهُ وَصَغَّرَ شَيْئًا فَصَغَّرَهُ وَلَوْ لَمْ يَكُنْ فِينَا إِلَّا حُبُّنَا مَا أَبْغَضَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَتَعْظِيمُنَا مَا صَغَّرَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ لَكُنْفِي بِهِ شِقَاقًا لِلَّهِ وَ مُحَادَّةً عَنْ أَمْرِ
اللَّهِ

*'And he (the Prophet) knew that Allah Almighty hated something, so he hated it. And He considered something lowly, so he considered it lowly. And He subdued something, so he subdued it. And if we had (done) nothing but loving what Allah and His Messenger hated, and honouring what Allah and His Messenger belittled, it would suffice as opposition to Allah and contradiction of Allah's command.'*¹⁹⁸

The criterion for distancing from Allah and opposing His commands has been clearly stated here. The mere fact that a person loves what Allah and His Messenger hate, and honours

¹⁹⁷ Surah Kahf v 7

¹⁹⁸ Nahjul Balagha Fiqhi, pg 508, 509

what they consider lowly, is enough to dissociate oneself from the straight path of Allah. This is an accurate and clear criterion for believers to assess the degree of their faith and test their connection with the scale of deeds,¹⁹⁹ which is the sacred existence of Ameerul Momineen (a.s), without deceiving themselves. At the end of this blessed sermon, for the third time, the exemplary nature of the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.a) is stated more explicitly:

*'So, whoever seeks to follow, let him follow his Prophet (s.a.w.a) in his life and his disregard for the world and follow in his footsteps wherever he went, for if he does not, he will not be safe from destruction. For indeed, Allah made Mohammed (s.a.w.a) a sign of the Resurrection – the giver of glad tidings of Paradise and a warner of punishment. He left the world with an empty stomach and entered the Hereafter safely. As long as he followed the path of his Lord and obeyed the call of his Lord, at the time of his death, he did not lay one brick upon another nor build anything. How great then is Allah's favour upon us that He gave us a leader to follow and an exemplar whose footsteps we must tread.'*²⁰⁰

At the end of the sermon Ameerul Momineen (a.s), who was the greatest follower of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a), said about himself,

'I swear by Allah, I have patched this woollen garment so much that I became ashamed of the one who patched it. And indeed, someone told me, "Don't you discard this garment?!" I said to him, "Get away from me or hide yourself. In the mornings, the group

¹⁹⁹ This is a pointer to the Ziarat of Ameerul Momineen (a.s); 'Salutations upon you, O the scale of deeds! (مميزان الاعمال) (Behaarul Anwaar, vol 100, pg 287)

²⁰⁰ Nahjul Balagha Fiqhi, pg 511

*that has reached their destination praises their night journey, (which caused them to reach their goal.)*²⁰¹

The last sentence is a famous Arabic proverb,

هرکه به شب راه رفت، صبح به منزل رسید، هرکه به شب خواب کرد، خاک به سر می کند

'At dawn, the people praise the nightly journey that enabled them to reach their destination. And the one who slept at night throws dust on his head'

This proverb is used when someone endures hardship in the hope of attaining comfort. The mentioned proverb can also be interpreted as: "In the morning, the group that remained asleep and did not travel, praises those who journeyed at night and reached their destination."²⁰²

In the mentioned sermon Ameerul Momineen (a.s) spoke three times about the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) being an exemplar and the necessity of following him. These recommendations clarify the duty of believers, especially those who consider themselves among the muntazirs of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s).

The temptation that sometimes makes one neglect this duty is thinking: "Where do we stand compared to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a)?" Or believing that we can never be like the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) and Ameerul Momineen (a.s) and abstain from emulating these great personalities! This thought is nothing but the insinuation of Satan. One should not think

²⁰¹ Ibid

²⁰² Nahjul Balagha Fiqhi, pg 864

that since they cannot be like Ameerul Momineen (a.s), they have no duty to follow his example. While Imam himself has stated that you (believers) cannot be like me, he has also advised considering the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.a) as an exemplar and acting accordingly. If we consider Ameerul Momineen (a.s) as our Imam and exemplar, we must strive to act according to his conduct. His noble self has stated in a letter to Usman ibn Hunaif Ansari,

أَلَا وَإِنَّ لِكُلِّ مَأْمُومٍ إِمَامًا يَفْتَتِدِي بِهِ وَيَسْتَضِيءُ بِنُورِ عَلَيْهِ

'Know that every follower has an Imam whom they follow and from whose light of knowledge they seek illumination.' ²⁰³

The Imam (a.s) must be the exemplar of the followers, and everyone's actions should be shaped according to the conduct of their Imam. So the terms "Imam" and "exemplar" indicate that one cannot be indifferent towards the actions of their leader. The Imam then said,

أَلَا وَإِنَّ إِمَامَكُمْ قَدْ اكْتَفَى مِنْ دُنْيَاةٍ بِطَبْرِيهِ وَمِنْ طُعْمِهِ بِقُرْصِيهِ أَلَا
وَإِنَّكُمْ لَا تَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى ذَلِكَ وَلَكِنْ أَعِينُونِي بِوَرَعٍ وَاجْتِهَادٍ وَعِفَّةٍ وَ
سَدَادٍ

'Know that your Imam has sufficed from this world with two worn-out cloaks, and from its foods with two loaves of bread. Know that you do not have the ability for that, but assist me with piety, endeavour, chastity, and uprightness.' ²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Nahjul Balagha Fiqhi, pg 1024, letter 45

²⁰⁴ Ibid

The Imam has explicitly stated that you cannot live like me, meaning that a lofty degree of piety and renunciation of the world is specific to himself and his noble household (a.s). However, he has also said: Walk onto this path with endeavour and observance of piety and try as much as you can to make yourselves resemble your Imam. This is the duty of those who consider themselves followers of this Imam (a.s). We should not drown ourselves in the world and its dazzling allurements under the pretext that no matter what we do, we cannot live like our Maula, Ameerul Momineen (a.s). Rather, we must strive as much as we can to make our lives resemble his life and spare no effort in achieving this goal. Therefore, indifference and lack of commitment in this regard are unacceptable.

Endeavour (ijtihad) in the present discussion means striving to attain the goal outlined by Imam (a.s) while describing the conduct of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.a), which is hatred of the world. We must strive to achieve this quality and come closer to it day by day. First, we must identify the way to attain this goal. There is a path to attain every desired aim. What is the way to achieve hatred of the world?

Certainly, if the reality of the world and its faults become clear to a person, hatred and aversion towards it will naturally arise. Those infatuated and enthralled by the world have not recognized its true nature. If something inherently abhorrent is properly understood, aversion towards it will automatically develop – and there is no way to instil hatred of the world other than this. So we must seek a way to recognize the world. But how can we recognize the “world”?

The reality is that if one loves the world, one cannot recognize its true nature. If one seeks to properly understand the world, one must remove the love and attachment for it from their heart. Human beings are such that if they are infatuated with something, they become deprived of seeing its faults and only perceive its goodness and beauty. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a) said,

حُبُّكَ لِلشَّيْءِ يُعْمِي وَيَصِم

'Your love for something makes you blind and deaf to it.' ²⁰⁵

Being blind and deaf here means being heedless to its faults – one's vision and hearing regarding its flaws become inactive, and they only discern goodness in it, even perceiving its flaws as virtues.

به مجنون گفت روزی عیب جویی؛ که پیدا کن به از لیلی نکویی؛
 که لیلی گرچه در پیش تو حوری است یه هر عضوی ز اعضایش
 قصوری است؛ ز حرف عیب جو مجنون بر آشفت؛ در آن آشفتگی
 خندان شد و گفت؛ اگر بر دیده مجنون نشینی؛ به غیر از خوبی
 لیلی نبینی

'One day a faultfinder said to Majnun, "Find a beauty better than Laila! For though Laila seems a houri to you, in each of her limbs there is some defect." Enraged by the words of the faultfinder, Majnun smiled amid his distress and said: "If you could see through the eyes of Majnun, You would see no beauty except Laila's"

²⁰⁵ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 77, pg 164

From Majnun's perspective, Laila was flawless, not because she had no flaws, but because he was so enamoured with her that he could not see her flaws.

Another saying from Ameerul Momineen (a.s),

عَيْنُ الْمُحِبِّ عَمِيَّةٌ عَنِ مَعَايِبِ الْمُحِبُّوبِ وَ أُذُنُهُ صَمَاءٌ عَنِ قُبْحِ مَسَاوِيهِ

*'The eye of the lover is blind to the faults of the beloved, and his ear is deaf to hearing about his beloved's ugliness.'*²⁰⁶

Therefore, the way to know the world and its faults is by having no desire or inclination towards it - and this is what is called zuhud (asceticism) in religious culture. How wise are the words of Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) who said,

مَنْ زَهَدَ فِي الدُّنْيَا أَثَبَّتَ اللَّهُ الْحِكْمَةَ فِي قَلْبِهِ وَ أَنْطَقَ بِهَا لِسَانَهُ وَ بَصَرَهُ عُيُوبَ الدُّنْيَا دَاءَهَا وَ دَوَاءَهَا وَ أَخْرَجَهُ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا سَالِمًا إِلَى دَارِ السَّلَامِ

*'Whoever is ascetic towards the world, Allah will establish wisdom in his heart, make his tongue speak it, make him aware of the world's faults - its ailment and cure - and take him safely out of this world towards the abode of peace.'*²⁰⁷

Zuhud (Asceticism) is a spiritual state in a person which is the same as indifference. Asceticism towards the world means

²⁰⁶ Ghurar, H no 11061

²⁰⁷ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of condemnation of the world and adopting ascetism in it, H no1

being indifferent to it. One of the effects and blessings of this good quality is that the person's eyes open to the flaws of the world, and they not only see the evils and pains but also understand their remedy and cure. When a person is not infatuated with the world, they observe its reality, and by discovering its truth, its flaws become manifest and apparent, resulting in aversion and resentment towards it. Anyone who wants to avoid being contaminated by the vices of the world throughout their life and pass-through this passage safely to their eternal abode has no choice but to distance themselves from the world and try to become indifferent to it. In this case, they will see both the weaknesses and flaws of the world as well as the way to salvation and deliverance from its pitfalls (بَصْرَةُ عِيُوبِ الدُّنْيَا دَاءُهَا وَدَوَاءُهَا). Without attaining this state, a person will never taste the sweetness of faith. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) says,

حَرَامٌ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ أَنْ تَعْرِفَ حَلَاوَةَ الْإِيمَانِ حَتَّى تَزْهَدَ فِي الدُّنْيَا

*'It is forbidden for your hearts to know the sweetness of faith until you renounce the world.'*²⁰⁸

Until your hearts become disinterested in the world, they are deprived of knowing the sweetness of faith. If the love of the world is in a person's heart, they are deprived of tasting the sweetness of faith, and the only way to attain this unparalleled blessing is renunciation of the world. Moreover, all other blessings are also only attained through renunciation. That honourable and great Imam (a.s) said,

²⁰⁸ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of condemnation of the world and adopting ascetism in it, H no 2

جُعِلَ الْخَيْرُ كُلُّهُ فِي بَيْتٍ، وَجُعِلَ مِفْتَاحُهُ الزُّهْدَ فِي الدُّنْيَا

*All goodness has been placed in a house, and the key to it is renunciation of the world.*²⁰⁹

No goodness comes to a person except through the path of renunciation of the world, and one of the greatest virtues is the hatred of the world, which after the recognition of Allah, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a), and Imam, is the greatest divine blessing. Accordingly, those awaiting the reappearance of Hazrat Baqiyatullah (a.t.f.s) should place attaining the station of renunciation (zuhud) at the top of their programme for self-building and strive to actualize it through possible means. The most important point that should be considered for practising renunciation is this reality: the more worldly means are provided for a person, the more attached his heart becomes to the world, and the more covetous they become of what they do not have. Imam Jafar Sadiq has drawn attention to this matter, saying:

مَا فَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَى عَبْدٍ بَاباً مِنَ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا فَتَحَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْجِرْصِ مِثْلِيهِ

*Allah does not open a door of worldly affairs for a servant except that Allah opens for him a similar door of covetousness.*²¹⁰

The more the world is provided for a person, the more covetous he becomes of it. So, if he does not suffice with what is necessary and needed, he will strive for more than whatever he has. Ultimately, due to excessively seeking the world, they are destroyed. Imam Jafar Sadiq said,

²⁰⁹ Ibid

²¹⁰ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of condemnation of the world and adopting ascetism in it, H no 12

مَثَلُ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ الْبَحْرِ الْمَلْحِ كَمَا شَرِبَ الْعَطْشَانُ مِنْهُ اَزْدَادَ
عَطْشًا حَتَّى يَقْتُلَهُ.

*'The parable of the world is like the parable of the seawater. However much the thirsty one drinks from it; his thirst increases until it kills him.'*²¹¹

Being satisfied with the world does not come from benefiting more from it. Rather, the more one benefits, the more a person's covetousness and sense of thirst (for the world) increase, and this continues until the world and its covetousness led to his destruction. Destruction here means spiritual ruination—in other words, being deprived of faith and true recognition, and the soul eventually dies.

The wise person is content with the world to his necessary needs and does not afflict himself by falling into a path whose end is destruction. Imam Jafar Sadiq narrates one of the revelations of Allah to Hazrat Moosa (a.s) as follows:

يَا مُوسَى لَا تَرْكُنْ إِلَى الدُّنْيَا... رُكُونِ مَنِ اتَّخَذَهَا أَبًا وَأُمًّا يَا مُوسَى لَوْ
وَكَلَّتْكَ إِلَى نَفْسِكَ لَتَنْظُرَ لَهَا إِذَا الْغَلَبَ عَلَيْكَ حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا وَزَهَرَتْهَا

*'O Moosa! Do not rely on the world... like one who takes it as a father and mother. O Moosa! if I had left you to yourself, the love of the world and its adornments would have overpowered you...'*²¹²

²¹¹ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of condemnation of the world and adopting ascetism in it, H no 24

²¹² Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of condemnation of the world and adopting ascetism in it, H no 21

The world has nothing reliable for human beings, and Allah says to Prophet Moosa (a.s) - who was His chosen and beloved prophet - that even someone like him, if left to reform himself, the beautiful manifestations of the world will captivate his heart, attract him towards itself, and deceive him. As a result, he will neglect self-reform. Therefore, one must be very careful and heed Allah's advice. Some of this advice is mentioned in the remainder of this narration,

أَتْرُكُ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا مَا بَكَ الْغَيْى عَنْهُ وَلَا تَنْظُرْ عَيْنَكَ إِلَى كُلِّ مَفْتُونٍ بِهَا
وَمُوَكِّلٍ إِلَى نَفْسِهِ وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ كُلَّ فِتْنَةٍ بَدَأُهَا حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا تَغْبِطُ
أَحَدًا بِكَثْرَةِ الْمَالِ فَإِنَّ مَعَ كَثْرَةِ الْمَالِ تَكْثُرُ الذُّنُوبُ لِوَأَجِبِ الْحُقُوقِ

'Abandon whatever of the world you have no need for. Do not look at everyone who is infatuated by it and left to themselves. Know that every tribulation begins with the love of the world. Do not envy anyone for his abundant wealth, for with abundant wealth, sins inevitably increase due to the rights owed within that wealth.'

If Allah extends His grace to a person, he only uses the world to the extent of his need and does not occupy himself with ceremonial affairs that are mostly for ostentation. He also does not envy those who are immersed in worldly appearances and have become blind and deaf to their faults. He does not consider benefiting from the world as a position or perfection. Nor does he envy its possessors and spends sleepless nights not having their position. Rather, he is happy since he is less tainted by the world and hopes that he will enter the Abode of Peace (Paradise) safely. He truly understood that whoever has more wealth in this world also has more obligations and rights on his shoulders. If he cannot

fulfil them, the burden of those sins will grip him. For this reason, he wishes to have only what satisfies his needs and does not retain or accumulate more than that. Of course, the manifestations of the world are not just wealth and property and a wise person is not deceived by any of them. The continuation of the Hadees Qudsi is as follows,

وَلَا تَغْبِطَنَّ أَحَدًا بِرِضَى النَّاسِ عَنْهُ حَتَّى تَعْلَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ رَاضٍ عَنْهُ، وَ
لَا تَغْبِطَنَّ مَخْلُوقًا بِطَاعَةِ النَّاسِ لَهُ؛ فَإِنَّ طَاعَةَ النَّاسِ لَهُ وَاتِّبَاعَهُمْ
إِيَّاهُ عَلَى غَيْرِ الْحَقِّ هَلَاكٌ لَهُ وَلِمَنْ اتَّبَعَهُ

'Do not envy anyone for people's approval of them until you know that Allah is pleased with them. And do not envy the creatures for the people's obedience to them. For indeed, people's obedience to them and their following of them other than the truth leads to destruction for them and for whoever follows them' ²¹³

The world manifests itself differently for everyone. What causes forgetfulness of Allah and negligence of Him may, for some, be wealth and amenities, and for others, position and status among their followers. For the first person, wealth is his world, and for the second, rank and status among his followers is his world. There is no difference in these things being the "world". The wise person does not attach his heart to them and does not sell the pleasure of Allah to any of them.

Allah must grace the person so that he can recognize all the deceptive manifestations of the world and not be deceived by any of them. In that case, he flees from the world and is careful that nothing from it contaminates him. Those who have

²¹³ Al-Kafi, vol 2, pg 135

implemented these invaluable instructions can encourage others to act upon them better and create an environment more conducive to practising these teachings.

The author finds it necessary to mention here the immense grace of Allah and Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) who has blessed him with a precious gift since his youth. As per the verse (وَأَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ) 'And relate the favours of your Lord'²¹⁴, he fondly remembers his noble teacher and mentor of his life who has an immense influence upon him. Marhoom Allamah Ali Asghar Karbasi, with his blessed life in this world, taught his students of the Alawi school that one can truly detach the heart from this world, turn away from wealth, status and the vain words of the worldly people, and consider nothing but the pleasure of the Divine Beloved.

This embodiment of piety practically taught his students the lesson of asceticism and detachment from the world. He proved that it is possible to live in this world without being tainted by its deceptive appearances and attend to the needs of the impoverished while being content with the bare minimum necessities for himself. Through his conduct, he showed that following Ameerul Momineen (a.s) and emulating the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) is not just a thought or an imagination but that coming near to those lofty models of humanity is achievable.

Indeed, Nahjul Balagha of our Master, Ameerul Momineen (a.s) was the guiding principle of his life. His existence is proof for all Shias of Ameerul Momineen (a.s) that it is possible to lead an Alawi life in every era. May Allah preserve his blessed

²¹⁴ Surah Zoha, v 11

life with wellbeing and health, and grant him the opportunity to assist Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) during his advent.²¹⁵

It is good to pay attention to one of the lessons of this student of Ameerul Momineen (a.s).

Ali (a.s) says:

وَإِنَّ دُنْيَاكُمْ عِنْدِي لِأَهْوَنُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ فِي فَمِّ جَرَادَةٍ تَقْضُمُهَا

*'Indeed, your world is more insignificant to me than a leaf in the mouth of a locust chewing it.'*²¹⁶

Is it possible for a person to be happy for possessing a leaf that a locust has chewed, or to grieve for not, having it? He (a.s) also says,

وَ اللَّهُ لَدُنِّيَاكُمْ هَذِهِ أَهْوَنُ فِي عَيْنِي مِنْ عَرَاقٍ [عَرَاقٍ] خَنْزِيرٍ فِي يَدٍ
مَجْدُومٍ

*'By Allah! Your world is more insignificant in my sight than the sweat of a pig in the hands of a leper.'*²¹⁷

Would a rational person grieve over losing such a thing? In another statement, he (a.s) says,

²¹⁵ With thousands of regrets and sorrows, in the last days when this book was being prepared for publication, this unsung and unrecognized blessing departed from the group of his students and devotees, leaving the mourners of Imam Mahdi in grief. He, the beloved of Hazrat Zahra (s.a) was buried on the night of her martyrdom beside the shrine of the noble Ahle Bait (a.s.) in the holy city of Qum. May Allah grant us all the blessing to appreciate this precious gift in word and deed and place our great teacher among the chosen companions of Imam Mahdi (may our souls be sacrificed for him) at the time of his reappearance.

²¹⁶ Nahjul Balagha Fiqhi, pg 824, sermon 221

²¹⁷ Nahjul Balagha Fiqhi, pg 824, pg 1284

لَأَلْفَيْتُمْ دُنْيَاكُمْ هَذِهِ أَرْهَدَ عِنْدِي مِنْ عَفْطَةِ عَنَزٍ

*'You will find that your world is more contemptible to me than the snot of a goat.'*²¹⁸

Have you ever seen someone being anxious because they do not possess the snot of a goat? In another phrase, he states,

فَلْتَكُنِ الدُّنْيَا فِي أَعْيُنِكُمْ أَصْغَرَ مِنْ حُثَالَةِ الْقَرِظِ وَقُرَاضَةِ الْجَلَمِ

*'Let the world be smaller in your eyes than the remnants of the leaves of the lotus tree and the shavings of the shears.'*²¹⁹

In the previous statements, he said the world is such and such in his view, but in this last statement, he says this is how you too should view it. It's very interesting! We say we are Shias and followers of this great man of humanity, and we admit that we don't pay attention to his (a.s) instructions! I swear to Allah if he has ordered us to have this attitude, but even the smallest piece of thread is scattered somewhere, is it possible for us to look at it and resent not owning it?!

From this moment on, we must either resign from being followers of Ali (a.s) or strive to become noble and sacrifice our life, existence, world, and the Hereafter for the sake of Ameerul Momineen (a.s). The loss of life - if even a moment of it passes by - becomes irreplaceable - is not comparable to material losses, which are repairable. So why don't we come to our senses and not let this great asset slip from our hands?...

²¹⁸ Nahjul Balagha Fiqhi, pg 824, pg 42, sermon 3

²¹⁹ Nahjul Balagha Fiqhi, pg 824, pg 112, sermon 32

I swear by Allah if human beings understand that profit and loss, having and not having, are all imaginary, is it possible for them to become captives of those things?

'Profit and loss and capital - what will it matter when gone?

For this trade, be not grieved but joyous instead.

Tell the profit-seekers of the world this wisdom to heed:

"Limit your capital, since profit and loss are the same."

How good it would be if we awake from our deep slumber and understand these realities - which are brighter than the sun - so that we may live at ease and die at ease and be in pleasure and joy forever! Think a little. There was a time when you were obsessed with the mother's breast, and if it was taken away from you, you would be upset and cry. Yet that period passed. Later, if someone took the ball away from you, you would become restless and cry. And assuming that hundreds of people told you, 'A Day will come when you will laugh at your crying,' it still would not have any effect.

Think a little. Lest what you are currently obsessed with and think that if it is lost, the sky will fall to the earth - is the same as the breast and ball of yesterday for which you would kill yourself! Yes, in the view of the great ones, all these fascinating stages of the world are nothing but a game and a mockery, and they consider us to be intoxicated, blind, and insane.

"I said to him: Why are these people so attached?"

He said: "They are either intoxicated, blind, or insane."

These statements are the exact words of the one who has been trained in the school of thought of Ameerul Momineen

(a.s.)²²⁰, and which can serve as a model for all those who wish to emulate the life of their Imam (a.s).

One who treads this path and truly turns away from the world and its appearances, attains a blessing that cannot be compared with any other blessing. So even if other people who fail to understand his logic do not respect and honour him, it does not matter to him at all. The incomparable blessing he attains is the sweetness of the love of Allah. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) says,

إِذَا تَخَلَّى الْمُؤْمِنُ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا سَمًا وَوَجَدَ حَلَاوَةَ حُبِّ اللَّهِ وَكَانَ عِنْدَ
أَهْلِ الدُّنْيَا كَأَنَّهُ قَدْ خُولِطَ وَإِنَّمَا خَالَطَ الْقَوْمَ حَلَاوَةَ حُبِّ اللَّهِ فَلَمْ
يَشْتَغَلُوا بِغَيْرِهِ.

*'When the believer renounces the world, he soars and finds the sweetness of the love of Allah. And among the people of the world, it is as if he is mixed, but what mixes with the people is the sweetness of the love of Allah, so they do not busy themselves with anything else.'*²²¹

Yes, the one who turns his back on the world finds Allah and tastes the sweetness of His love. Then nothing other than Allah seems important or beloved to him, and nothing occupies his thoughts and heart except that which brings him closer to Allah. Such a person is considered insane by those whose entire preoccupation is the world and its adornments. The reason they consider him insane is because he does not

²²⁰ This concept was written by our teacher to one of his students in a letter dated 8/7/1365 AH

²²¹ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of condemnation of the world and adopting ascetism in it, H no 10

think like them. The worldly allurements - good or bad – is ridiculous, frivolous and a toy to this wise believer.

The truly wise one is he whose criterion for good and bad is the pleasure of Allah, not pleasing or displeasing people. And it is natural that if he turns his back on people's baseless judgments and does not give them any importance, he is considered insane, foolish, or mindless. But people's praise or condemnation does not change the reality of things. What is important and the true criterion is solely and solely the pleasure of the Almighty Allah, and that is all.

Let us all heed the advice of the Master of the Worlds, Ameerul Momineen (a.s), and adopt realism for the remainder of our lives, so that if we have fallen short in the past, we do not lose the opportunity to make amends.

فَارْضِ الدُّنْيَا فَإِنَّ حُبَّ الدُّنْيَا يُبْغِي وَيُصِمُّ وَيُبْكِمْ وَيُذِلُّ الرِّقَابَ
فَتَدَارِكُ مَا بَقِيَ مِنْ عُمْرِكَ وَلَا تَقُلْ غَدًا أَوْ بَعْدَ غَدٍ فَإِنَّمَا هَلَكٌ مَنْ
كَانَ قَبْلَكَ بِإِقَامَتِهِمْ عَلَى الْأَمَانِيِّ وَالتَّسْوِيفِ حَتَّى آتَاهُمْ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ
بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ غَافِلُونَ فَنُقِلُوا عَلَى أَعْوَادِهِمْ إِلَى قُبُورِهِمْ الْمُظْلِمَةِ
الضَّيِّقَةِ وَقَدْ أَسْلَمَهُمُ الْأَوْلَادُ وَالْأَهْلُونَ

"Renounce the world, for the love of the world blinds, deafens, makes one dumb and abases the necks. So, make up for what remains of your life and do not say 'Tomorrow' or 'After tomorrow.' Those who came before you perished by clinging to hopes and procrastination until the command of Allah came upon them suddenly while they were unaware. So, they were carried on their

*biers to their dark, narrow graves, abandoned by their children and families.*²²²

This is an important matter - whether a person builds his life based on worldly desires and transient interests or bases it on realities. What the worldly people consider invaluable is nothing but fruitless hopes and desires. But a believer must always look towards the Hereafter and make its values the foundation of his life. Hence Ameerul Momineen (a.s) says in another part of the same hadees,

مَنْ اتَّقَى اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَ قَوِيَ وَ شَبِعَ وَ رَوِيَ وَ رَفَعَ عَقْلُهُ عَنِ أَهْلِ الدُّنْيَا
فَبَدَنُهُ مَعَ أَهْلِ الدُّنْيَا وَقَلْبُهُ وَ عَقْلُهُ مُعَايِنٌ لِلْآخِرَةِ

*'Whoever fears Allah becomes honoured, powerful, satiated and quenched. His intellect rises above the worldly people, so his body is with them, but his heart and intellect are focused on the Hereafter.'*²²³

A pious person does not seek honour and strength through base worldly matters. Since he sees the world as nothing but a mirage, he does not expect it to quench his thirst. Rather, he is spiritually satiated only by tasting the love of Allah. He rises above the level of worldly people - only his body is with them, while his soul and heart are ever oriented towards the Hereafter. He calculates his profits and losses by the standards of the Hereafter, attaching his heart to what will make him fortunate in the latter life, considering the worldly people and

²²² Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of condemnation of the world and adopting ascetism in it, H no 23

²²³ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 70, pg 75

their criteria of good and bad as pointless and foolish. All this is due to the perfect intellect Allah has granted him.

The discussion on the renunciation of the world has become longer than expected. The reason for this elaboration is the importance this topic holds regarding Intezaar of Imam Asr (a.s). Those awaiting their Master with their whole being are aware of how the evil deeds of the Shias have deprived them of the grace of seeing their Imam. They know well how worldly desires have prolonged this deprivation. Imam Asr (a.s) himself says in a Tawqee to Shaikh Mufid (r.a),

فَمَا يَحْسِنَا عَنْهُمْ إِلَّا مَا يَتَّصِلُ بِنَا مِمَّا نَكْرَهُهُ وَلَا نُؤْتِرُهُ مِنْهُمْ

*'Nothing prevents us from being with them except what reaches us from them that we dislike and do not prefer.'*²²⁴

Certainly, materialism and being immersed in the deceptive manifestations of the world, which cause negligence from the remembrance of Allah, are not loved by Imam (a.s). Therefore, those who await the reappearance of Imam (a.s) should not be indifferent to this matter, and they should consider themselves obligated to observe piety and turn away from the world in practice, just as Ali ibn Ibrahim ibn Mahziyar did when he attained the honour of being in the presence of Imam Asr (a.s). It is narrated from him that when he entered Imam's (a.s) tent and greeted him, Imam (a.s) said: *'We have been waiting for you day and night. What caused your delay in coming to us?'*

He said: "My master, until now I didn't find anyone to guide me (to your location)."

²²⁴ Ihtejaaj Tabarsi, vol 2, pg 325

The Imam said: 'Did you not find a believer to guide you?' Then he drew with his finger on the ground and said:

لَا وَ لَكِنَّكُمْ كَثَرْتُمْ الْأَمْوَالَ، وَ تَجَبَّرْتُمْ عَلَى ضُعَفَاءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ، وَ
قَطَعْتُمْ الرَّحِمَ الَّذِي بَيْنَكُمْ، فَأَيُّ عُدْرٍ لَكُمْ الْآنَ؟

'No. But you were engrossed in accumulating wealth and acted arrogantly towards the weak believers, and you severed the bonds of kinship among yourselves. What excuse do you have now?'

I said: "I repent, I repent, pardon me, overlook it." Then he (a.s) said:

يَا ابْنَ الْمَهْزِيَارِ، لَوْ لَا اسْتِغْفَارُ بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ لَهْلَكَ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا
خَوَاصَّ الشَّيْبَعَةِ الَّذِينَ تُشْبِهُهُ أَقْوَالُهُمْ أَفْعَالُهُمْ

'O son of Mahziyar, if it were not for some of you seeking forgiveness for others, all those who are on the earth would be destroyed, except the special Shias - those whose words match their deeds.'²²⁵

With this description, what percentage of the friends of Imam Asr (a.s) can claim to be true believers and muntazirs? The Imam, in this meeting, considered attachment to the world, being drowned in wealth, neglecting the poor Shias, and cutting off kinship as obstacles for the likes of Ali ibn Ibrahim ibn Mahziyar - who was incidentally among the Shias – who was honoured with Imam's (a.s) meeting. He then said that the Shias' deeds must match their words, or else they deserve destruction and annihilation. Everyone must judge for themselves how worthy they are of awaiting his Faraj, and

²²⁵ Dalail Imamah, pg 297

whether the desire to help that Master (a.s) is a real hope or an instance of vain and baseless wishes! Here, we end the explanation of the first stage of the requirements of awaiting relief - living with the remembrance of Imam (a.s) and according to his pleasure. Although the explanation of this discussion may seem somewhat lengthy, this stage of the requirements of awaiting relief is very important. It is the basis and foundation for the subsequent stages; hence this elaboration was necessary.

The realization of the three axes mentioned in explaining this stage makes the life of the muntazir according to Imam's (a.s) satisfaction and prepares him to welcome his beloved (a.s). All of these are among the blessings of awaiting the relief of Imam Mahdi, which itself is one of the greatest manifestations of Faraj.

Necessities of Intezaar

Second stage

The desire to assist Imam (a.t.f.s) and join him.

The second stage of deliverance, which is a necessary part of awaiting Faraj (reappearance of Imam (a.s)) and for which every muntazir must aspire during occultation is that his life takes shape with the desire to help Imam (a.s) with the hope of joining him (a.s). This type of life emanates from possessing love and attachment to Imam (a.s).

To explain this matter, we must first pay attention to the general relationship between a person's desires and his inner world, and the mutual influence of these two. Then we will discuss the relationship between the muntazirs and the desires they have towards their Imam (a.s).

In general, it can be said that a person's desires have a direct connection to his self (nafs) and soul (ruh) and represent his inner world, to the extent that one of the best ways to know a person is to know his desires. One can discern a person's state from his desires. Of course, the desires in question here are those that exist on a real and firm basis within a person, not vain and baseless desires that merely arise in one's mind and imagination without any reality. Our intention is desires whose realization one can hope for, not unattainable things. In the Arabic language, the term (أَمْنِيَّة) "Omniah" is used for the latter meaning, which is not what we intend here. In any case,

a person's real desires can well represent his inner self and personality.

Imagine someone whose desire is to help the needy and attend to the destitute, and they work to earn wealth in the hope of performing such services. This hope and desire indicate the good qualities of generosity, charity, and a spirit of helping others within him. In contrast, someone whose desire is to acquire wealth to live more comfortably and increase his riches, this desire speaks of the ugly traits of miserliness and greed within them. In both cases, the person's desires arise from his inner world, and one can largely know a person's character from his desires. Good or bad desires show the lofty or base station of the individual.

In both cases, they are desires/aspirations and one can largely recognize a person's character from his aspirations. Good or bad aspirations show the lofty or lowly status of the individual. The result is that a person's true aspirations are influenced by his inner world and stem from their personality. However, this is only one side of the matter. The other side is that a person's aspirations are also very influential in shaping their character, to the extent that by changing someone's aspirations, a new personality can be created.

For example, consider a student who does not have a high aptitude and hardly studies. Naturally, given their aptitude and lack of effort, these students do not hope to achieve the first rank in their class, nor do they nurture such a desire.

This is the first side of the matter, that a person's desire can indicate his personality and spiritual characteristics. The second side is that if the parents and teachers of this same student want to raise his academic rank in the class, even to

the first or second position, one of the best ways is to instill hope in them - to create within them the hope of attaining excellent ranks in the class and thereby nurture the desire to become a champion. Bringing about such hope and desire can transform a lazy and bored student into a resolute, serious striver. This effort and seriousness will gradually raise his academic rank in the class and place them among the best students. This effort and seriousness are due to the hopes and desires that were created within him. Previously when he lacked such hope, he also lacked the effort and patience for serious studying.

In this way, the personality of this student is gradually transformed until he thinks only of attaining the top rank in the class, whereas earlier his only ambition was not to fail. The ambition of this person has changed from what it was before, and this change is due to the change in his intention. In general, it can be said that a person's intention plays a fundamental role in forming his ambition. Everyone strives to the extent of his intention, and since a person's desires shape his intention, his desires greatly influence the strengthening or weakening of his ambition. In conclusion, a person's desires, by influencing his intention, affect his ambition, and a person's ambition forms his personality:

Desire → Intention → Ambition → Personality

Ameerul Momineen (a.s) said,

قَدْرُ الرَّجُلِ عَلَى قَدْرِ هَيْبَتِهِ

*'The worth of a man is in proportion to his determination and resolve.'*²²⁶

The higher and loftier a person's focus is, the higher and nobler his station and rank will be. And if his ambition is shameful and lowly, his worth and value will also be corrupt. Hence, in the supplications that have reached us from the Infallible (a.s), the request for the highest ambitions from Allah Almighty has been raised. In a supplication from Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s), it is stated,

أَسْأَلُكَ ... مِنَ الْعِبَادَةِ أَنْشَطَهَا ... وَمِنَ الْهَمِّ أَعْلَاهَا

*'I ask You...from acts of worship, the most lively of them...and determinations, the highest of them.'*²²⁷

A lofty ambition elevates the human personality and increases his seriousness and diligence. Ameerul Momineen (a.s) said,

مَنْ كَبُرَتْ هَيْبَتُهُ كَثُرَ اهْتِمَامُهُ

*'Whoever has a greater resolve, will have a greater diligence.'*²²⁸

A person's persistence is always to the extent of his ambition. The weaker the ambition, the weaker the diligence and a lofty ambition brings lofty diligence. The extent of a person's courage in reaching his goal also depends on the extent of his ambition.

Imam Ali (a.s) says,

²²⁶ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 70, pg 4

²²⁷ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 94, pg 155

²²⁸ Ghurar, H no 10277

شَجَاعَةُ الرَّجُلِ عَلَى قَدْرِ هَمِّتِهِ

'A person's courage is to the extent of his perseverance.'²²⁹

As mentioned earlier, what raises a person's determination is his intention. Such that if a person's intention to reach a goal is strong, his physical strength also increases, and he does not feel any weakness. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) said,

مَا ضَعْفَ بَدَنٌ عَمَّا قَوِيَتْ عَلَيْهِ النِّيَّةُ

'The body does not feel weak towards what the intention is strong upon accomplishing.'²³⁰

Taufeqaat and divine help are also bestowed upon a person to the extent of his intention. Ameerul Momineen (a.s) says,

عَلَى قَدْرِ النِّيَّةِ تَكُونُ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَطِيَّةُ

'Divine gifts are according to the extent of one's intention.'²³¹

Whoever has a lofty intention will receive more from Allah's bounties, and the lower the intention, the less the Divine grace will be.

Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) says,

إِنَّمَا قَدَّرَ اللَّهُ عَوْنَ الْعِبَادِ عَلَى قَدْرِ نِيَّاتِهِمْ فَمَنْ صَحَّتْ نِيَّتُهُ تَمَّ عَوْنُ اللَّهِ لَهُ وَ مَنْ قَصُرَتْ نِيَّتُهُ قَصُرَ عَنْهُ الْعَوْنُ بِقَدْرِ الَّذِي قَصَرَ.

²²⁹ Ghurar, H no 10267

²³⁰ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 70, pg 205

²³¹ Ghurar, vol 1594

*'Indeed, Allah has apportioned the assistance to His servants according to their intentions. So, whoever has a sound intention, then Allah's assistance for him is complete. And whoever has a deficient intention, the assistance falls short for him to the extent of that deficiency.'*²³²

In summary, a person's intention shapes his ambition, and Divine successes are granted to them to the extent of his ambition. On the other hand, each person's personality takes shape as per his intentions and ambitions.

Now we must see how a person's desires relate to his ambition. In general, it can be said that a person's essence and his desires mutually influence each other. What is meant by essence is the same as one's personality from which his actions arise. The Noble Quran states,

كُلُّ يَعْْمَلُ عَلَىٰ شَاكِرَتِهِ

*'...Everyone acts according to his innate nature...'*²³³

In the traditions of the Ahlul Bait (a.s), this innate nature in the noble verse has been interpreted as a person's intention.²³⁴ From this explanation, it can be understood that each person's personality is formed and shaped by his intentions. So, it can be said that on one side, a person's desires arise from his spiritual essence and personality, and on the other side, a person's desires affect his intention, and his intention affects

²³² Behaarul Anwaar, vol 70, pg 211

²³³ Surah Bani Israel, v 84

²³⁴ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of Sincerity, H no 4

his ambition, and each person's essence takes shape by his intentions and ambitions.

With this issue clarified, we can now discuss the mutual relationship between the muntazir and the desires he has regarding awaiting the reappearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) and recognize the influence on each other.

If someone, who is counting the moments while awaiting the advent of his Master is asked what his greatest desire is, he will certainly first mention that Allah should grant him the Taufeeq to witness the reappearance of Imam (a.t.f.s) and include him among his (a.s) companions. Someone whose heart has been influenced by the fervour of awaiting Hazrat Baqiyatullah (a.t.f.s), his desires will not relate to himself, his relatives or those around him. They have no beloved closer than Imam (a.t.f.s), and thus his greatest desire relates to his greatest beloved. All other desires come after attaining the beloved. Indeed, they arise due to him and solely for his sake.

The more intense and sincere the awaiting of Faraj within a person, the more intense this state will be in them, to the extent that the desire to help Imam (a.t.f.s) and join him pervades his entire being, flowing through all his actions like a soul within a body. Naturally, his deeds will reflect his desires. His personality becomes overshadowed by this great desire, and all his efforts take on the colour and scent of helping Imam (a.s). This spiritual state is one of the highest perfections for a believer during the occultation of his Master. This great desire keeps him constantly alive with the remembrance of and love for his Imam, and the presence of Imam (a.t.f.s) never departs from his heart. Rather, all his endeavours are guided in this direction.

The greatest desire of every individual manifest in the sincere supplications they present from the depths of his heart before Allah. When a person nurtures a desire, hopes for its fulfilment, and makes its realization conditional upon Allah's Will, he calls out to Him fervently to make his desire a reality. Among the foremost supplications that the muntazirs recite during the occultation of Imam (a.t.f.s) is one narrated from Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) as part of Dua Ahad:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي مِنْ أَنْصَارِهِ وَأَعْوَانِهِ

*'O Allah, make me from among his helpers and supporters.'*²³⁵

Although the acceptance of this supplication is not exclusive to the era of Imam's reappearance and includes helping him even during occultation, our present discussion pertains to the desire to help Imam (a.s) at the time of his reappearance. From this perspective, this supplication expresses one of the loftiest desires of those awaiting Faraj during occultation.

Another supplication that expresses one of the best and most beautiful desires of the muntazir has been introduced from the noble presence of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) himself through his representative. This is a part of the blessed "Dua Iftitah" recited on the nights of the month of Ramazan.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَرْغِبُ إِلَيْكَ فِي دَوْلَةِ كَرِيمَةٍ تُعِزُّ بِهَا الْإِسْلَامَ وَأَهْلَهُ وَتُذِلُّ
بِهَا النِّفَاقَ وَأَهْلَهُ وَتَجْعَلُنَا فِيهَا مِنَ الدُّعَاةِ إِلَى طَاعَتِكَ وَالْقَادَةِ فِي
سَبِيلِكَ وَتَرْزُقُنَا بِهَا كَرَامَةَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ

²³⁵ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 102, pg 111

'O Allah, we desire from You a noble government through which You fortify Islam and its people, and debase hypocrisy and its people, and make us among those who invite to Your obedience and guide to Your path, and grant us through it the honour of this world and the Hereafter.' ²³⁶

Blessed is the one whose greatest desire is the realization of this noble supplication. A true supplication is not merely words uttered by the supplicant's tongue. Rather these words must arise from his heart and express his hopes and desires. If so, the supplicant has attained the highest spiritual degrees in connection with Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) during his occultation. Is not attaining this spiritual perfection itself among the manifestations of Faraj and deliverance for a muntazir? What greater deliverance is there than during the occultation of Imam (a.t.f.s), for one's thoughts to dwell on being among the workers of that noble government? One who truly harbours such desires has attained lofty degrees of knowledge, love, and support for his Imam (a.s)

In another supplication that has also reached us from the Noble Imam (a.s) himself, through his first representative, we read,

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ أَنْ تُرِيَنِي وَيَّ أَمْرِكَ ظَاهِرًا نَافِذًا لِأَمْرِكَ... فَأَفْعَلُ
ذَلِكَ بِي وَبِجَمِيعِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَتَّى نَنْظُرَ إِلَى وَوَلِيَّكَ صَلَوَاتُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ
ظَاهِرَ الْمَقَالَةِ وَاضِحَ الدَّلَالَةِ... أَبْرُزِيَا رَبِّ مَشَاهِدَهُ... وَاجْعَلْنَا
مِنْ تَقَرُّ عَيْنُهُ بِرُؤْيَيْتِهِ وَأَقِمْنَا بِخِدْمَتِهِ

²³⁶ At-Tehzeeb, vol 3, pg 110

*'O Allah! I ask You to show me Your Guardian in manifest authority, enforcing commands... So do that for me and all the believers, until we observe Your Guardian - prayers upon him and his family - with clear speech and manifest evidence... Manifest his presence, O Lord... and make us among those whose eyes are delighted by seeing him and appoint us in his service.'*²³⁷

These are the best desires of the one awaiting Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s). If one's most important wishes are such, then the greatest relief regarding religious matters has been attained for him. According to the traditions of the Ahlul Bait (a.s), even if such a person does not witness the reappearance of his Master, it will not harm them.²³⁸ Consequently, it can be said that merely having such desires during occultation of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) is the greatest deliverance for the muntazir. It is what we referred to in the second stage among the requirements of awaiting deliverance. But this has another constructive and influential side as well.

So far, we have discussed the influence of the muntazir's essence on his desires. Now we must examine the opposite effect - the influence of these desires on shaping the essence and personality of the muntazir. However, these very desires can have a profound effect on shaping the essence and personality of the muntazir. For example, the desire to help Imam (a.t.f.s) and the hope of joining him creates the intention to realize that desire within the person. This good intention places his resolve on this path and motivates him to actualize it. Such a person spontaneously structures his life towards achieving this goal, never losing sight of his goal in all daily

²³⁷ Jamlul Usboo, pg 316

²³⁸ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Hujjah, Chapter of the one who recognizes his Imam, H no 5

affairs. The stronger this intention and ambition becomes, the more it preoccupies his efforts until he nurtures no thought other than this. It is at this point that his inner world takes shape under the influence of these lofty aims, the desire to help Imam (a.t.f.s) moulds his essence in the chosen manner.

If this spiritual influence is accompanied by the commitment to recite the narrated supplications on this topic, it gains a greater depth. Supplications such as those mentioned, in addition to being effective in hastening the reappearance of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) and consequently completing the ultimate deliverance of the believers including the supplicant themselves, also have a significant impact on shaping the supplicant's personality even before reappearance. Reciting these supplications with complete awareness and fulfilling their etiquettes creates the best and loftiest hopes and desires concerning Imam Asr (a.s) within the supplicant. As a result, it inculcates the best intentions and highest ambitions in the muntazir, shaping his personality in a manner consistent with these ambitions.

Just as a person's personality influences the formation of his desires, his desires also greatly influence the shaping of his personality. Therefore, those seeking personal deliverance must strive to develop loftier desires about Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), and one of the best ways to achieve this is through diligence in reciting the narrated supplications with these themes.

For example, regarding the phrases we quoted from the blessed 'Dua Iftitah' – if one sincerely and wholeheartedly asks to play a central and leading role in the noble government of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), to be among the commanders of his companions, and constantly utters this desire while awaiting

and even counting the moments until that day - then this very act of desiring and constantly hoping will be constructive and guiding for him. It keeps his soul and spirit alive each day and every moment with the joyful remembrance of the era of the government of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s). It creates the appropriate intention for those desires within them, and his ambition is moulded around the axis of realizing those lofty goals. Through this, a powerful internal force constantly binds them to his Imam, and consequently, his personality takes shape through these desires.

If we are to provide a final summation of the mutual influence and effect between one's essence and his desires, it would be as follows:

'If a believer has attained such a degree of knowledge of Imam (a.t.f.s) that his greatest desires are to help that Noble One (a.s) and the requisites that come with it, then this very degree of knowledge that has brought about such lofty desires within them is itself among the manifestations of Faraj that are created within the muntazir for awaiting the ultimate Faraj. This is the first aspect. On the other side, this very act of desiring, especially when accompanied by reciting the relevant supplications, raises the person's rank in knowledge and devotion to Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s). The elevation in the rank of knowledge, in turn, creates even loftier desires within them or deepens the same desires, such that they recite the previous supplications with greater spiritual zeal, and this recitation exerts a deeper influence on his soul. So, in reality, his personality is elevated by these very desires, and this higher rank is a loftier stage of spiritual deliverance that has been granted to them due to constantly awaiting deliverance. Now, this higher rank itself creates desires that are loftier than the previous rank, which in turn leads to even higher

knowledge than the previous stage within them. And this cycle of mutual influence and effect continues perpetually.

We will conclude the explanation of the second stage from the necessities of 'Intezaar-e-Faraj' by stating one of the most beautiful desires of the muntazirs, which has also been mentioned in the authentic supplications. This supplication, from certain aspects, expresses the loftiest desire of those awaiting the deliverance of Imam (a.t.f.s), as mentioned in Dua Ahad,

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي مِنْ ... وَالْمُسْتَشْهِدِينَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ

"O Allah, make me from among those.... those attain martyrdom in his presence." ²³⁹

Martyrdom in the presence of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) means sacrificing one's most precious and beloved possession at his feet. Not everyone has the capability for his insignificant self to be accepted as a sacrifice by the 'beloved' of the daughter of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a). On the Day of Ashura in 61 AH, many hoped to sacrifice their lives for the beloved and cherished one of Hazrat Fatemah (s.a). But this honour was granted only to a few individuals who were chosen by Allah and Imam Husain (a.s) himself. Indeed, for one who wholeheartedly desires martyrdom in the presence of his Imam, even having this desire is the greatest deliverance for him during the occultation of his beloved Imam.

رَزَقْنَا اللَّهُ بِمَنَّةِ اِكْرَمِهِ

(May Allah grant us sustenance by His grace and generosity)

²³⁹Behaarul Anwaar, vol 102, pg 111

Necessities of Intezaar

Third stage

Preparing oneself to accompany Imam (a.t.f.s)

After achieving the previous two stages of self-development and desiring to join Imam Asr (a.s), the muntazir prepares himself to attain his great wish. At this stage, he tries to create a state of complete readiness within himself to assist his Imam, and for this purpose, firstly, he strengthens his connection with Imam, and secondly, he devotes all his endeavours to him (a.s) in practice. The muntazir's focus on this path and taking these two steps is one of the greatest Faraj for him during the occultation of his Master. Now, to clarify that both matters are among the most important manifestations of Faraj, we will briefly explain each of them.

Connection with Imam Asr (a.s)

Every believer must have a connection and bond with the Imam of his time. In other words, he must link himself to him through various means. This is a duty that every 'mukallaf'²⁴⁰ person must perform as an "individual obligation" (wajib-e-aini), and its root is mentioned in the Noble Quran,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

²⁴⁰ A Mukallaf is a sane person who has reached puberty and upon whom the Shariah is applicable.

*"O you who have believed, persevere and endure and remain stationed and fear Allah that you may be successful."*²⁴¹

In this noble verse, the believers are enjoined to do several things. One of them is adopting "patience," the second is "perseverance," and the third is "connection/relation". In the narrations that are mentioned under this verse, the necessary explanation is given for each of these three obligations.

In one of these narrations, it is quoted from Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s):

اضْبِرُوا عَلَى الْفَرَائِضِ وَصَابِرُوا عَلَى الْمَصَائِبِ وَرَابِطُوا عَلَى الْأَئِمَّةِ

*'Persevere in performing the obligations, endure calamities with patience, and adhere to Imams.'*²⁴²

With this explanation, "remain connected" in the noble verse means being connected to Imams. The word مُورَابِطُهُ is derived from رَاطَ which means tying something and making it firm, and رَابِطٌ means "one who is diligent in a matter and adheres to it." So, remaining connected with Imams (a.s) means being diligent in one's connection with them and adhering firmly to them.²⁴³

In this way, رَابِطُوا عَلَى الْأَئِمَّةِ means to adhere to Imams, and adherence means that a person should not separate from them and should connect and commit himself to them in all

²⁴¹ Surah Aale Imran, v 200

²⁴² Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of fulfilling the obligations, H no 3

²⁴³ Moajamul Wasit, pg 323

affairs. This commitment stems from the heart and pervades all actions. In every situation, a believer must adhere to his Imam, and tie himself to him (a.s).

In another narration, the narrator asks Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) about each of these three recommendations in the noble verse, and Imam states,

إصْبِرُوا عَلَى الْأَذَى فِينَا قُلْتُ وَصَابِرُوا قَالَ عَدُوَّكُمْ مَعَ وَلِيِّكُمْ قُلْتُ
وَرَابِطُوا قَالَ الْمَقَامَ مَعَ إِمَامِكُمْ

'Be patient against the harm inflicted upon you for our sake.' I said: "And what is 'be patient'? He (a.s) said: "Against your enemy, along with your guardian (your Imam)." I said, "And 'be connected'?" He (a.s) said: "To rise with your Imam."²⁴⁴

“To rise with Imam” conveys the meaning of adherence, companionship with him, and perseverance and steadfastness along with him. As the author of the book Mikayalul Makarim says, ‘The adherence of a believer to Imam of his time means that he ties himself to the rope of his wilayat and commits himself to obeying and assisting him. This type of adherence²⁴⁵ is an individual obligation (wajib-e-aini), and a proxy (niyabat) is not accepted for it. This is one of the pillars of faith, without which Allah does not accept any deed.’²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 24, pg 217, H 11

²⁴⁵ In the book of Mikyalul Makarim, two more meanings of ‘muraatebah’ have been explained that come under the meaning of recommended (mustahab), pg 424, 426

²⁴⁶ Mikyalul Makarim, vol 2, pg 425

Adhering/Connecting (مُوراطبه) to Imam Asr (a.s) means that a person should commit himself to never separate from him in any matter. It also suggests having a heartfelt connection and bond with him in all affairs of life, as well as being committed in practice to obeying him and assisting him in every field. Naturally, in this case, he will be considered among his aides and helpers during occultation, and this itself is one of the greatest Faraj that is granted to him by awaiting the reappearance of Imam (a.s)

The means available now to support Imam Asr (a.s) are numerous and abundant. Those interested can refer to the valuable book 'Shahwaeh Yaari Qaem Aale Mohammed' by Marhoom Ayatullah Mirza Mohammed Baqir Faqihi Imani, in which twelve ways of assisting that noble Imam have been described.

“The eighth way is as follows: the desire and craving to assist him, accompanied by sincere determination, heartfelt eagerness, and certainty.”²⁴⁷

A sufficient explanation of the importance of this heartfelt desire and its virtuous effects has already been provided in the previous stage of the conditions of Intezaar.

Devoting oneself to Imam (a.s)

The second step in creating readiness to join Imam (a.s) is that the muntazir devotes himself and all of his efforts to Imam Asr (a.s), and in reality, he does not desire anything for himself or others, but rather places all his material and spiritual exertions

²⁴⁷ Shahwaeh Yaari Qaem Aale Mohammed, pg 83

in the direction of assisting Imam (a.s) and in the service of fulfilling his (a.s) wishes.

If someone has the right and complete recognition of his Imam, he wholeheartedly acknowledges that since Imam holds the position of mastery over the believers, then devoting all of one's endeavours to that master is a right that Allah, the Exalted, has granted him. If a believer does so, he has only fulfilled his duty. All the divine blessings that are placed at one's disposal essentially belong to Imam (a.s), and others have the right to benefit from them by his permission. Therefore, every believer should devote himself to his Imam (a.s)

Of course, the performance of this duty is not a religious duty for the public. Rather, depending on the level of his recognition concerning his Imam, the fulfilment of this intellectual obligation becomes necessary for him. Now, if someone reaches such a level of recognition of Imam (a.s) that he devotes himself to him, this very spiritual state is considered the greatest manifestation of Faraj (deliverance) for him before the appearance of Imam.

This is because all goodness stems from this unparalleled blessing. One can say that since the Wilayat of Imam is the Wilayat of Allah, whoever devotes himself to his Imam has essentially devoted himself to his Lord and has attained the highest level of servitude to the Lord.

Such a person will certainly be granted the special favours (Taufeeqaat) from Allah and his affairs will be managed in the best possible way throughout his life. For one who perfectly fulfils his duty of servitude to Allah, Allah Himself will take charge of managing his affairs. This matter is beautifully and completely emphasized in the statement of Imam Baqir (a.s)

to Abdul Hamid Wasiti when he spoke of the difficulties of the period of Intezaar. Imam (a.s) said to him,

يَا عَبْدَ الْحَمِيدِ، أَتَرَى مَنْ حَبَسَ نَفْسَهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ لَا يُجْعَلُ اللَّهُ لَهُ
مَخْرَجًا؟ بَلَى وَ اللَّهُ، لِيُجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا، رَحِمَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا أَحْيَا
أَمْرَنَا

*'O Abdul Hamid! Do you think that if someone devotes himself for the sake of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, Allah will not appoint a way out for him?! Yes, by Allah, Allah will surely appoint a way out for him. May Allah have mercy on a servant who dedicates himself for our sake. May Allah have mercy on a servant who keeps our command alive.'*²⁴⁸

Devoting oneself (حبس نفس) for Imam means that a person views all of his means/assets as belonging to Imam (a.s) and utilizes them in the path that is pleasing to him - his hands work for Imam, his tongue is employed towards Imam's goals, his steps are taken to fulfil Imam's wishes, and...

Imam Baqir (a.s) has stated with two emphases (لِيُجْعَلَ) and one majestic oath (وَاللَّهِ) that Allah will certainly appoint a way out for such a person. The first and most fundamental manifestation of Faraj is the believer's attainment of the belief to devote himself to his Imam. This will be the origin of other reliefs (Faraj) for him. Among the most important reliefs that are realized for the believer as a result of this belief and acting upon it, is mentioned in the following noble narration:

²⁴⁸ Kamaluddin, Chapter 55, H no 2

In continuation of the same narration, Abdul Hamid Wasiti asks Imam Baqir (a.s): "If I depart from this world before witnessing the reappearance of Qaem Aale Mohammed, what will happen?" In response, Imam gives glad tidings to the true muntazirs of Imam Asr (a.s) in general,

الْقَائِلُ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ لَوْ أَدْرَكْتُ قَائِمَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ نَصَرْتُهُ كَانَ كَالْمُقَارِعِ بَيْنَ
يَدَيْهِ بِسَيْفِهِ لَا بَلْ كَالشَّهِيدِ مَعَهُ

'Whoever among you says, 'If I had witnessed Qaem Aale Mohammed, I would have assisted him,' it is as if he has fought along with him with his sword, rather, it is as if he has attained martyrdom alongside him.' ²⁴⁹

Isn't it a true muntazir's greatest wish to witness the reappearance of his Imam and assist him? Does every believer attain this level of recognition and devotion? And if someone reaches this rank, is it not through the special grace and favour of Allah upon him? And is this very spiritual state itself, not the loftiest Faraj?

The sign that this state exists within a person is that his entire focus and preoccupation is for assisting his Imam, and he prepares all the necessary conditions within himself to actualize this "support." With his actions, he demonstrates that

نُصْرَتِي مُعَدَّةٌ لَكُمْ

'My support is prepared for you...' ²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ Ibid

²⁵⁰ Ehtejaj Tabarsi, vol 2, pg 317, from Ziarat Aale Yasin while addressing Imam Asr (a.s).

He has completely prepared himself from every aspect for the reappearance of Imam and assisting him. Out of His grace, Allah grants the reward of assisting Imam (a.s) during his reappearance to the one who, in aspiring to help his Imam, has devoted himself to him. He treats him like someone who has wielded a sword in the company of Imam. And since he has also devoted his life to his Imam, aspiring to sacrifice himself in his presence, he is granted the reward of a martyr in the ranks of Imam. What greater Faraj is there for a person to than attain the rank of a martyr while accompanying Imam Asr (a.s)? So, with this explanation, the one who prepares himself from every aspect to join Imam Asr (a.s), and undertakes the twin duties of "remaining connected" (مُورَاطِبُهُ) and "dedicating oneself" (حَبَسَ نَفْسًا) for Imam's sake, attains his greatest wish - which is martyrdom in the presence of Imam, during this very period of occultation. And this is the third stage of the requirements of awaiting deliverance.

Necessities of Intezaar

Fourth stage

Training of true muntazirs

The true muntazirs of Imam Asr (a.s) are not only content with preparing themselves to welcome him and join his (a.s) presence, rather they consider it an obligation to create this readiness among other believers as well, and they engage in training the true muntazirs.

The obligation of supporting the weak

The first step in this path is for a person to feel a divine obligation towards this duty and not shrug off the responsibility. Imam Raza (a.s), regarding the reason for the obligation of zakat (alms) upon the wealthy, mentioned a general point that can also be raised in the context of our discussion. He has given this reason:

لِأَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ كَفَّ أَهْلَ الصِّحَّةِ الْقِيَامَ بِشَأْنِ أَهْلِ الزَّمَانَةِ وَ
الْبَلَوَى

*'Because Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, has made it incumbent upon the healthy to take care of the affairs of the weak and needy...'*²⁵¹

True health and well-being apply to the body and soul of a person. Someone can be physically healthy but spiritually ill or have a sick body but a healthy soul. Spiritual health means being free from weakness, distress, and illness in terms of beliefs and morals. Those who hold incorrect beliefs lack a firm foundation of faith to withstand doubts and objections from opponents. In general, they lack the necessary steadfastness in performing religious duties and are spiritually ill. Therefore, those who possess firm and correct faith are obligated to attend to the problems and afflictions of such individuals.

Just as the wealthy are obligated to look after the poor among the believers, the sound thinkers and those of higher degrees of faith must attend to the weak-minded and those afflicted with the disease of ignorance, negligence, and forgetfulness of Allah and Imam Asr (a.s). If they fall short in fulfilling this duty, they will be considered sinners and wrongdoers in the sight of Allah.

What tribulation and affliction could be more severe and painful than a believer being misguided in core and fundamental matters of faith, falling into doubts, or in moral issues and being heedless and indifferent in observing religious rulings? In this case, do qualified and righteous individuals not have any responsibility towards such people? If they fall short in fulfilling their duty, will they not be considered partners and contributors to the sins and deviations of those people?

²⁵¹ Uyoon Akhbar Raza, vol 2, pg 89

Here, it is good to once again sit at the feet of our esteemed teacher, who is himself trained in the Alawi school, as he writes to one of his students:

When the Holy Prophet (a.s) states,

حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا رَأْسُ كُلِّ خَطِيئَةٍ

*'Love of the world is the chief (cause) of every sin.'*²⁵²

Its meaning is not just that because we love the world, we end up sinning. Rather, the level of this statement is much higher. If due to our love of the world and our desire for comfort, we do not make any effort to save others, and they commit a sin, that very sin will be recorded in our book of deeds...Now that you have understood the meaning of "love of the world"...ask Allah the Almighty to prevent you from becoming the source of future errors due to negligence and lack of attention to human development.

Alī (a.s) says:

مَا أَخَذَ اللَّهُ عَلَى أَهْلِ الْجَهْلِ أَنْ يَتَعَلَّمُوا حَتَّى أَخَذَ عَلَى أَهْلِ الْعِلْمِ أَنْ يُعَلِّمُوا

'Allah did not hold the ignorant accountable to learn until He held the scholars accountable for teaching'^{253 254}

²⁵² Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of condemnation of the world and adopting ascetism in it, H no 1

²⁵³ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 2, pg 81, H no 83

²⁵⁴ This is the literal translation of the hadees. A more deeper and precise translation is "Allah did not take a covenant from the ignorant ones to acquire knowledge until he took a covenant from the scholars to teach their knowledge

When we come across this saying of our Maula (a.s), due to our desire for comfort and selfishness, we easily overlook it. Why do we not make his words the adornment of ourselves?! Is "Ali" only for us to say "Ya Ali" whenever we want to get up from the ground or to eat cake and sweets on his birth anniversary?! If it is other than that, and we want to be his followers, then why do we not extend a helping hand to others?! On the Day of Resurrection, will we have an answer for the destructions and crimes committed by others because we did not guide them?

‘You who remain indifferent to the suffering of others, do not deserve to be called a human being’ (a Persian couplet)

Let alone being considered a Muslim.

مَنْ أَصْبَحَ لَا يَهْتَمُّ بِأُمُورِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ فَلَيْسَ بِمُسْلِمٍ

‘Whoever wakes up in the morning without concern for the affairs of the Muslims is not a Muslim.’²⁵⁵

The true muntazir of Imam Asr (a.s) during his occultation must consider themselves duty-bound and responsible towards other believers in this way and have such fervour in guiding and supporting the orphans of Aale Mohammed (s.a.w.a).

Has not Allah Almighty stated:

مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا

²⁵⁵ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of arranging the affairs of the Muslims, H no I

*'...Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption done in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely.'*²⁵⁶

When Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) was asked to explain the latter part of this noble verse, he said:

مَنْ أَخْرَجَهَا مِنْ ضَلَالٍ إِلَى هُدًى فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَاهَا وَمَنْ أَخْرَجَهَا مِنْ هُدًى إِلَى ضَلَالٍ فَقَدْ قَتَلَهَا

*'Whoever brings someone out from misguidance to guidance, it is as if he has given them life. And whoever takes someone out from guidance to misguidance, it is as if he has killed them.'*²⁵⁷

Life and death, from the perspective of the Quran and ahadees, fundamentally pertain to the human soul. Whoever is on the straight path is on the path of guidance and is alive. Similarly, whoever is on the path of misguidance and deviation is dead. One who provides the means of guidance for a person is as if he has given life to all of mankind, and in reality, he has a right over the entire community.

Those who are not on the right path are like the dead who appear alive, and according to the logic of revelation, they cannot be called alive. So, the duty of those who have been graced and favoured by the Lord, and have been granted the ability to comprehend the duty of guidance, is to strive with all their effort and strive wholeheartedly in this path. Is not attending to the believers and fulfilling their needs among the greatest rights that are incumbent upon every believer? And is

²⁵⁶ Surah Maidah, v 32

²⁵⁷ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of enlivening the believer, H no

there any need greater for them than the need for guidance, upon which their life and death depend?

The truth is that realization of this virtue i.e. recognizing the rights of one's religious brothers and sisters and fulfilling them, is itself one of the greatest divine blessings. It can be considered as one of the most important manifestations of "Faraj" for the awaiting believer.

Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) said,

وَالْمَعْرِفَةُ بِحُقُوقِ الْإِخْوَانِ مِنْ أَفْضَلِ الصَّدَقَاتِ وَالصَّلَوَاتِ وَالزَّكَاةِ
وَالْحَجِّ وَالْمُجَاهَدَاتِ.

'Recognition of the rights of brothers (in faith) is superior to charity, prayers, zakat, Hajj and struggles (in the way of Allah).'

²⁵⁸

Similarly, Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) said,

أَعْرَفُ النَّاسِ بِحُقُوقِ إِخْوَانِهِ، وَأَشَدُّهُمْ قَضَاءً لَهَا، أَعْظَمُهُمْ عِنْدَ
اللَّهِ شَأْنًا

'The one who recognizes the rights of his religious brothers the most and strives the hardest to fulfil them has the greatest standing with Allah.' ²⁵⁹

Believers must strive to fulfil the rights of their religious brothers, just as they strive to meet their own needs. For example, if they become afflicted with poverty and need money, how hard do they try? They must have the same

²⁵⁸ Tafsir Imam Askari (a.s), pg 322, H no 168

²⁵⁹ Ibid, pg 325, H no 173

diligence and effort in fulfilling the financial needs of a believing individual. They cannot be content with taking one or two simple and ineffective actions, feeling that they have fulfilled their duty towards their religious brother. If their child falls ill, what do they do? Who do they contact, and how much of their honour do they sacrifice to resolve their problem? If they want to fulfil their duty towards other believers, they must be equally serious and diligent about their problems.

The highest and most important need of religious brothers is the salvation of those among them who are misguided and sinful. The believer must strive so that such individuals, especially the youth and adolescents, are guided to the right path and saved from the dangers and perils that threaten their religion. Gradually such deviated youths become acquainted with their duties towards Imam Asr (a.s) and join the ranks of his true muntazirs. This is the greatest need of the believers in every era and time.

When Mualla bin Khunais asked Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) about the rights of believers, he said:

'There are seventy rights, of which I will only mention seven, for I am concerned about you lest you are unable to fulfil all of them.'

Then he mentioned seven of the seventy rights of a believer, one of which is:

تَسْعَى فِي حَوَائِجِهِ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ

'That you strive night and day to fulfil his needs.' ²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of rights of believer upon his brother, H no 4

Striving night and day to fulfil the rights of a believer means that one should not fall short in taking any possible action, even at night which is a time for rest, for this purpose. One should always see oneself as responsible and obligated towards others, and never feel satisfied or sufficient with one's efforts. It is quite possible for a believer to strive to meet the needs of others, but not to the extent they are capable of according to his ability. In that case, they would be subject to the saying of Imam Askari (a.s):

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) witnessed, on the Night of Meraj, magnificent and intensely illuminated palaces whose beauty left one spellbound. However, these palaces lacked entrance corridors, and there were no gardens in front or behind them. When he inquired about these strange palaces, Jibraeel replied,

يَا مُحَمَّدُ هَذِهِ قُصُورُ الْمُصَلِّينَ [الصَّلَوَاتِ] الْخَمْسِ، الَّذِينَ يَبْدُلُونَ
بَعْضَ وَسْعِهِمْ فِي قَضَاءِ حُقُوقِ إِخْوَانِهِمُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ دُونَ جَبِيعِهَا،
فَلِذَلِكَ قُصُورُهُمْ مُسْتَرَّةٌ بِغَيْرِ دِهْلِيْزٍ أَمَامَهَا، وَغَيْرِ بُسْتَانٍ خَلْفَهَا

"O Mohammed! These are the palaces of those who perform the five daily prayers, but allocate only a portion of their capacity towards fulfilling some of the rights of their believing brothers - not all of them (capacities). That is why their palaces are veiled, without a pathway in front or a garden behind."

Yes, this is the result of negligence in serious and comprehensive efforts to meet the needs of the believers. Then the Messenger of Allah said,

أَلَا فَلَا تَتَّكِلُوا عَلَى الْوَلَايَةِ وَحُدَّهَا وَأَدُّوا مَا بَعْدَهَا مِنْ فَرَائِضِ اللَّهِ وَ
قَضَاءِ حُقُوقِ الْإِخْوَانِ

'Indeed, do not rely solely on our wilayat. Perform the obligations of Allah and fulfil the rights of the brothers...' ²⁶¹

So, beware and do not rely only on wilayat devoid of action, and perform the divine obligations and the rights of the believing brothers that come after accepting wilayat.

Of course, all goodness and blessings stem from the wilayat of the Ahle Bait (a.s.), and the ability to perform religious duties is only attained through their grace. However, this truth should not make one negligent in acting upon the religious laws. Rather, to strengthen the wilayat and fulfil its rights, the believer must be serious and diligent in performing each of his duties, and then his only hope should be Imams, not the actions he has performed. In any case, believers in every era and time, especially in the era of occultation of Imam, must be concerned about the state of faith of their brothers.

We listen with our hearts to another part of the advice of our great teacher,

'Try to reach intellectual maturity and be forward-looking, meaning do not just revolve around yourself, your wife and your children. If you go beyond this limited sphere and look at the world and others with a broad view, you will realize that the duty is very heavy and you must also think about others.

This is a couplet in praise of Maula (a.s)

'Everyone wants himself for their own life,

²⁶¹ Tafsir Imam Askari (a.s.), pg 365, H no 256

O the one who wants his life for others, not himself.'

.... If we just sit and watch as Muslim youths are being lost and becoming irreligious, and only say that religion has an owner - if Allah wills, He will save His religion - is this right? Why is it that in material things we never leave things up to Allah? If our child gets sick, we take them to the best doctor and don't only say "If Allah wills, He will cure them." But in spiritual matters, we say, "Inshallah, Allah will protect His religion!" It's very strange - all of this is the deception of the self (nafs), which the Prophet ((a.s)) identified as the greatest enemy of mankind.'²⁶² Meeting the needs of the believers, foremost of which are their spiritual needs, is considered one of the best religious deeds, but discussing it in detail would divert us from the focus of the book. Here we suffice with one example. Imam Jafar Sadiq said:

تَنَافَسُوا فِي الْمَعْرُوفِ لِإِخْوَانِكُمْ وَ كُونُوا مِنْ أَهْلِهِ فَإِنَّ لِلْجَنَّةِ بَاباً
يُقَالُ لَهُ الْمَعْرُوفُ لَا يَدْخُلُهُ إِلَّا مَنْ اصْطَنَعَ الْمَعْرُوفَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ
الدُّنْيَا فَإِنَّ الْعَبْدَ لَيُبْشِي فِي حَاجَةِ أَخِيهِ الْمُؤْمِنِ فَيُوكِّلُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ
بِهِ مَلَائِكِينَ وَاحِدًا عَنِ يَمِينِهِ وَ آخَرَ عَنِ شِمَالِهِ يَسْتَتَفِرَانِ لَهُ رَبَّهُ وَ
يَدْعُونَ بِقَضَاءِ حَاجَتِهِ ثُمَّ قَالَ وَ اللَّهُ لَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص أَسْرُ بِقَضَاءِ
حَاجَةِ الْمُؤْمِنِ إِذَا وَصَلَتْ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ صَاحِبِ الْحَاجَةِ

'Compete with each other in goodness towards your brothers and be from its people. For Paradise has a gate called 'Goodness'

²⁶² This statement has been taken from a letter written by my respected teacher to one of his students.

*(Ma'roof) that none shall enter except those who performed goodness in the worldly life. Verily, when the servant walks to fulfil the need of his believing brother, Allah Almighty appoints two angels with him, one to his right and one to his left, who seek forgiveness for him from their Lord and pray for fulfilling his need. By Allah! The Prophet ((a.s)) was more delighted - when the believer's need was met - than the believer himself.*²⁶³

What deed can have such vast merits from different aspects? The greatest merit of this deed is pleasing the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.a) which is itself among the greatest acts of worship. According to this hadees, it can be said that one of the best ways to please Imams, especially the Present Imam (a.t.f.s), is to pay attention to taking care of the believers, especially in spiritual aspects. The importance of this act of worship near the Imams (a.s) is greater than we can imagine. Pay attention to this statement of Imam Moosa Kazim (a.s):

وَمَنْ قَضَىٰ حَاجَةً لِأَحَدٍ مِنْ أَوْلِيَائِنَا فَكَأَنَّمَا قَضَاهَا لِجَمِيعِنَا

*'Whoever fulfils a need of one of our friends (Shias), it is as if he has fulfilled it for all of us (Imams).*²⁶⁴

Therefore, taking care of the needs of the believers is an instance of fulfilling the needs of Imam Asr (a.s). Those who are successful in carrying out this important duty during occultation can hope that these phrases from Dua Ahad have been answered for them:

²⁶³ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of fulfilling the needs of a believer, H no 10

²⁶⁴ Mikyalul Makarim, vol 2, pg 420, H no 1741 narrating from Behaarul Anwaar

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي ... وَالْمُسَارِعِينَ إِلَيْهِ فِي قَضَائِهِ حَوَائِجِهِ

'O Allah, make me from...those who hasten towards him in fulfilling his needs.'²⁶⁵

Those muntazirs, eager to find a way to hasten towards their Imam, can attain their goal during this very occultation by fulfilling the rights of their believing brothers. Is this not itself a great 'Faraj' (relief) for them? They certainly hope that during the reappearance as well, they can attain this station concerning their Imam, but this is a blessing that is realized for them even before the reappearance of Imam (a.s)

The other phrases from this part of Dua Ahad can also be realized during occultation in this way:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي مِنْ أَنْصَارِهِ وَأَعْوَانِهِ ... وَالْمُسْتَثْلِينَ لِأَوْامِرِهِ ... وَ
السَّابِقِينَ إِلَى إِرَادَتِهِ

'O Allah! Make me from his helpers and supporters...and from those who obey his commands...and from those who take precedence in (fulfilling) his aims.'

All these concepts can be attained by paying attention and being diligent in taking care of the spiritual and moral needs of the believers during occultation of Imam (a.s). Especially if one's aim is to nurture the true muntazirs of Imam Asr (a.s) - in this case, not only will he be among his helpers and supporters, but they will also add other believers to his ranks by divine grace. By fulfilling this duty, they continuously add individuals to the true companions of Imam Asr (a.s). This is

²⁶⁵ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 102, pg 111

one of the greatest divine graces and the best form of relief during occultation. In the supplications that have reached us from the infallible Imams regarding Imam Asr (a.s), there are very profound statements on this subject. One of the most beautiful of them is a supplication narrated by Imam Raza (a.s)

وَأَجْعَلْنَا مِمَّنْ تَنْتَصِرُ بِهِ لِدِينِكَ وَتُعْزُ بِهِ نَصْرَ وَلِيِّكَ وَلَا تَسْتَبْدِلْ
بِنَا غَيْرَنَا فَإِنَّ اسْتِبْدَالَكَ بِنَا غَيْرَنَا عَلَيْكَ يَسِيرٌ وَهُوَ عَلَيْنَا عَسِيرٌ

*'And make us among those through whom You grant victory to Your religion and through whom You honour the assistance of Your Wali (Guardian). And do not replace us with others, for replacing us with others is easy for You but difficult for us (to attain the Taufeeq of serving Imam)'*²⁶⁶

Whoever is graced with nurturing the muntazirs of Imam Asr (a.s) during his occultation has attained the greatest “special favours” from him. If they truly understand his status before Allah and Imam, they will not exchange it for anything and will accept no replacements. He will be unwilling to lose it at any cost. He knows well that Allah Almighty may easily take away this blessing bestowed upon him and give it to someone else, and in that case, no right of his will be violated because attaining that position was nothing but divine grace (فضل). Therefore, he must be careful and not do anything that would exclude him from the domain of this unparalleled blessing. In this very profound and beautiful supplication, we come across this phrase:

²⁶⁶ Dua Ghaibat, Jamalul Usboo, pg 309

وَاجْعَلْنَا فِي حِزْبِهِ ... حَتَّى تَحْشُرَنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِي أَنْصَارِهِ وَأَعْوَانِهِ وَ
مُقَوِّبَةِ سُلْطَانِهِ

'And include us among his party... so that on the Day of Resurrection, you may resurrect us among his helpers, assistants, and strengtheners of his authority.'

Those who take steps on the path of nurturing the true muntazirs of Imam Asr (a.s), if they act with pure intention and seek the pleasure of Allah, will be among the strengtheners of his authority, and they can hope to be resurrected among them on the Day of Judgment. So, this grade should be insistently and repeatedly requested from Allah Almighty.

Pure affection for Imam (a.s) is a sign of perfect Intezaar

A very subtle point that, if paid attention to in this discussion, can have an extraordinary impact on one's intention and consequently elevate the value of one's action:

All believers are children of Imam Asr (a.s). Therefore, caring for them and loving them is considered a form of kindness and love towards Imam (a.s) himself. Imam Raza (a.s), in introducing the rank and status of an Imam (a.s) called them *الوالد الشفيق* (Benevolent father)²⁶⁷. So, the believers are truly considered his children, and it is clear that if someone does something for a person's child, they have done a service and kindness to that person.

²⁶⁷ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Hujjah, Chapter of Nawadir about Virtue of Imam and his attributes, H no 1

Paying attention to this matter causes one to have the best intention for nurturing the believers and creating true muntazirs. Attending to the needs of his children is an expression of our service and love for Imam himself. Such a person looks at his own relative's children as the children of Imam Asr (a.s), and in fulfilling their needs, he intends to be kind to Imam and make him happy by helping his children. Is not attaining this level of knowledge and reaching this unparalleled station itself a very great Faraj for such a muntazir? Can it not be said that this state indicates the perfect degree of Intezaar in a believer?

One who has reached such a degree of knowledge and devotion towards his Imam has forgotten himself and loves everyone - even his children - for the sake of his Imam (a.s). Any love he shows towards anyone is in fact due to that person's connection to Imam (a.s). If he does something for a believer, his intention is nothing other than service to his Imam and making him (a.s) happy. In all his services, he has no wish other than for a smile of pleasure on the lips of his Master. He wishes to reduce one of the sorrows of his beloved by performing his duties and removing some grief from his (a.s) pure heart.

If someone has reached this station, it can be said that the last supplication of the Ziarat of Aale Yasin has been answered for him: (مَوَدَّتِي خَالِصَةٌ لَكُمْ)²⁶⁸ (My affection is purely for you). And indeed, it must be said that the answering of this supplication is considered a very important Faraj for the true muntazir of Imam Mahdi (a.s) because it is an outcome of the highest degree of Intezaar. And this degree of Intezaar, whose sign is

²⁶⁸ Ehtejaj, vol 2, pg 317

sincerity in love for Imam, has indicators. Everyone can test themselves according to the degree of their sincerity. It is good to identify these signs from someone who is one of these individuals himself.

Marhoom Sayyed Mohammad Taqi Mousavi Isfahani (a.r), the author of the precious book *Mikyalul Makarim fi Fawaid Dua lil Qaem* has mentioned twelve signs for the perfect degree of *Intezaar*, some of which we will quote here. For the rest, we will refer to the text of the treatise '*Noorul Absar fi Fazilat Intezaar*' in the concluding section. A few of them are:

First: The *muntazir* is constantly grieved and saddened due to the separation from his beloved.

Second: He is weeping while awaiting Imam (a.s)

Third: He always remembers that person and does not let himself become free from his remembrance for a moment...

Eighth: In awaiting his beloved, he patiently endures hardships and difficulties, and considers them easy and light compared to this great matter. In *Kharaij*, it is narrated from the Prophet that he said to his companions:

'There will come a group after you, each one of whom will have a reward equal to the reward of fifty of you.' They said, "O Messenger of Allah! We were with you in the battles of Badr and Uhud, and the Quran was revealed praising us.' He (s.a.w.a) said, *'You were not afflicted with the hardships that they will be afflicted with, and you did not have the patience that they will have.'*

The author says that for a believer, there is no greater affliction and hardship than the separation and absence of his Imam. It

is for this reason that the believers of this time have superiority over the believers of previous times...

Tenth: When the Intezaar and love becomes intense, the person's sleep and food decreases, to the point that they pay no attention to anything related to themselves...

Eleventh: When the Intezaar becomes complete, the person derives no pleasure from anything in this world. Rather, their pleasure is confined only to the remembrance of the beloved. 'If I have nothing, neither this world nor the next, since I have you, I have everything, I need nothing else.'²⁶⁹

What could be a greater solace (Faraj) than the presence of these spiritual states in the muntazir?

The conclusion that can be drawn from the discussion about the fourth requirement of Intezaar is that striving to nurture true muntazirs brings about the highest Faraj (relief) for the muntazir that occurs before the reappearance of Imam (a.s). We will end this chapter on the effects and blessings of Intezaar during occultation by mentioning one point related to the true meaning of 'Faraj'. What was stated throughout this chapter were examples of "Faraj" for those awaiting Faraj which were more of a spiritual nature. If we want to look at the material aspects of Faraj, we can say that awaiting the Faraj is also a source of Faraj for the believers from these aspects. However, one should never expect that material problems and difficulties of life will completely disappear due to Intezaar-e-Faraj. This is something that has never happened and will never happen in this world. Comforts and pleasures

²⁶⁹ Treatise of Noorul Absar, pg 31 - 33

in this world have always been accompanied by discomforts and pains, and pure ease - without any hardship and pain - has never been and will never be created by Allah for anyone in this world. For everyone, this world comes with difficulties and afflictions.

دَارٌ بِالْبَلَاءِ مَحْفُوفَةٌ

*'The abode (world) is encompassed by afflictions.'*²⁷⁰

And since this world is not the abode of retribution, one should not expect the oppressive and disbelieving people to be punished for their deeds in this world, nor for the believers to see the reward of their faith in this world. Rather, the opposite is true - according to the narrations from Imams, whoever has greater faith will face greater hardship in this world, and those with weaker faith will face less difficulty. It is for this reason that the divine Prophets and infallible Imams have endured the greatest hardships in this world. Imam Jafar Sadiq narrated from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a),

يُبْتَلَى الْمُؤْمِنُ بَعْدُ عَلَى قَدْرِ إِيمَانِهِ وَحُسْنِ أَعْمَالِهِ فَمَنْ صَحَّ إِيمَانُهُ وَحَسُنَ عَمَلُهُ اشْتَدَّ بَلَاؤُهُ وَمَنْ سَخُفَ إِيمَانُهُ وَضَعُفَ عَمَلُهُ قَلَّ بَلَاؤُهُ.

*'A believer is tested according to the level of his faith and good deeds. Whoever has true faith and good deeds, his afflictions will be severe. And whoever's faith is weak, and deeds are insignificant, his affliction will be light'*²⁷¹

²⁷⁰ Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 226

²⁷¹ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wal Kufr, Chapter of severity of calamity for a believer, H no 2

Based on this, the believers during occultation should not expect to be separate from others and face no hardship or suffering in life due to their awaiting of Imam (a.s). Such an expectation is misplaced and against the Quranic verses and narrations. Of course, we do not mean that awaiting the reappearance of Imam Mahdi has no effect in removing the material and worldly difficulties of the Shias. This is not the case. However, the point is that awaiting the reappearance does not eliminate all the afflictions of the believers. This world is a place of examination, and during occultation, there are even harder tests for the believers. If there is no hardship, difficulty, or affliction, then what is the meaning of a test?

What matters for a believer is protecting his religion, and he must prepare himself for all kinds of hardships and afflictions. Imam Jafar Sadiq said to Fuzail ibn Yasar:

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ لَوْ أَصْبَحَ لَهُ مَا بَيْنَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ كَانَ ذَلِكَ خَيْرًا لَهُ وَ
 لَوْ أَصْبَحَ مُقَطَّعًا أَعْضَاءَهُ كَانَ ذَلِكَ خَيْرًا لَهُ يَا فَضِيلَ بْنَ يَسَارٍ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
 لَا يَفْعَلُ بِالْمُؤْمِنِ إِلَّا مَا هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ يَا فَضِيلَ بْنَ يَسَارٍ لَوْ عَدَلَتْ الدُّنْيَا
 عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ جَنَاحَ بَعُوضَةٍ مَا سَقَى عِدْوَهُ مِنْهَا شَرْبَةً مَاءٍ

'If a believer wakes up owning everything between the East and the West, that would be better for him. And if he wakes up with his limbs severed, that would be better for him. O Fuzail ibn Yasar! Indeed, Allah does not do anything with a believer except what is better for him. O Fuzayl ibn Yasar, if the world was equal in the

*sight of Allah Almighty to the wing of a mosquito, He would not have quenched His enemy with a sip of water from it.'*²⁷²

So, one should not expect that the believers during occultation will not have to endure any suffering or face any difficulties.'²⁷³

PART 2

The effects and blessings of Intezaar after reappearance

At the beginning of the fourth section, we explained that both the effects and blessings of awaiting reappearance are encompassed in a single word: Faraj (deliverance). The manifestations of this deliverance can be discussed in two stages: during occultation and after reappearance (i.e. during the reign of Imam (a.t.f.s)). In the previous chapter, we discussed the primary aspects before reappearance. In this part, to complete the discussion on Faraj that will be achieved for the muntazirs, we talk about the blessings of Intezaar after the reappearance of Imam Asr (a.s). This discussion forms the last chapter of the book.

Taufeeq of assisting Imam (a.s) at the time of reappearance

Undoubtedly, the highest aspiration of a true muntazir is to witness the reappearance of his beloved Imam and to have the taufeeq of assisting him. This is a wish that he had been waiting

²⁷² Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wal Kufr

²⁷³ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wal Kufr, Chapter of being satisfied with the gift of Imaan and being patient on everything after that. H no 5

for a lifetime and counting the seconds until that moment arrived. His concern and worry are that he might not see such a day. Every night, he goes to bed with the hope of witnessing the dawn of reappearance, and every morning, he wakes up with the hope of seeing the rising sun of Mahdi (a.t.f.s) with his unworthy eyes. But will his life allow him to perceive those sweet moments? Will he take this wish to the grave with him? If the reappearance of Imam (a.t.f.s) occurs while this muntazir is alive, he will achieve his long-cherished wish. But what if he is not alive?

The Merciful Allah, through His grace and generosity, will not deprive such a believer of attaining this great blessing. According to the definitive divine promises, if someone correctly fulfils his duties during occultation of Imam (a.s) and always desires to assist his Imam, then after the reappearance, even if he has passed away, the possibility of returning to this world and assisting his Imam will be provided for them. This is someone who, throughout his life, after renewing his covenant with his Imam every morning, always asked Allah Almighty to fulfil such a promise:

اللَّهُمَّ فَإِنْ حَالَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهُ الْمَوْتُ الَّذِي جَعَلْتَهُ عَلَى عِبَادِكَ حَتْمًا
مَقْضِيًّا فَأَخْرِجْنِي مِنْ قَبْرِي مُؤْتَزِرًا كَفَنِي شَاهِرًا سَيْفِي مُجَرِّدًا
قِنَاتِي مُكَلِّبًا دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِي فِي الْحَاضِرِ وَالْبَادِي

'O Allah, if death, which You have decreed as inevitable upon Your servants, comes between me and him, then bring me out of my grave with my shroud wrapped around me, my sword unsheathed,

*my lance bare, answering the call of the caller in the city and the desert.*²⁷⁴

Every muntazir who sees his death approaching during occultation recites this supplication with more heartfelt emotion and desires its fulfilment with his whole being. How many worthy muntazirs have taken this wish to the grave with them, and now they are counting the days and even moments, awaiting the fulfilment of their supplications and those of others regarding them? Indeed, those awaiting His Eminence (a.s), even after their death, are awaiting the reappearance of their Master (a.s). The promise given to them by Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) is their solace in the realm of Barzakh. Mufazzal bin Umar says: In the presence of Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s), the discussion turned to the subject of the Qaem (a.t.f.s) and our companions who passed away while awaiting him. The Imam (a.s) said,

إِذَا قَامَ أَبِي الْمُؤْمِنِ فِي قَبْرِهِ فَيُقَالُ لَهُ يَا هَذَا إِنَّهُ قَدْ ظَهَرَ صَاحِبُكَ فَإِنْ تَشَاءُ أَنْ تَلْحَقَ بِهِ فَالْحَقْ وَإِنْ تَشَاءُ أَنْ تُقِيمَ فِي كَرَامَةِ رَبِّكَ فَأَقِم

*'When the Qaem arises, he will come to the believer in his grave and say to him: 'O so-and-so, your Master has indeed appeared. If you wish to join him, then join him, and if you wish to remain in the grace of your Lord, then remain.'*²⁷⁵

Yes, after the reappearance of Imam (a.t.f.s), a special invitation will be sent to the awaiting believer, asking if he wishes to return to this world to join his Master. What promise

²⁷⁴ Dua Ahad (Behaarul Anwaar, vol 102, pg 111)

²⁷⁵ Mikyalul Makarim, vol 2, pg 143 narrating from Ghaibah of Shaikh Tusi

could be more exhilarating than this, and what glad tiding more hope-inspiring?

The author of the invaluable book 'Mikyalul Makarim', when discussing the Faraj of those awaiting Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), states,

الْمَقْصُودُ مِنَ الْفَرَجِ، النَّصْرَةُ لِلْإِمَامِ (عَلَيْهَا سَلَامٌ) وَالْجِهَادُ بَيْنَ
يَدَيْهِ

'The purpose of relief is to assist Imam (a.t.f.s) and to strive in his presence.'²⁷⁶

He then explains that this purpose is achieved through awaiting the deliverance (Faraj). Can a greater deliverance than this be conceived for a true muntazir at the time of the reappearance of Imam (a.s)? The genuine muntazirs have made all the necessary preparations throughout their lives to attain this great blessing, and they have even prepared the swords, during their lifetimes, with which they intend to assist their Master. Will such individuals not be granted the blessing of assisting their Imam after their death?

It would be good to introduce an example of an individual who lived a righteous life, free from negligence towards his Imam, and before his death, by the grace and mercy of the Lord, received the glad tidings of assisting his Imam at the time of his reappearance. He was known as Shaikh Hasan Kazmini, and his story dates back to the year 1224 AH, which is two hundred years ago. We narrate this story from the book 'Abqariyal Hesaan' by Marhoom Shaikh Ali Akbar Nahavandi, who narrated it through several intermediaries from the

²⁷⁶ Ibid, under H no 1221

honourable Sayyed Mohammed Taqi, the son of the great scholar, Marhoom Sayyed Mohammed Mahdi Bahrul Uloom.

Shaikh Hasan Kazmini said: In the year 1224 in Kazmain, my love and desire to attain the honour of being in the presence of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s) became very intense. To the extent that on Fridays after performing the Friday ablutions, I would wear the Ehram (haj garment) carry a sword and engage in remembrance (zikr). This sword was always hanging above his perfume shop. On Fridays, I would not buy or sell anything, and I was awaiting the reappearance of Imam Asr (a.s). Until one Friday, while I was engaged in remembrance, I saw three Sayyeds appear and come towards my shop. Two of them were of mature age, and one of them, who was in the middle of the other two, appeared to be a young man of around twenty-four years old. His blessed countenance was so radiant that it drew my attention, and I stopped my rosary beads and became engrossed in his beauty. I wished they would come to my shop.

They walked gracefully with utmost dignity until they reached my shop. I greeted them, and they responded. They said, "O Shaikh Hasan! Do you have such-and-such medicine?" They mentioned the name of a medicine. That medicine was at the back of the shop. Although I did not buy or sell anything on Fridays and did not respond to anyone, I immediately said, "Yes, I have it." They said, "Bring it." I said, "Certainly," and went to the back of the shop to bring the medicine they had asked for, and I brought it.

When I returned, I saw no one there, but there was a staff on the table in front of the entrance, and it was the same staff I had seen in the hand of the one who was in the middle of the two. I kissed the staff and placed it at the back of the shop.

Then I went outside and asked the people around if they had seen where the three Syyeds who had been in my shop, had gone. They said they had not seen anyone in my shop. I returned inside, deep in thought and distressed that after all this eagerness to meet them, I had attained it but did not recognize His Eminence.

At that moment, I saw an injured person wrapped in cotton being taken by the people to the holy shrine of Moosa ibn Jafar (a.s) for healing. I stopped them and said, "Come here. I will cure your sick person." They brought the injured person to my shop. I laid him on a bed that I had at the back of the shop, facing the Qiblah, where I used to sleep during the day. I performed two units of prayer. Although I was certain that my Master, Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), had graced my shop with his presence, I wanted to be doubly sure. I thought to myself that if that gentleman was Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), then if I pass this staff over this sick person's body, his wounds would be completely healed. With this intention, I passed the staff from his head to his feet. Immediately, he was healed, his bodily wounds disappeared, and new flesh grew under the staff.

The sick person got up and, out of joy, placed a lira in front of my shop. I did not accept it, and he thought that I was not accepting it because the amount was small. He left the shop, happily walking away. I followed him, telling him that I did not want the money, and he thought I was saying it since was too little. Finally, I reached him and returned his money to him. I returned to the shop, crying because I had been visited by His Eminence (a.t.f.s) but did not recognize him.

When I returned, I saw that the staff was gone. Due to the great distress of not recognizing His Eminence (a.t.f.s) and the disappearance of the staff, I cried out, "Whoever loves my

Master, Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), come and take whatever they want from my shop with sincerity..." I collected twenty-four Ashrafi coins. I took them and went home, gathered my wife and children, and said, "I am heading to Mashhad. Whoever of you wishes to come with me may do so." They all accompanied me except for my eldest son, Mohammed Amin.

Then we attained the honour of visiting the holy shrine of Imam Raza (a.s) and I invested some of those Ashrafi coins and started selling rings and rosary beads on the platform in the sacred courtyard... One day, when I visited the shrine of Imam Raza (a.s), I saw a Sayyed clinging to the holy tomb and weeping profusely. I tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Dear sir, why are you crying?" He said, "How can I not cry when I do not have a single penny in my pocket?" I said, "For now, take these five Qurans to get by. Then come back here, I intend to make a deal with you." The Sayyed said, "What deal do you want to make with me? I have nothing." I said, "I believe that every Sayyed has a house in Paradise. Would you give me the house you have in Paradise?" He said, "I don't even have a house for myself, but since you want to buy it, I will sell it."

I had collected forty-one Ashrafi coins to buy a house for my family. I brought that money to buy his house for my hereafter. The Sayyed went and brought paper, ink, and a pen, and wrote: "In the presence of the just witness, Imam Raza (a.s) I have sold and transferred the house that this person believes I have in Paradise to him for forty-one Ashrafi coins of this world's money." I said to him, 'Say بَعْتُ (I have sold it). He said it. Then I said, اِشْتَرَيْتُ (I have purchased it). I gave him the money. The Sayyed took it and left, and I took the document and returned to my daughter's house. She said, "Father, what have you done?" I said, "I have bought a house for you with

flowing waters, green and lush trees, and all kinds of fruits in its gardens." They thought I had bought such a house in this world for them, and they became very happy. They said, "Take us to see this house and meet the neighbours." I said, "You will come and see. One side of this house neighbours the house of the Final Prophet (s.a.w.a). Another side is adjacent to the house of Ameerul Momineen (a.s). Another side is next to the house of Imam Hasan (a.s), and the other side neighbours the house of Sayyedush Shohada (a.s)." They understood what I had done. I said, 'I have bought a house that does not deteriorate or decline.'

Some time passed after this incident, until one day I was sitting in the courtyard when I saw a dignified gentleman come towards me. I greeted him, and he responded and addressed me by my name, saying, "O Shaikh Hasan! Your Master, Imam Asr (a.s), says: 'Why do you bother and embarrass the son of the Prophet (s.a.w.a) so much? What need do you have from him? What do you want from that Eminence?'" So, I held on to his robe and said, 'May I be sacrificed for you! Are you Imam Asr (a.s)?' He said, 'I am not Imam Asr (a.s), I am his messenger. I want to know what your need is.' Then he took my hand and brought me to the corner of the holy courtyard, and to reassure me, he mentioned some signs that no one else knew, including saying, "Are you not the one who had a perfume shop in Kazmain?" He narrated the story of the staff, and said, "Do you recognize this staff?" That was your Master, Imam Asr (a.s). Now tell me your needs." I said, "I have three needs. First, I want to know if I will leave this world with faith. Second, I want to know if I am among the companions of Imam Asr (a.s) and if the deal I made with the Sayyed is correct or not. Third, I want to know when I will leave this world." He

immediately bid farewell, and after taking just one step, disappeared from my sight, and I did not see him again.

A few days passed, and I was eagerly awaiting some news. One afternoon, my eyes were brightened by his countenance. He took my hand and brought me again to the corner of the holy courtyard (of Imam Raza (a.s)), which was secluded, and said, "I have conveyed your greetings to your Master, and he sends his greetings to you and says: 'Be assured that you will leave this world with faith, you are among our companions, and your name is registered among our companions. The deal you made with Sayyed is also completely valid. As for the time of your death, whenever it comes, its sign is that during the week, you will see in a dream two letters descending upon you from the higher world. On one is written لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله (There is no god but Allah, Mohammed (s.a.w.a) is the Messenger of Allah), and on the other is written, علي ولي الله حقا حقا (Ali is truly the Wali of Allah). On Friday of that same week, at the rise of dawn, you will attain the mercy of Allah.'" Upon saying this, he disappeared, and I awaited the promised sign.

The narrator of the story (Sayyed Taqi) says, 'One day I saw Shaikh Hasan happily returning from the shrine of Imam Raza (a.t.f.s) towards his house. I asked, "O Shaikh Hasan, I see that you are very happy today!" He said, 'I am only a guest among you for one more week. Entertain me as a guest as best you can.'

During the nights of that week, he did not sleep at all; he only took afternoon naps during the day and woke up anxiously. He constantly recited supplications in the holy shrine of Imam Raza (a.t.f.s) and at home. During that week, he fasted

continuously until Thursday when he applied henna and took out his cleanest clothes. He went to the hammam (bathhouse) and thoroughly cleansed himself, applying dye to his beard, hands and feet. His bath was prolonged. After returning from the bathhouse, he visited the shrine of Imam Raza (a.s) Nearly two and a half hours into Friday night had passed when he came out of the shrine and headed home.

He told me to gather the entire family and children. I assembled them all. He spoke with them briefly and joked, saying, "Forgive me, my companionship with you has ended. You will not see me again, and now I bid you farewell." Then he dismissed his family and children, saying, "I entrust you all to Allah." All the children left the room. Then he said to me, "O Sayyed Taqi, do not leave me alone tonight. Rest a bit, but on the condition that you wake up early."

Sayyed Taqi says: I could not sleep, and he (Shaikh Hasan) was completely engaged in prayers and supplications. Since I could not sleep, I got up and said, "Why are you not at ease? Do not worry so much. You are tired, rest a little." He smiled at me and said, "Soon I will be at rest." And although I have made a will, I will make a will again:

'I testify that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that Mohammed (s.a.w.a) is the Messenger of Allah and I bear witness that Ali and his infallible progeny are the proofs of Allah. And know that death is real, and the questioning by Nakir and Munkar is real and that Allah will resurrect those in the graves. And I believe that the resurrection is real, and the Serat and the Scale are real. Moreover, I do not owe a single dirham, nor have I missed a single obligatory prayer under any circumstance, nor have I missed a day of fasting. I do not owe

a single dirham of **مظالم** (injustice) to anyone, and I have not left anything for you except two liras in the pocket of my vest. This is the payment for the one who will bathe me, shroud me and bury me, and also the expense for the brief memorial gathering that you will hold for me. I entrust you to Allah. And peace be upon you, do not speak to me from now on. And whatever is in my shroud, bury it with me, and place the document that I took from the Sayyed in my shroud. **والسلام علي من اتبع الهدى** (And peace be upon those who follow the guidance)

Then he became engrossed in his remembrances and, as per his nightly habit, performed the optional night prayer. After completing the night prayer, he sat on his prayer mat, as if awaiting death. Suddenly, I saw him stand up and invite someone with utmost humility and reverence. I counted thirteen times that he stood up and invited with utmost etiquette. Then I saw him, like a bird flapping its wings, throw himself towards the door of the room, and cry out from the depths of his heart, "O my Master, O Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s)," and he placed his face on the threshold of the door for a few minutes. Then I got up and held him under his arms while he was crying. I said, "What is happening to you? What is this state you are in?" He said, "Be quiet," and said in Arabic that fourteen blessed lights were all present in this room. I thought to myself that because of his love for the fourteen infallible (a.s), it appears that way to him. I did not think that this state was the throes of death (sakaraat) since those great ones (a.s) were present and his condition was good. He didn't show any pain or illness, whatever he said was sound, and his state was not disturbed.

Then, shortly after, I saw him smile and move from his place and say three times, "Welcome, O seizer of souls!" Then he turned his face around the room, with his hands placed on his chest, and said, **السلام عليك يا رسول الله** "Peace be upon you, O Messenger of Allah, do you permit?" Then he said, **السلام عليك يا امير المؤمنين** (Peace be upon you, O Ameerul Momineen (a.s), do you permit?) And in this way, he greeted and sought permission from each of the fourteen pure lights, saying, "My hand is at your robe." Then he turned towards the Qiblah and lay down, saying three times, "O Allah, for the sake of these fourteen sacred lights." Then he drew the quilt over his face and placed his hands by his sides.

When I pulled back the quilt, I saw that he had passed away. I woke up the children for the morning prayer while crying. From my crying, they understood what had happened. In the morning, we carried his bier, accompanied by many mourners, to the bathing room, bathed him, and buried him in the Darul Sa'adah of Imam Raza (a.t.f.s). May he rest in peace.²⁷⁷

This delightful account of attaining the presence of Imam is very joyous and appealing for the true muntazirs of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) because it gives them hope that even if they do not attain the blessing of seeing their beloved (a.s) before the throes of death, the final moments of their worldly life will be the most beautiful times of their lives, and inshallah, they will not take the wish of meeting the friend to the grave. At the time of the throes of death (sakaraat) a person is in most need of his Imams (a.s), especially Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s). And if at that time, his Master (a.s) does not leave them alone, it is the

²⁷⁷ Abqarihul Hesaan, pg 124 – 126 (with a slight variation in the original text)

greatest blessing bestowed upon them. It is narrated from Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) that he said,

مَنْ مَاتَ لَا يَعْرِفُ إِمَامَهُ مَاتَ مَيِّتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً وَأَحْوَجُ مَا تَكُونُ إِلَى مَا
أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِ إِذْ بَلَغَتْ نَفْسُكَ هَذِهِ وَأَهْوَى بِيَدِهِ إِلَى حَلْقِهِ وَانْقَطَعَتْ عَنْكَ
الدُّنْيَا تَقُولُ لَقَدْ كُنْتُ عَلَى أَمْرٍ حَسَنٍ

*'Whoever dies without recognizing his Imam, dies the death of ignorance (jahiliyyah). And the time when you are most in need of what you believe in is when your soul reaches this - and he pointed with his hand to his throat - and you are cut off from this world, and you will say: 'Indeed, I was upon a good matter.'*²⁷⁸

At that time, the believer realizes the benefits and blessings of believing in Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s). An essential lesson we learn from the incident of Shaikh Hasan Kazmini is that a believing person must constantly fulfil his religious and divine duties in all states and conditions. At the time of death, he calmly stated that he did not owe any injustice (مظالم) to Allah's servants. According to this, he did not fall short of fulfilling people's rights. If there was any obligation on him, he fulfilled his duty before time ran out. Regarding acts of worship like prayer and fasting, he did not have any remaining obligations either. Instead of requesting compensatory prayers and fasts in his will, he performed his duty in his lifetime. He acted upon the advice of Ameerul Momineen (a.s), Imam Ali (a.s), who said,

²⁷⁸ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaam wa Kufr, Chapter of Daimul Islam, H no 6

يَابْنَ آدَمَ! كُنْ وَصِيَّ نَفْسِكَ فِي مَالِكَ وَاعْمَلْ فِيهِ مَا تُؤْتِرُ أَنْ يُعْمَلَ
فِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِكَ

*'O son of Adam! Be the executor of your wealth and do with it what you would prefer to be done with it after you.'*²⁷⁹

Why should a person procrastinate in sending provisions for his hereafter while they are alive and able to do so, and then request others to act on his behalf in his will? Who will be more compassionate towards a person than himself? Shaikh Hasan Kazmini did not neglect or procrastinate in fulfilling his duties, hoping for the compassion of others. He did not rely on any of his friends or relatives because he wholeheartedly believed that death is a reality, the Lord's reckoning of one's deeds is a reality, and everyone must answer for their actions. Before losing the opportunity, he made plans for his future prosperity.

Another important lesson we can learn from this great man is that accumulating worldly wealth beyond one's needs and necessities is not a wise act. It only serves to weigh down a person's ascent towards the heavenly realm and hinder his speed on this path. In this regard too, he acted upon the saying of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a),

الدُّنْيَا دَارٌ مَنْ لَا دَارَ لَهُ وَلَهَا يَجْمَعُ مَنْ لَا عَقْلَ

²⁷⁹ Nahjul Balagha Fiqhi, pg 1290,

*'The world is the home of those who have no home, and only the one without intellect accumulates for it.'*²⁸⁰

Indeed, why should a person accumulate more than he needs? And for whom should they accumulate? When one can use worldly wealth correctly during his lifetime to prepare provisions for his journey to the Hereafter, what reason is there to accumulate more than necessary and leave it behind? Will his heirs be more mindful of them than they were of themselves? Will they send more charitable deeds for them than they could have done for themselves?

Marhoom Shaikh Hasan Kazmini had even prepared for the expenses of his modest memorial gathering so that he would not be dependent on his children. But he did not save anything more than that. This way of life testifies to his abundant intellect and sends a message to all muntazirs of Hazrat Baqiyatullah (a.t.f.s) that throughout their lives, they should not let their hearts be attached to anything but their beloved. They should not develop any attachment that would prevent them from being detached for his (a.s) sake so that at every moment they are ready to soar to meet their 'friend' and sacrifice their lives in his (a.s) presence. No wish should ever be more important to them than this desire, lest it delays them even for a moment when the time of union arrives.

In any case, Marhoom Shaikh Hasan Kazmini was one of the rare muntazirs who had truly prepared himself to assist Imam (a.s) of his time, and he was ready in every way to join him. No obstacle could prevent him from being among the soldiers of His Eminence, and he was, so to speak, in a state of

²⁸⁰ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wa Kufr, Chapter of condemnation of the world and ascetism in it, H no 8

complete readiness. This level of Intezaar is from a degree that turns a believer inside out and prepares him at every moment to welcome his Imam. Such individuals have been promised union in this life and after the appearance. This passionate lover received the glad tidings of his Imam's assistance at the time of appearance before his death and closed his eyes to the world with a joyful heart from the divine promise. Blessed be this great tiding.

Indeed, some enthusiasts receive the promise of union in this very world. The noble Prophet (s.a.w.a) once spoke of Hujjat ibn Hasan Mahdi (a.t.f.s) addressing Salman Mohammadi, and said,

يَا سَلْمَانَ، إِنَّكَ مُدْرِكُهُ، وَ مَنْ كَانَ مِثْلَكَ، وَ مَنْ تَوَلَّاهُ بِحَقِيقَةِ
الْبُعْرِفَةِ

'O Salman, you will indeed meet him, and so will anyone like you and anyone who truly acknowledges his authority.'

Then the noble Prophet (s.a.w.a) explained to Salman that after death, during the 'return' (رَجُعْتُ) he will have the fortune to meet Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s). It was here that Salman said,

مَا يَبَايِ سَلْمَانَ مَتَى لَقِيَ الْمَوْتَ، أَوَّ الْمَوْتُ لَقِيَهُ

*'Salman does not care whether he goes to meet death or death comes to meet him.'*²⁸¹

A true muntazir finds no peace until he meets his beloved, and when he sees death approaching, he becomes very worried

²⁸¹ Tafsir Burhaan vol 3, pg 219

and saddened that he has not yet reached his desire – witnessing Imam's advent and assisting him. In this state, the only thing that can console his mind is the glad tidings of union and the promise of meeting his beloved, in which case he finds peace and no longer fears death but welcomes it."

The reward of the companionship of Imam Muntazar (a.t.f.s)

The life of a believer, from the perspective of divine standards, must be such that it resembles Salman or at least the late Shaikh Hasan Kazmini, to be hopeful of this great divine promise. In this case, if he does not receive this promise during his lifetime, he should not despair. Rather, he must be certain that his reward is preserved with the Lord, and he should have hope in divine grace to receive the reward of those who witnessed the emergence of their Master and attained martyrdom in his ranks, whether he is resurrected at that time or not. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) said,

مَنْ سَرَّهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْقَائِمِ فَلْيَنْتَظِرْ وَ لْيَعْمَلْ بِالْوَرَعِ وَ
 مَحَاسِنِ الْأَخْلَاقِ وَ هُوَ مُنْتَظَرٌ فَإِنْ مَاتَ وَ قَامَ الْقَائِمُ بَعْدَهُ كَانَ لَهُ
 مِنَ الْأَجْرِ مِثْلُ أَجْرِ مَنْ أَدْرَكَهُ فَجِدُّوا وَ انْتَظِرُوا هَنِيئاً لَكُمْ أَيُّهَا
 الْعَصَابَةُ الْمَرْحُومَةُ

'Whoever is pleased to be among the companions of the Qaem, let him wait and act with piety and excellent moral traits while

awaiting. For if he dies before the Qaem appears, he will have a reward like those who attained his company.²⁸²

In this noble hadees, anticipation is mentioned thrice, and those who desire to assist their Imam must deeply understand the importance of this divine duty, its effects, and its requirements. Additionally, special emphasis is placed on "piety" and "good morals," which should be the yardstick for true muntazirs. Of course, these two must be accompanied by the spirit of anticipation. *وَلْيُعْمَلْ بِالْوَرَعِ وَمَحَاسِنِ الْأَخْلَاقِ وَهُوَ مُنْتَظَرٌ* (Let him practice piety and good morals while awaiting.) In this condition, the reward of witnessing Imam Asr (a.s) and assisting him accrues for the believer. Another narration from Imam Baqir (a.s) states,

مَا ضَرَّ مَنْ مَاتَ مُنْتَظِرًا لِأَمْرِنَا إِلَّا يَمُوتُ فِي وَسْطِ فُسْطَاطِ السَّهْدِيِّ وَ
عَسْكَرِهِ

*'It does not harm the one who dies awaiting our command (reappearance) that he does not die amid the camp of Mahdi (a.t.f.s) and his army.'*²⁸³

The highest aspiration of a muntazir is to be able to fight in the army of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) to further his (a.s) goal and not hesitate to sacrifice his life on this path. If someone with this aspiration does not find the opportunity to witness it during his lifetime and does not die among the tents and camps of Imam (a.s), they have not suffered any harm or loss in terms of the reward. Provided they maintain a true state of

²⁸² Ghaibat-e-Nomani, Chapter 11, pg 16

²⁸³ Al-Kafi, Kitabul Hujjah, Chapter of the one who recognizes his Imam, is not harmed

anticipation. Therefore, "Intezaar" is an alchemy that transforms the copper of the believer's existence into pure gold and makes them a person who holds a position among the companions of Imams (a.s). How beautiful is the expression of Ameerul Momineen (a.s) regarding the true muntazir of Imam Asr (a.s), when he said:

وَالْمُنْتَظِرُ لِأَمْرِنَا كَالْمُتَشَحِّطِ بِدَمِهِ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

*'The one awaiting (muntazir) of our command is like one who is struggling in his blood for the sake of Allah.'*²⁸⁴

What reward is greater than this, and what station is more honourable before Allah than for a believer to give his life and struggle in his blood for the sake of Allah? A believer can attain such a rank by awaiting Faraj. Thus, even if the muntazir does not witness the time of reappearance, he will not be deprived of its reward and the reward of assisting and sacrificing his life for his Imam (a.s). This is the reassuring promise for believers during occultation of their Imam (a.s).

It should be noted, however, that although this glad tidings can be a consolation for those awaiting the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s), there are enamoured and infatuated individuals who are not satisfied with the reward and recompense of attaining the union and victory of their beloved. They essentially have not been seeking reward and recompense. Therefore, although they are completely satisfied and content with what Allah desires for them, their eternal desire is the same as what Salman and Shaikh Hasan Kazmini attained.

²⁸⁴ Khisal, Hadees Arba Meah, pg 625

رزقنا الله بيمه اكرمه

May Allah grant us sustenance through His grace and generosity

Accompanying Imam Asr (a.s) in avenging the martyrdom of Sayyedush Shohada (a.s)

One of the aspirations of those awaiting Imam Asr (a.s) is to accompany him in avenging the blood of Sayyedush Shohada (a.s). Among the calamities that Hazrat Fatemah (s.a.) has witnessed, perhaps none has pained her blessed heart and caused tears to flow more than the martyrdom of the oppressed “Leader of the oppressed ones of the world”, Imam Husain (a.s). This calamity has been so painful that in the Ziarat Nahiya while addressing his oppressed grandfather (a.s), Imam Zamana (a.s) says,

فَلَيْسَ أَخَّرْتَنِي الدُّهُورُ، وَعَاقَبَنِي عَنْ نَصْرِكَ الْمَقْدُورُ، وَلَمْ أَكُنْ لِمَنْ
حَارَبَكَ مُحَارِباً، وَلِمَنْ نَصَبَ لَكَ الْعَدَاوَةَ مُنَاصِباً، فَلَا نَدْبَنَّكَ صَبَاحاً
وَمَسَاءً، وَلَا بَكِيْنَ عَلَيْكَ بَدَلَ الدُّمُوعِ دَمًا. حَسْرَةً عَلَيْكَ وَتَأْسُفًا
عَلَى مَا دَهَاكَ وَتَلَهُّفًا، حَتَّى أَمُوتَ بِدُوعَةِ الْمَصَابِ وَغُصَّةِ الْإِكْتِيَابِ

'If time has delayed me and fate prevents me from assisting you, and I am not among those who fought against those who waged a war with you, and those who showed enmity towards you, then I will lament you morning and evening, and instead of tears, I will shed blood for you out of grief. Regret for what has befallen you,

and anguish, until I die from the affliction of calamity and the anguish of distress.' ²⁸⁵

In all fairness, no one can comprehend the depth of this calamity in the sorrowful heart of our Master. The blood of Sayyedush Shohada (a.s) holds such honour before Allah that He has attributed it to His Sacred Essence,

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا ثَارَ اللَّهِ وَابْنَ ثَارِهِ

'Peace be upon you, O blood of Allah and the son of His blood.' ²⁸⁶

Imam Asr (a.s) is the heir of his oppressed grandfather (a.s) and the owner of his blood, and he awaits divine permission to avenge this blood of Allah. The slogan of his companions is

يَا لثَارَاتِ الْحُسَيْنِ ²⁸⁷

Therefore, those awaiting him (a.t.f.s) are also considered seekers of the blood of Sayyedush Shohada (a.s), and this act of seeking the blood of Imam Husain (a.s) is considered one of the noblest deeds of the believers. If someone considers Imam (a.s) as his true father (الامام ... الوالد الشفيق), he truly considers himself the owner of his blood and considers seeking that blood as his inviolable right. This is why, in the Ziarat of Sayyedush Shohada (a.s), his blood is attributed to himself, and a person beseeches Allah:

²⁸⁵ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 101, pg 320 (Ziarat Nahiya)

²⁸⁶ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 101, pg 294 (Ziarat Ashura)

²⁸⁷ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 52, pg 308, H no 82

أَسْأَلُهُ... أَنْ يَرْزُقَنِي طَلَبَ ثَارِي مَعَ إِمَامٍ مَهْدِيٍّ هُدَى ظَاهِرٍ نَاطِقٍ
بِالْحَقِّ مِنْكُمْ

'I ask Him... to grant me seeking my blood with the guided Imam, the apparent and eloquent one from among you, the Ahlul Bait (a.s).'²⁸⁸

"ناطق (Apparent) and ناطق (eloquent) refer to the time of reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s), and every believer who recites the blessed Ziarat Ashura asks Allah to grant them the opportunity to avenge the blood of Imam Husain (a.s) accompanied by Imam of Guidance, the apparent and eloquent one from the Ahlul Bait (a.s) referring to his Master's blood as ثاري (my blood)

This pure and sacred blood is mentioned thrice in Ziarat Ashura with three different expressions. Initially, it is called ثارالله (blood of Allah). Then, addressing Sayyedush Shohada (a.s), it is referred to as ثارك (his blood) meaning the blood of Imam Husain himself (a.s). In the third instance, it is called ثاري (my blood) referring to the blood of the one reciting/performing the Ziarat. Each of these three expressions carries a special significance, with the third being the subject of discussion here.

One of the highest aspirations of a true muntazir is to seek this sacred blood alongside its true and original guardian (wali), the blessed Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s). This request is presented twice to Allah during the Ziarat. If Allah accepts this supplication for someone, he will attain great felicity during the time of the

²⁸⁸ Ziarat Ashura

reappearance of our Master, Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s), and a significant Faraj will encompass his life.

One who truly appreciates the value of this immense felicity strives to repeatedly present his request to the Divine Presence every day by persevering in the recitation of Ziarat Ashura for Imam Husain (a.s), insisting and persisting in its fulfilment so as not to be deprived of this immense grace. In this case, this very perseverance will itself be a great relief for the awaiting believer during occultation of Imam (a.s). This is because Ziarat Ashura is considered the most virtuous of the Ziaaraat for Sayyedush Shohada (a.s) and is not restricted to any specific time or place.²⁸⁹

Many great Shia scholars and jurists, despite their numerous scholarly engagements and the significant time spent attending to the affairs of the people, were committed to persevering in the recitation of this Ziarat and recommended this noble act to others.

Ayatollah Shaikh Murtuza Ansari (r.a) persevered in reciting Ziarat Ashura, with one hundred curses and one hundred salutations in the shrine of Ameerul Momineen (a.s) ... And if someone observed his perseverance, they would assume that he did not engage in scholarly matters and was solely devoted to Ziarat. On the other hand, when they witnessed his scholarly works, they would not believe that he persevered in reciting Ziarat Ashura.²⁹⁰

The son of Marhoom Ayatollah Amini writes, ‘Despite his numerous engagements, writing books, study, organization,

²⁸⁹ More explanation is available in the book Aaftab dar Ghurbat, pg 457

²⁹⁰ Ziarat Ashura wa Asaar Shaguft, pg 72, 73

and supervision of the construction of Ameerul Momineen's (a.s) library in Najaf, Allamah Amini diligently adhered to reciting Ziarat Ashura and recommended it to others. He also wrote:

'Four years after the demise of the late Grand Ayatollah Allamah Amini Najafi, the author of the book 'Al-Ghadeer'.... meaning the year 1394 AH, one Friday night before the dawn prayer, I saw him in a dream. I found him joyful and content. In that dream, among other words addressed to his son, he said: "My son, in the past, I have repeatedly reminded you, and now I advise you never to abandon or forget Ziarat Ashura under any circumstances. Recite Ziarat Ashura regularly and make it obligatory upon yourself. This Ziarat possesses numerous effects, blessings, and benefits that will lead to your salvation and prosperity in this world and the Hereafter." ²⁹¹

An example of the remarkable effects of Ziarat Ashura is an incident narrated by Marhoom Ayatollah Haj Shaikh Murtuza Haeri from his esteemed father, the late Grand Ayatollah Haj Shaikh Abdul Karim Haeri, the founder of the Qum Seminary. He said,

"Along with Marhoom Mirza Ali Aga Shirazi, ²⁹² we attended a private lesson with Marhoom Mirza Mohammad Taqi Shirazi, and upon the instruction of Marhoom Mirza, ²⁹³ I attended that lesson, and we would engage in discussions with Mirza Ali Aga. The location of the lesson was in an upper room belonging to the late scholar, Sayyed Mohammad Fesharaki, ²⁹⁴ who, upon

²⁹¹ Ibid, pg 39, 40

²⁹² Son of Marhoom Mirzai Buzhurg

²⁹³ Ayatullah Uzma Sayyed Mohammed Hasan Shirazi, famous as Mirzai Buzhurg

²⁹⁴ Teacher of Marhoom Abdul Kareem Haeri

hearing the voice of his friend, Mirza Mohammad Taqi, from below, came upstairs. This incident occurred during a discussion about the outbreak of a disease in Samarra. During the conversation and discussion with his companion Mirza, he turned to him and asked, 'Mirza, do you consider me a mujtahid?' He replied, 'Yes, I consider you a mujtahid.' Again, he asked, 'Do you consider me a just person?' He said, 'Yes, I consider you a just person.' For the third time, he asked, 'Do you accept the ruling of a just mujtahid?' The late Mirza responded, 'Undoubtedly.'"

He said, 'I have ruled (given a Hukm) that all men and women among the Shias of Samarra should recite Ziarat Ashura and dedicate its reward to the soul of Hazrat Narjis Khatoon (s.a.), the noble mother of Hazrat Hujjat (a.t.f.s) and that they should seek her intercession with her son, so that he (a.t.f.s) may intercede before Allah, and I guarantee that whoever performs this act will not be afflicted by the disease and plague.'

This ruling was announced, and everyone acted upon it, and none of the Shias became afflicted by the disease and plague. Apparently, during that time, no one died except for a Shia tailor whose case was unknown – whether he had recited the Ziarat or not, and whether he died of the disease and plague or not. The matter was so clear that the Sunnis, out of shame would bury their dead at night. They would come and say to Imam Hadi (a.s) and Imam Askari (a.s), **أَنَا نُسَلِّمُ عَلَيْكَ مِثْلَ مَا يُسَلِّمُ عَلَيْكَ الشَّيْعَةُ.** (We submit to you as the Shias submit to you.)²⁹⁵

²⁹⁵ Sirre Dilbaran, pg 88 - 90

Many great scholars consider persevering in reciting Ziarat Ashura for forty days as the best way to overcome material and spiritual difficulties, and they enumerate the remarkable effects of this great act of worship.

For instance, the late Grand Ayatollah Najafi stated: 'Whenever I face a major problem or a severe difficulty, I seek refuge in Ziarat Ashura for a continuous period of forty days. Before the end of this period, its remarkable and delightful effects become evident to me, and that problem is resolved by the grace of Allah and the blessings of Imam Abu Abdullah, Husain (a.s).'²⁹⁶

Some of the muntazirs of Imam Asr (a.s) consider reciting forty Ziarat Ashura as a way to attain a meeting with their beloved. The late Ayatollah Sayyed Baqir Mujtahid Sistani, the father of the current Marja, Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Sistani, initiated the completion of Ziarat Ashura over forty Fridays in forty mosques so that he is blessed with the meeting with Imam Asr (a.s). On one of the final days, while engrossed in the Ziarat, a light emanating from a nearby house suddenly caught his attention. The light was radiating from within, and he followed it. It was a small, humble house. He knocked on the door, and upon permission, he entered. In one of the rooms, he witnessed Imam (a.t.f.s). He greeted Imam with tears and noticed a corpse covered with a white shroud in the corner of the room. After replying to his greeting, Imam said: 'Why are you searching for me in this way and subjecting yourself to such hardships?' (i.e. reciting forty Ziarat Ashura). Then, pointing to the corpse, he (a.s) said: 'Be like this, so that I may come to you.' The Imam (a.s) continued: 'During the era

²⁹⁶ Ziarat Ashura wa Asaar Shaguft, pg 79

of the ban on hijab (veil), under the rule of Raza Khan Pahlavi, this lady did not leave her house for seven years, lest an unrelated man (na-mahram) should see her.’²⁹⁷

When a great scholar like Marhoom Sistani, with complete sincerity, eagerly undertakes the effort of reciting forty Ziarat Ashura on forty Fridays in forty mosques, while he attains his desire, he also imparts a profound lesson to himself and those awaiting Imam (a.s). If someone fulfils his duties diligently, there is no need to endure hardship for the union with the beloved. Instead, the beloved will come to him and put an end to their separation.

Therefore, it is best to utilize this greatest means (Ziarat Ashura) of drawing near to Allah for the realization of the greatest desire of all Prophets and chosen ones of Allah – the joyous reappearance of Hazrat Baqiyatullah (a.t.f.s). Every other blessing and felicity will be a branch of this glad-tiding. A true muntazir of Imam Asr (a.s) never falls short in seeking refuge in this great and effective means before Allah.

The pious scholar Marhoom Ayatollah Aqa Najafi Quchani, who was an outstanding student of Marhoom Akhund Khurasani, writes in his memoirs from his seminary (Hauza) days, ‘Since we had recited Ziarat Ashura for two chillas²⁹⁸ in Isfahan for a legitimate request, and it yielded results, we had the utmost faith in it. Therefore, from the very beginning of our arrival in Najaf, we engaged in reciting Ziarat Ashura solely for the hastening of the reappearance of the Islamic government and the coming of Hujjat Asr (a.t.f.s) ... And every

²⁹⁷ Ziarat Ashura wa Asaar Shaguft, pg 74, 75

²⁹⁸ Chilla = Forty days (Translator)

Friday, we would recite this Ziarat, whether in Najaf, Karbala or while travelling, totalling forty Fridays in a year.

أشهد الله على سرِّ قلبي أنّي أحبُّ حُجَّةَ العَصْرِ حُبًّا شديداً... واسأل
الله أن يوفّقني لخدمته ويُريني الغرّة الحميدة

'I bear witness before Allah about the secret of my heart that I love Hujjat Asr with an intense love... And I ask Allah to grant me success in serving him and to show me his radiant countenance.'

299

Therefore, Ziarat Ashura for Imam Husain (a.s) is a precious gem, and the more one recognizes its value, the better one can benefit from it in gaining proximity to Allah and His Awliya (a.s).

One of the distinctive features of this noble Ziarat is the number of curses and salutations. Each of them should be recited a hundred times. However, according to a tradition narrated from Imam Hadi (a.s), even if one does not reach one hundred repetitions, the reward is still obtained. Regarding the recitation of these curses and salutations, a concession has been made to allow individuals to benefit from the grace of this unparalleled Ziarat with less time commitment.

The late scholar, Shaikh Abdul Husain Amini, in his valuable book Adab Zair, with an unbroken chain of narration from Imam Hadi (a.s), narrates,

²⁹⁹ Siyahat Sharik, pg 379 & 380

من قَرَأَ لَعْنِ زِيَارَةِ عَاشُورَا الْمَشْهُورَةِ مَرَّةً وَاحِدَةً ثُمَّ قَالَ: اللَّهُمَّ
 الْعَنَّهُمْ جَمِيعاً تِسْعاً وَتِسْعِينَ مَرَّةً كَانَ كَمَنْ قَرَأَهُ مِائَةً وَمَنْ قَرَأَ
 سَلَامَهَا مَرَّةً وَاحِدَةً ثُمَّ قَالَ: السَّلَامُ عَلَى الْحُسَيْنِ وَعَلَى عَلِيِّ بْنِ
 الْحُسَيْنِ وَعَلَى أَوْلَادِ الْحُسَيْنِ وَعَلَى أَصْحَابِ الْحُسَيْنِ تِسْعاً وَ
 تِسْعِينَ مَرَّةً كَانَ كَمَنْ قَرَأَهُ مِائَةً تَامَةً

'Whoever recites the curse (lanat) of the renowned Ziarat Ashura once, and then says, 'Allah, curse them all ninety-nine times', it is as if he has recited the complete curse one hundred times. And whoever recites the salutation (salam) of the Ziarat once, and then says, "Peace be upon Husain, and Ali ibn Husain, and upon the children of Husain, and the companions of Husain ninety-nine times", it is as if he has recited the complete salutation one hundred times.' ³⁰⁰

Remembrance of the tragedy of Hazrat Ali Akbar (a.s)

Ziarat of Ashura begins with sending salutations to Sayyedulsh Shohada himself (a.s) and the revered martyrs who were martyred alongside him. Towards the end, salutations are again sent to that Master and his martyred companions, and then these salutations are repeated a hundred times. In between, specific salutations are sent to two highly venerated martyrs - one being the sacred person of Sayyedulsh Shohada (a.s) himself, and the other being Ali ibn Husain (a.s), which refers to Ali Akbar (a.s). He is the elder son of Imam Husain (a.s) who was martyred alongside his father in Karbala.

³⁰⁰ Aadaab Zaer, pg 60

Sending salutations to the children of Imam (a.s) after Ali ibn Husain (a.s) is an instance of mentioning the 'general' after the 'specific', which highlights the noble status of Hazrat Ali Akbar (a.s).

Among the Shias and those devoted to the Infallible Ahle Bait (a.s.), the attention befitting the status of the elder son of Imam Husain (a.s) is generally lacking. It is for this reason that we dedicate the concluding part of this book to narrating some of his tragedies, so that we may not be deprived of his special favours in this world and the Hereafter. In one of the renowned ziarat narrated by Abu Hamza Somali from Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s), we address H. Ali Akbar (a.s) in the following words

بِأَبِي أَنْتَ وَأُمِّي مِنْ مَذْبُوحٍ وَمَقْتُولٍ مِنْ غَيْرِ جُرْمٍ وَبِأَبِي أَنْتَ وَأُمِّي
 دَمَكَ الْمُرْتَقَى بِهِ إِلَى حَبِيبِ اللَّهِ وَبِأَبِي أَنْتَ وَأُمِّي مِنْ مُقَدَّمِ بَيْنِ يَدَي
 أَبِيكَ يَحْتَسِبُكَ وَيَبْكِي عَلَيْكَ مُحْرَقاً عَلَيْكَ قَلْبُهُ يَرْفَعُ دَمَكَ بِكَفِّهِ
 إِلَى أَعْنَانِ السَّمَاءِ لَا تَرْجِعْ مِنْهُ قَطْرَةٌ وَلَا تَسْكُنْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَبِيكَ
 زُفْرَةٌ

'May my father and mother be sacrificed for you, O one who was slaughtered and killed without any crime! May my father and mother be sacrificed for your blood that ascended towards the Beloved of Allah! May my father and mother be sacrificed for you who proceeded ahead of his father, while he sacrificed you and wept over you, his heart burning for you. He raised your blood

with his hands towards the horizons of the sky, not a drop of it returning, and not a sigh from your father reached you.'³⁰¹

From these statements, one can understand that the sacred heart of Sayyedush Shohada (a.s) was so aggravated with grief over Ali Akbar (a.s) that his lamentations over the loss of his beloved did not subside. The secret behind this may lie in the fact that the eldest son of Imam Husain (a.s) was like the soul and spirit of his father, and the words uttered by Imam over the lifeless body of his son demonstrate this connection. Addressing Ali Akbar (a.s) after his martyrdom, Imam Husain (a.s) said,

عَلَى الدُّنْيَا بَعْدَكَ الْعَفَاء

*'After you, dust be upon the world!'*³⁰²

What an eloquent expression, as the late Shaikh Jafar Shooshtari (r.a) writes: 'Imam Husain (a.s) came close to death three times due to the tragedy of his son: First when Ali Akbar (a.s) came forward and sought permission to enter the battlefield. The father granted permission, dressed him in battle attire, gave him his weapons, and mounted him on a horse. When his beautiful face shone on the edge of the battlefield and his hands and feet were positioned on the reins and stirrups, the women came out and formed a circle around him. His aunts and sisters held onto the reins and stirrups, trying to prevent him from proceeding. At this moment, the state of Imam (a.s) changed in such a way that he came close to death. He (Imam Husain (a.s)) raised his voice and said: 'Leave him, for he is drowned in the pleasure of Allah and is

³⁰¹ Kamiluz Ziaraat, Chapter 79, H no 23

³⁰² Al-Luhoof, pg 114

being slain in the way of Allah.’ Then he took his (Ali Akbar’s) hand and brought him out from among them. Then he looked at him with a despairing gaze.

The second time Imam Husain (a.s) came close to death was when Ali returned from the battlefield with numerous injuries that had afflicted him, blood flowing from his armour, and overwhelmed by heat and thirst. He stood and said: "Father, thirst has drained me!" Husain (a.s) embraced him to his chest and wept due to the intensity of his grief at being unable to quench his thirst. Here again, he came close to death.

The third time he came close to death was when Ali fell from his horse and called out: ‘O Father! Peace be upon you from me!" Sakina said: ‘When my father heard the voice of his son, I looked at him and saw that he was close to death, his eyes rolling like a spinning sphere, looking around the tent as if his soul was departing his body.’³⁰³

Ali Akbar (a.s) was distinguished among the Aale Mohammed (a.s) for his resemblance to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a). His noble father expressed this when he gave him permission to fight, saying,

اللَّهُمَّ اشْهَدْ فَقَدْ بَرَزَ إِلَيْهِمْ غُلامٌ أَشْبَهُ النَّاسِ خُلُقاً وَخُلُقاً وَمَنْطِقاً
بِرَسُولِكَ ص وَكُنَّا إِذَا اشْتَقْنَا إِلَى نَبِيِّكَ نُنْظِرُنَا إِلَيْهِ

‘O Allah, bear witness! A young man has come forth who is the most similar of people in creation, character, and speech to Your

³⁰³ Ali Akbar (a.s), pg 148, 149

Messenger (s.a.w.a), and whenever we longed to see Your Prophet, we would look at him.'³⁰⁴

This is a great virtue for Ali Akbar. For Allah has praised His Prophet (s.a.w.a) in the Quran for his great character,

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

*'And verily, you are on an exalted standard of character.'*³⁰⁵

The complete resemblance to this personification of great character indicates the extraordinary greatness of the eldest son of Sayyedush Shohada (a.s).

The manner of the martyrdom of Ali Akbar (a.s) on the Day of Ashura was also distinguished in certain aspects, and what happened to him deeply intensified the anguish of his noble father (a.s). Marhoom Mohaddis Qummi has narrated the account of his martyrdom:

'...When Murrah bin Munqiz saw Ali Akbar (a.s) attacking and reciting verses of valour, he said: 'The sins of the Arabs shall be upon me if I let this young man pass by me without making his father taste grief for his loss!' As Ali Akbar (a.s) charged forward, he encountered Murrah bin Munqiz. The accursed Murrah struck him with his spear, bringing him down...Then the other horsemen also wounded Ali Akbar (a.s) with their swords until he lost all his strength. He caught hold of the horse's neck, loosening the reins. The horse carried him through the enemy ranks from one side to the other, and

³⁰⁴ Al-Luhoof, pg 113

³⁰⁵ Surah Qalam, v 4

every merciless and accursed enemy struck a blow upon Ali (a.s) until they cut his body into pieces.’³⁰⁶

Before his pure soul departed from his body, he called out to his father,

يَا أَبَتَاهُ هَذَا جَدِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ قَدْ سَقَانِي بِكَأْسِهِ
الْأَوْفَى شَرِبْتُهَا لَا أَطْمَأُ بَعْدَهَا أَبَدًا وَهُوَ يَقُولُ الْعَجَلُ الْعَجَلُ فَإِنَّ لَكَ
كَأْسًا مَذْخُورَةً حَتَّى تَشْرَبَهَا السَّاعَةَ

‘O father! This is my grandfather the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a), who has given me a drink from his overflowing cup, after which I shall never be thirsty again. And he says: ‘Hasten, hasten! For I have preserved another cup for you to drink at this very moment.’

³⁰⁷

Then Sayyedush Shohada (a.s) came to the field of oppression and injustice. According to the narration of Sayyed bin Taoos, he placed his face upon his (Ali Akbar's) face. Further, he narrates,

‘The daughter of Ali (a.s) came out (from the tent), crying out يَا حَبِيبَاةُ! يَا بِنَ إِخْوَاهُ (O my beloved! O son of my brother!) And she threw herself upon the body of Ali Akbar (a.s). Imam Husain (a.s) arrives, lifts his sister, and turns her back towards the women.’³⁰⁸

It was here that Sayyedush Shohada (a.s) sprinkled his son's sacred blood towards the sky, without a drop falling to the

³⁰⁶ Muntahiyul Aamal, vol I, pg 452, 453

³⁰⁷ Ibid

³⁰⁸ Tarjumah Ibarat Luhoof, pg 114

ground. Then he commanded his young men to bring Ali Akbar's (a.s) body to the tent.³⁰⁹

In this way, the severed body of Imam's (a.s) beloved was brought to the tent. Then, on the thirteenth of Moharram, when the Banu Asad came to Karbala to bury the bodies of the martyrs, by the order of Imam Zainul Abedeen (a.s), the pure body of Ali Akbar (a.s) was buried at the feet of Sayyedush Shohada (a.s). Regarding his grandfather, Sayyedush Shohada (a.s), Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) said to Hammad Basri,

فَإِنَّهُ غَرِيبٌ بِأَرْضِ غُرْبَةٍ يَبْكِيهِ مَنْ زَارَهُ وَيَحْزَنُ لَهُ مَنْ لَمْ يَزُرْهُ وَ
يَخْتَرِقُ لَهُ مَنْ لَمْ يَشْهَدْهُ وَيَرْحَمُهُ مَنْ نَظَرَ إِلَى قَبْرِ ابْنِهِ عِنْدَ رِجْلِهِ

*'He is a stranger in a strange land. Whoever visits him weeps for him, and whoever does not visit him grieves for him. Whoever does not attend his (burial) place burns for him, and whoever looks at the grave of his son by his feet he (Imam (a.s)) has mercy upon him.'*³¹⁰

At the feet of Sayyedush Shohada (a.s), meaning beside the grave of Ali Akbar (a.s) is a sacred place to which the great ones have paid special attention, and many blessings have been witnessed there due to Sayyedush Shohada's (a.s) love for his eldest son. One instance of this attention relates to the late Grand Ayatollah Mara'shi Najafi, which we will quote in its entirety from the memoirs of the one who was close to him. He said,

'In the year 1339 AH (one year after the passing of my father), I was a student at the Qawaam Seminary in holy Najaf,

³⁰⁹ Maqatal Husain, pg 260

³¹⁰ Kamiluz Ziaraat, Chapter 108, H no 1

teaching the Sharh (commentary) of Mulla Abdullah Yazdi on logic. My life was difficult and I had no escape from poverty and hardship. The onslaught of troubles and distresses weighed heavily upon my heart..." (He then mentions various difficulties he was facing, including people's bad behaviour, family issues, illness, poor eyesight, poverty, spiritual doubts, and certain hopes and aspirations.)

These problems and tribulations did not leave me at peace. Therefore, I thought of seeking the intercession of Sayyedul Shohada, Imam Husain (a.s), and went to Karbala. I had only a rupee, with which I had bought a piece of bread and a jug of water...'

'When I entered Karbala, I went towards the Husaini river, performed ablution, and then went to the holy shrine. After ziarat and supplications, it was near sunset when I went to the room of the shrine's servant, Sayyed Abdul Husain, the author of the book 'Bughyat al-Nubala fi Tarikh Karbala.' He was my father's friend. I asked his permission to stay in his chamber for one night, although it was prohibited for anyone to remain in the holy shrine overnight. However, he agreed, and I spent that night in the shrine. After renewing my wuzu (ablution), I went to the shrine, wondering where I should sit. It was customary for people to sit at the head side, but I thought that since Imam was attentive towards his son Ali Akbar (a.s) during his life, he must certainly also be looking towards his son after his martyrdom. Therefore, I sat in the lower section, near the grave of Ali Akbar (a.s), at the feet of Imam (a.s).

Shortly after, I heard the sorrowful recitation of the Quran from behind the holy grave. I turned in that direction and saw

my father sitting there, with thirteen volumes of the Quran beside him. In front of him, there was also a stand and a Quran was placed on it, and he was reciting from it. I went to him, kissed his hand, and asked about his condition. With a smile, he replied that he was in the best state and enjoying divine blessings. I asked, 'What are you doing here?' He answered, 'We are fourteen people engaged in the recitation of the Holy Quran here.' I asked, 'Where are they?' He said, 'They have gone outside the shrine.' Then, pointing to the volumes, he introduced the thirteen others, who included Allamah Mirza Mohammed Taqi Shirazi, Allamah Zainul Abedeen Marandi, Allamah Zainul Abedeen Mazandarani, and others whose names I do not recall.

Then my father asked me, 'Why have you come here during the study period?' I explained to him the reason for my coming. He then instructed me to go and present my needs to Imam (a.s). I asked, 'Where is Imam?' He said, 'He is at the top of the shrine. Hurry, for he intends to visit an ill pilgrim on the way.' I stood up and went towards the shrine, and I saw Imam (a.s), but I couldn't look directly at his blessed face, as it was concealed within a halo of light. I greeted him, and he responded, saying, 'Come up to the top of the shrine.' I said, "I am not worthy to go near that Master." Again, he ordered me to go to the top of the shrine, but again, shyness and modesty prevented me from going near him. So, he permitted me to remain where I was standing. I looked again at Imam (a.s) and at that moment, a graceful smile appeared on his lips. He asked me, 'What do you want?' I recited this Persian verse:

آنجا که عیان است ، چه حاجت به بیان است

"Where it is apparent, what need is there for explanation?"

That Master gifted me a piece of candy and said, 'You are our guest.' Then he said, 'What have you seen from the servants of Allah that made you have Soo-e-Zan (suspicions) about them?' With this question, a transformation occurred within me, and I felt that I no longer had Soo-e-Zan towards anyone and felt very close and connected to all people. In the morning, during prayer time, I followed a man of apparent righteousness who was praying, and I had no discomfort or ill thoughts. Then Maula (a.s) said, 'Attend to your studies, for the one who was preventing you can no longer do anything.' When I returned to Najaf Ashraf, the very relative who had been stopping me from teaching came to visit me and said, 'I have thought about it, and you have no other way (career) but teaching.'

Imam (a.s) healed me, and my eyesight became stronger. He gifted me a pen and said, 'Take this pen and write swiftly.' After that, my heart's discomfort was removed. And he prayed for me to remain steadfast in my faith. My other needs were also fulfilled, except for the matter of Hajj, which he did not address at all, perhaps because of the expectations I had set for that journey.

I bade farewell to Maula (a.s) and returned to my father. I asked him, 'Do you have any need or command?' My father said, 'Strive more for the knowledge of your ancestors, be kind to your brothers and sisters, and I owe a debt to Abdul Raza the grocer from Behbahan, which you should pay off.' I returned to Najaf, and all those troubles and ill thoughts were gone.³¹¹

³¹¹ Shehaab Shariat, pg 288 - 291

We entreat Sayyedush Shohada (a.s) by the right of his son Ali Akbar (a.s) to bestow favour upon the friends of his son, Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s), so that they may attain the ability to tread the path of the true muntazirs. And we call upon Allah by the right of Sayyedush Shohada (a.s) and his son to illuminate our inadequate eyes with the vision of our Master.

اللَّهُمَّ ارْزُقْنِي شَفَاعَةَ الْحُسَيْنِ يَوْمَ الْوُرُودِ وَ ثَبِّتْ لِي قَدَمَ صِدْقٍ
عِنْدَكَ مَعَ الْحُسَيْنِ وَأَصْحَابِ الْحُسَيْنِ الَّذِينَ بَدَلُوا مُهَجَّهُمْ دُونَ
الْحُسَيْنِ صَلَوَاتُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

'O Allah, grant me the intercession of Husain on the Day of Return, and establish for me a firm footing of truthfulness with You, along with Husain and the companions of Husain who sacrificed their lives for Husain (a.s).

آمين رب العالمين



اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ أَنْ تُرِيَنِي وَلِيَّ أَمْرِكَ ظَاهِرًا نَافِذًا
لِأَمْرِكَ... فَافْعَلْ ذَلِكَ بِي وَبِجَمِيعِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
حَتَّى نَنْظُرَ إِلَى وَلِيِّكَ صَلَوَاتُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ ظَاهِرَ
الْمَقَالَةِ وَاضِحِ الدَّلَالَةِ... أَبْرِزِيَا رَبِّ مَشَاهِدِهِ...
وَاجْعَلْنَا مِمَّنْ تَقَرُّ عَيْنُهُ بِرُؤْيَيْهِ وَاقْمَنَا بِخِدْمَتِهِ

'O Allah! I ask You to show me Your Guardian in manifest authority, enforcing commands... So do that for me and all the believers, until we observe Your Guardian - prayers upon him and his family - with clear speech and manifest evidence... Manifest his presence, O Lord... and make us among those whose eyes are delighted by seeing him and appoint us in his service.'

(Jamlool Usboo, pg 316)



THE PROMISED
MAHDI