

Who Rises From The Lap Of The Earth?

Everybody has to depart after doing their time on this earth, irrespective of him being the Emperor of the Universe or an unknown beggar. As a poet says, Now there is neither Rustam nor Saam,

Nay! Only their names exist, nothing else. Gradually, even the domain of 'name' reduces and the word 'exists' sinks in the tempest of time. It is a living reality that annihilation is destined for everything. Nothing will survive save Allah the Almighty, Who created eternity and has power over non-existence. Here, annihilation does not imply non-existence; rather, it is used in the meaning of death.

Therefore, Allah the Almighty declares that when this earth will die, He will grant it a new life. Obviously, when life will be anew, then all things will wear the luster of newness. New hopes, new desires, new endowments, new light of the morn, new kohl of the evening, new human society, new social relations; wails giving way to songs of divinity, new people, new earth, new sky, new seasons, new deserts, new mountains, etc.

All thoughts will be transformed. Every imagination will fly to the pinnacles of horizon with the wings of reality. The Satanic shadows of evil whisperings and baseless conjecture, along with their scary faces, will be rendered non-existent. The hearts of one and all will be so pure that everyone will be able to see the images of worship, generosity and love on them. How fortunate are those who will 'return' with new lives to the enlivened earth and witness this world; a world that will be astonishingly strange and one which will be re-embellished by the Almighty's Power. The time is not far when the people of this world of a million eons will vanish in the dark valleys of death with their lives and a few chosen ones of the new world will emerge from the veils of dust.

Every new thing gradually becomes old and antiquated, a system that is as old as time itself. Hence, Allah the Almighty says that such a change and transformation will come that when the earth will become absolutely lifeless, He, the All-Powerful, will grant it a new life. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) has even prophesied that the earth will be replete with injustice and oppression, a fact that is witnessed in every nook and corner of the globe. Life has become one big hell for the underdeveloped countries. The crop-producing power of the earth is reducing by the day and has to be strengthened with fertilisers. Pollution has contaminated the earth to such an extent that cities have started preparing large-scale plans to combat it. Jungles are being razed and converted to grounds, resulting in loss of rains and reduction in growth of crops. Newspapers are replete with articles about the gradual extinction of the animal kingdom due to human recklessness and negligence. Destruction of mountains has led to weakening the stability of the earth. The mode of oppression and tyranny of stronger countries is changing.

SHABAAN 1427 A.H.

Ask the inhabitants of the cities and countries where their devilish and demonic forces have been unleashed. Mothers beat their chests; fathers bang their heads against the wall while the earth burns with hunger and thirst. The Holy Quran questions the humans as to why they are not using their intellects? Why don't they deliberate and reflect deeply on the verses of the Holy Quran? When things are changing at such a rapid pace, can one deny the fact that the world stands on the brink of annihilation and destruction?

Initially oppressed was only a word that we heard but could not imagine. But the chilling cries that pervade the air from the cold countries of Chechnya, Bosnia and Ukraine to the hot deserts of Iraq convey distressing tale of miserable conditions of oppressed nations. Even more tyrannical are the new faces of hypocrisy and pretense. That is, the noble standards of justice, equity, mercy, compassion, humanity, etc. are now associated with these very nations which shed human blood mercilessly and have ripped apart all forms of decency. In other words, oppression and tyranny are accompanied with the weighing scale of justice and equity. This is one of the amazing twists of time about which Allah the Almighty had prophesied through his Messenger (s.a.w.a.) fourteen hundred years ago. Not only this, He had even informed about the impending revolution by declaring, "Allah's Remnant is good for you if you are believers."

Each alphabet of this prophecy is a caveat and a word of warning. The pronouncement of this call after reflecting on the global destruction caused by the thoughts and views of prejudice makes man conclude that this will transpire only and only after the advent of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). Yet, he is negligent and unaware of the news of this great goodness and does not ponder over the effects of the earth lifelessness as to how death is firmly strangulating the earth with its clutches and that this is a were of a new revolution. After this revolution, caravans of blessings and endowments will descend on the sky on the earth from the side of Allah the High. Newness will suffuse everything. Youth will permeate all things. The earth will swallow the oppressors and the tyrants. The graves will open their mouths for the righteous people of their times to step out. They will rise from their graves with a new fragrance, the bodies still covered in their shrouds and with a renewed desire to accompany the Remnant Of Allah (a.t.f.s.). What a beautiful scenario! What a fantastic world! Resplendence showered all around. Troups of worshippers will emerge from their houses and move towards the mosques. Fragrances will permeate the atmosphere in every lane and market.

Everybody including our our deficient intellects, discusses about the aforementioned prophecies. We talk about whatever goodness, kindness and compassion we have seen in this universe and the extent to which our intellects can comprehend. We write about the righteous of that era as per our conjecture. But the fact is that what do we know as to what will be the real scene at that time? It is beyond the comprehension and understanding of the greatest of intellectuals and scholars of today. Allah the Almighty Who illuminated the universe with the

sun and the moon created the earth as carpet and the skies as the ceilings, has informed us that His Remnant still lives on this very earth through whom He will grant a new lease of life to it. His forefathers had looked down upon the governments of the world, guided the creatures while living in seclusion and isolation, made the oceans of knowledge flow and despite treading a path of thorns, trained students for whom distances of the earth and the skies were of no consequence. Death kissed their (a.s.) feet. The goodness and blessings of life were willing to be sacrificed on them (a.s.). The reverence of kings and emperors lay at their soles. They destroyed falsehood in the courts through their scientific and knowledgeable discussions and gave the message of victory and triumph to the sons of monotheism.

When the heir of the infallible guides (a.s.) will reappear, divinity will place the crown of caliphate on his head; a crown studded with the jewels of righteousness. We cannot imagine those times, which are known only to Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), his successor and the infallible Imams (a.s) who succeeded him (a.s.). Or, which are known only to the smile on the resplendent face of the lady of paradise, Hazrat Zahra (s.a.).

How we long to be among the companions and lovers of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) who will join him (a.t.f.s.) after rising from their graves! Ameen!

Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) And Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.)

'The status and position of a believer before his Imam (at.f.s.) is equal to the importance and prominence accorded by the believer to his Imam (a.t.f.s.)'

(Kamaaluddin, vol. 2, pg. 400)

The reality of human existence can be grasped from the subtlety of the soul that Allah created as perfect, pure and free from all blemishes. The creation of this soul is such that on the one hand, equipped with the capacity for guidance and training; it possesses the potential to scale the highest peaks of spiritual perfection. On the other hand, it is equally vulnerable to plunge into the depths of degradation and misery through sins and transgression.

If this very essence of man, the soul, follows the path of self-purification, advancing along the path illuminated by the teachings of the Holy Quran and seeks guidance from the traditions of Ahle Bait (a.s.), it will attain success in this world and the hereafter. Perhaps, its most commendable success will be the achievement of the pleasure and satisfaction of Allah the Almighty. However, if it turns away from this path, it will be condemned to deprivation, shackled by darkness and corruption. One must remember that it is only the presence of a living soul that grants life to this body.

In this transient world, we are presented with two contrasting examples. On one hand we have the example of those who followed their desires, the pleasure seekers of this world; those who traversed the perverted path laid down by Bani Umayyah; the likes of Abu Jahl, Amr b. Aas, Umar b. Saad, Hajjaj b. Yusuf, the accursed Yazid and the corrupt scholars, who supported and encouraged them.

On the other hand, we are also introduced to the illustrious lives of the members of Bani Hashim and who followed their footsteps - Janabe Abdul Muttalib (r.a.), Janabe Abu Talib (r.a.), Janabe Salman (r.a.), Meesam (r.a.), Kumay! (r.a.) and pious scholars who treaded the path outlined by them.

In this short treatise, we are pleased to present the name of one such scholar who lived his life in the shadow of piety, knowledge of the Holy Quran and recognition of the Ahle Bait (a.s.). He set such high standards in the love and affection for the Imam of his Age (a.t.f.s.) that the latter (a.t.f.s.) addressed him as his son. This pious son of the Imam was Razi Al Deen Ali Sayyed b. Taoos (r.a.).

The Family of Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.)

Sayyed b. Taoos (r.a.) was extremely conscious of his family history, about which he has written with great reverence. And rightfully SO - since, on his father's side, his family roots reach Imam

Hasan (a.s.) and from his mother's side, they reach Imam Husain (a.s.). It is due to this distinction that some scholars have addressed him as "Zul Hasanain". Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.) writes, 'Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, bestowed my family and forefathers with respect, nobility, knowledge and eminence. He made them trustworthy in the eyes of the people. People praised them and held them in high regard. Even today people acknowledge their greatness and dignity. Every person is desirous of having a family tree like ours.

However, from the aspect of genealogy, I find no family better than mine.'

(Al Istafa, Rauzaatul Jannat, vol. 2, pg. 270)

Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.) and the station of spirituality

When the soul and heart of man frees itself from the veils of darkness and sin, and treads the path of Allah's Worship, it acquires the capacity of kindling the light of guidance in itself. This spiritual awakening illuminates the hearts of the pious believers. Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.) had reached such heights of spiritual purity that he was able to establish a spiritual relation with the Imam of the Age (a.t.f.s.). Such was his position that scholars have expressly acknowledged his extraordinary characteristics.

Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.), while completing his book writes, 'I hereby complete my book which is a collection of those authentic supplications, which Allah inspired me through certain special occasions.'

(Mehajj al-Da'waat, pg. 400, 413)

The author of Rauzaatul Jannaat writes, 'The supplications and Ziyaraat (Salutations) which are narrated by Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.) are very similar to those narrated by the infallible Imams (a.s.). In Misbaah al-Zaaer, he has narrated duties and actions for the pious while visiting Masjid-e-Kufa and other holy places. We do not find these mentioned in the books of any other scholar. In this regard Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.) considers his narrations as authentic and permissible.

(Rauzaatul Jannaat, vol. 5, pg. 138)

At another place, Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.) mentions, 'Among the bounties with which Allah has blessed me is that He has inspired me with recognition which is free from error, doubts and leaves no room for deviation. One who evaluates me with the light of faith and eyes of radiance will find me in harmony with my words. He will be needless of any further proof or argument.

(Kashful Mohajjah, pg. 17)

Spiritual attachment with the Imam of the Age (a.t.f.s.).

During the period of Ghaibat, it is the responsibility of every being, rather of every believer, that he establishes a spiritual contact with the Imam of the Age (a.t.f.s.). When a person acquires the recognition of the Imam, a unique relationship is established wherein the heart, as per its capacity becomes a reflection of the characteristics and ethics of the Imam (a.t.f.s.).

Allah the Almighty informs us in the Holy Quran,

'O those who believe! Be patient and enjoin patience amongst one another and remain in contact. And be careful of your duty to Allah lest you succeed.'

(Surah Ale Imran (3): 200)

The above verse has been explained by the Holy Imams (a.s.) in various exegesis of the Holy Quran thus - O those who believe! Remain patient and steadfast during the period of Ghaibat of the Imam of the Age; be steadfast upon the right path as compared to your enemies and remain in contact with the awaited Imam. Obey the laws and regulations of Islam as laid down by Allah for surely in it is your success.

(Tafseer al-Burhaan by Sayed Haashem al-Bahraani (r.a.) under the aforementioned verse)

Some people harbour the misconception that since we are living our lives in the period of the major occultation, it is impossible to maintain 'contact with the Imam and there is no way by which we can have a relationship with the Imam of the Age (a.t.f.s.). It is important that we clarify this point over here.

As regards the traditions that are available on this matter, it is true that during the period of the major occultation, the person who claims that he can meet the Hidden Imam (a.t.f.s.) whenever he desires is a liar. It is equally true, however, that during this period there are numerous instances of people having been blessed by a visit from the Imam (a.t.f.s.), either in person or through a spiritual experience like a dream.

A little attention to this point will clarify all doubts about the matter of contact with the Hidden Imam (a.t.f.s.). For surely this grace - the opportunity to meet the Hidden Imam (a.t.f.s.) - is a direct consequence of the love and benevolence of the Imam (a.t.f.s.) himself.

Secondly, it is not necessary that contact be maintained only by regular meetings in person. A relationship need not be established only through physical contact. Rather, a relationship through spiritual means can also be defined as a contact. In reality, it is the establishment of this spiritual relationship that confirms the distinguished status of a believer. And this is the relationship that every believer can establish and through which he attains such heights of

recognition and eminence that he always perceives himself to be in the honoured presence of the Holy Imam (a.t.f.s.) and conducts himself and his affairs as if he is constantly under the watchful eyes of the Imam (a.t.f.s.). We have the example of Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.) who narrates in the 'Supplication on the Day of Friday':

'O Allah, I seek nearness to you through a sincere heart (I consider myself lowly before your Might and Majesty), and to your representative - Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) through an obedient body (my body is subservient to the commands of the Imam and I seek benefit from the parts of my body such that the Imam is pleased with my actions) and to the Holy Imams (a.s.) through a humble heart (I prefer them over myself and seek obedience to them)."

(Jamaal al-Usboo', pg. 152)

Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.) has drawn our attention to establishing a relation with the Imam of the Age (a.t.f.s.) and even guided us along this path. He outlines how one should present his questions before the Imam (a.t.f.s.) and seek a response from him. In his advice to his son, he (r.a.) mentions:

'O my son, if ever you are presented with a difficulty, the solution of which you desire to seek from Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), may our lives and souls be sacrificed upon him, then remember the tradition reported by Muhammed Ibn Yaqub Kulaini (r.a.): One day a person came to Abul Hasan (a.s.) and asked him, "If a person wishes to place his desires before his Imam, just as he would place it before Allah, then what should he do?" Imam (a.s.) replied, "If he has any desire, then he must bring it to his lips (he must express his desire); he will receive the reply for it."

It is necessary to clarify the above statement of the Imam. The statement indicates in a simple manner that if one has any needs then he must present it through the medium of prayers and tawassul (seeking help through the mediation of the Imam). It is true that the Imam (a.s.) is aware of the deepest secrets of our heart; nevertheless, he (a.s.) prefers that his followers put forth their desires verbally and express their helplessness with sincerity.

The absolute contact of Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.) and his nearness to Imam (a.t.f.s.) was such that the latter (a.t.f.s.), with his benevolence and special grace, had blessed him with deep knowledge and hidden insights. Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.) continued to bask in the shade of Imam's (a.t.f.s.) generosity till the end of his life. Such was the perfection of his recognition that Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.), while speaking to his son about the conditions of the reappearance of the Imam (a.t.f.s.) quotes the following verse and says:

"Allah preserves whatever He wishes. And obliterates what He wishes..."

(Surah Ra'ad (13): 39)

'If the above verse were not present in the Holy Quran, I would have informed you easily about the day and the time of Imam's (a.t.f.s.) reappearance, may our lives be sacrificed upon him!'

Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.) and praying for the Imam of the Age (a.t.f.s.)

Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.) held the recitation of supplication in high regard. He encouraged establishing a personal and private relation with the Holy Imams (a.t.f.s.) as well. For the sake of brevity, we are unable to delve much into the supplications of Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.), though it is sufficient to say that a comprehensive book can be compiled on this topic.

In his book, "Jamaal al-Usboo", on the topic of the Etiquette of Supplication, Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.) writes, "An important aspect to be remembered from the etiquette of supplication is that one should prefer supplicating for Hazrat Baqiyatullah, Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) before seeking one's own desires."

He continues, "At the time of seeking their desires from Allah, believers should first remember the desires of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.). Thereafter, the believer should express his needs. Do not perform prayers, fast or supplicate out of habit. Remember, each person is tested through his own actions which may lead to a false impression and one cannot rely upon such actions. Your prayers, fasts and supplications should principally be for the sake of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) and then for yourself. This is because the continued existence this world and its elements are contingent to the blessed presence of the Imam (a.t.f.s.). When your very existence is protected by the existence of another personality, how can it be that we prefer ourselves over that exalted personality? Rather, it is incumbent that we prefer his needs over our own and his desires over our own. And this action itself will be a measure of our servitude and obedience for surely he (a.t.f.s.) is not in need of our prayers and fasts. He (a.t.f.s.) is needless of them. It is we who need him (a.t.f.s.). It is through him that our shortcomings and defects will be corrected and we will enjoy a peaceful and happy life."

Regarding the actions for the holy month of Ramazan, Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.), writes in his book "al-Mazaar" about the supplication which is to be recited before dawn (Seher) as follows: "It is the duty of every believer in the nights of this month that before and after every supplication, he remembers the holy personality of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) - the representative of the All Merciful Allah amongst His creatures on the face of this earth. This is because he is the owner of all that the one who fasts needs. Allah has entrusted him with all affairs.'

(Kitab-e-Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) wa Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.), pp. 90-93)

Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.) has enumerated several supplications through which one can reach Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.). These supplications are mentioned in several books. He has also

narrated several incidents wherein people have had the glad opportunity to meet the Holy Imam (a.s.). Scholars have suggested that instances, wherein the visitor's name is not mentioned, is Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.) himself.

Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) and supplications

Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) has true affection for those who love him. The extent of his fondness and the importance he gives to their remembrance in his prayers is highlighted by Allamah Majlisi (r.a.) and Mohaddes Noori (r.a.). They have both narrated that Sayyed Ibne Taoos (r.a.) said, 'One morning, after Seher, I visited the Sardab (cellar of the house of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) in Samarra) for offering prayers when I saw that Imam-e- Zaman (a.t.f.s.) was beseeching Allah,

'O Allah! Our Shias have been created from our light and the remainder of our earth (teenat). They have sinned in the hope of our love and benevolence. If their sin is related to Your Exalted Self, then You forgive them. We will be satisfied with Your forgiveness. And if their sin is related to the rights of their brethren, then you correct their shortcomings and grant them from the part of Khums which is our right so that they may be satisfied with it. Protect them from the fire of Hell and do not gather them along with our enemies in Your punishment.'

On reflecting on the words of Imam's (a.t.f.s.) invocation, we are overcome with shame and remorse. The blessed personality, whose continued presence ensures the existence of this world and its sustenance - the Imam of the Age (a.t.f.s.), - prays for sinners like us and seeks forgiveness that we may be saved from Hellfire. For us sinners, who are the direct recipients of his love and affection, is it right that we forget him and remove his remembrance from our hearts and minds? Or rather, shouldn't . We ensure that we fill our hearts and minds with his remembrance to such an extent that not a moment of our life passes by without his remembrance?

O Allah! Grant us the taufeeq that we develop the sincere love of our Imam in our hearts!
Aameen!

Muntakhab al-Asar: A Treasure-Trove of Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s.) Recognition

Readers of the Al-Muntazar magazine will remember that in the 1408 AH Shaaban issue, we had explained the importance of recognition of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) by introducing some books on the subject. We had pointed out that scholars are an important media for the spiritual growth and development of the Islamic nation. This is the only way our culture and tradition will be enriched.

While many books have been compiled across different topics, the topic of Mahdaviyyat has occupied centre stage. In the previous issues of Al-Muntazar we have introduced some of these books.

We take this opportunity to introduce another book on the subject.

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| Name of the | : Muntakhab al-Asar Fee Al Book Imam al-Saani al-Ashar |
| Language | : Arabic |
| Author | : Ayatullah Lutfullah Saafi Gulpaygani (May Allahprolong his blessed life) |
| Pages | : 525 |
| Publisher | : Maktabat Al Sadr, Tehran(3rd edition) |
| Year of printing | : 28th Ramazan 1373 Hijri |

Please Note:

In this particular article, we have considered the edition of Muntakhab Al- Asar, which is in one volume. Recently, another edition in three volumes has been published that has a detailed analysis of traditions and has significant supporting material to the original book.

Before beginning with the book, we feel it is important to mention a few words about its author viz. Ayatullah Lutfullah Saafi Gulpaygani (may Allah prolong his blessed life). He was born on the 19th Jamaadi Al Awwal 1337 Hijri in the city of Gulpaygan, Iran. His father, Ayatullah Akhund Mullah Muhammad Jawaad Saafi, was one of the renowned scholars of his time and had penned many books.

His mother was the daughter of Ayatullah Akhund Multah Muhammad Ali (r.a.), also a renowned scholar. She was a religious and knowledgeable lady.

After studying the basic Islamic teachings from his mother, he learnt the fundamentals of Rasael, Makaasib and. Kefaayah (these three books form part of the core curriculum in all religious seminaries) from the esteemed scholar of Gulpaygan - Akhund Mullah Abul Qasim.

In 1360 Hijri, he travelled to the city of Qum, where five teachers taught him viz.

1. Haaj Sayyid Muhammad Taqi-e-Khunsaari (r.a.)
2. Haaj Sayyid Muhammad Jehat Kowekamri (r.a.)
3. Haaj Sayyid Sadruddin Sadr Aameli (r.a.)
4. Haaj Sayyid Muhammad Husain Burujardi (r.a.)
5. Haaj Sayyid Muhammad Reza Gulpaygani (r.a.)

Besides Qum, he even traveled to Najaf-e-Ashraf in his quest for knowledge. There he learnt under some of the greatest scholars (Mujtahedeen) and teachers like

1. Haaj Shaikh Muhammad Kaazim Shirazi (r.a.)
2. Haaj Sayyed Jamaluddin Gulpaygani (r.a.)
3. Haaj Shaikh Muhammad Ali (r.a.)

But the one who sharpened his thinking and took him to the stage of Marjaeeyat (a stage when the Mujtahid is referred to by the people for religious edicts) was none other than the great thinker with deep understanding of Islamic principles - Ayatullah Haaj Burujardi (r.a.) - the epitome of knowledge and humility, who commands great respect amongst the Shiite jurists.

Ayatullah Lutfullah Saafi has written over a hundred books on various topics. To mention the details of these books would involve writing another article altogether. Suffice it is to say that only on Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.), apart from Muntakhab al-Asar, he has written many books, some of which are as follows:

1. Naveed-e-Amno Amaan
2. Aqeede Aazadiye Najis
3. Besooyeh Daulate Kareemeh
4. Furrooghe Wilayat Dar Dua-e-Nudba
5. Wabastageehe Jahan Be Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.)
6. Marefate Hujjate Khuda - Exposition of the Supplication **اللَّهُمَّ عَرِّفْنِي نَفْسَكَ**

These books have been written in Persian and are considered among the best works on the subject.

SHABAAN 1427 A.H.

Let us revert to our discussion on Muntakhab al-Asar. As mentioned earlier - the book has over 500 pages. Its contents are as follows:

1. Preface.
2. 10 parts
3. 100 Chapters

There are over 6,000 traditions in the book along with references for each. After researching the book, one can conclude that it has sourced traditions from nearly 70 books of the Ahle Sunnah scholars and 9 Shiite references, whose names can be referred to in the bibliography at the very start of the book.

Preface

Anyone who has studied history and is aware of the glad tidings of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and is cognizant of the sayings of the companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) regarding the last era and the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is aware of the reality that Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) will cleanse the earth of ignorance and oppression. He will abolish tyranny, establish justice, raise the slogan of Allah's Unity (Tauheed) and make Islam dominant even if the idolaters are averse to it. On divine command, Imam (a.t.f.s.) will abrogate all deviant forms of worship so that eventually only Allah is worshipped. Bad ethics and habits will be abolished as also laws legislated by man to serve his selfish interests and ends. Through his reappearance, Allah will fulfill His Promise.

(Preface pg. 1)

Based on Allah's promise, the author has brought verses from the Holy Quran to awaken man's sleeping intellect and then writes,

"...this (promise) is something over which the entire Muslim nation is united and none has cast any aspersion or doubted this consensus. Right from the beginning till date, all those who have claimed Mahdaviyyat (the Pretenders) have used these divine promises and glad tidings as the preface for the claim."

(Preface, pg. 2)

Note:

If there was no mention of the belief of Mahdaviyyat in Holy Quran and traditions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) (i.e. Sunnah), how could the pretenders of Mahdaviyyat get away with their fictitious claims? Certainly, the first objection of the Muslims would have been that there is no

concept of 'Mahdi' in Islam and there is no prophecy of the same in the Holy Quran and/or traditions. A forged coin is proof enough of the existence of the original.

Skepticism about the Mahdi (a.t.f.s.):

Some skeptics have eyed the traditions on the reappearance of Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) with suspicion. They have claimed that the narrators of such traditions are unreliable: This has paved the way for differences and animosity among the Muslims.

The author, in the light of traditions, replies:

ضعفُ السندِ انما يكونُ قايحًا اذا لم يكنُ الخبرُ متواترًا و اما في المتواتر منه فليس ذلك شرطًا في اعتباره.

"The chain of narrators can be considered weak when the news is not reliable. When the news is authentic and consecutively narrated, the reliability of the chain of narrators is not a criterion (for accepting the tradition)."

(Preface, pg. 2)

He further states:

و ليس في المسائل النقلية الى....

'To believe in rulings that cannot be authenticated except through hearing and acknowledgement does not have greater benefit than believing in the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). Of course, we do not claim that the belief in the reappearance of Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) has greater importance than the beliefs in other rulings on which Muslims have more faith. Even though the Muslims have not scrutinized the chain of narrators, the rulings are accepted on the basis of a single tradition. So, the Muslims must not entertain doubts regarding the reappearance of Mahdi (a.t.f.s).'

(Preface, pg. 2)

As one reads the preface, the arguments advocating the reappearance of Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) get more and more detailed.

The reason for writing the book:

With the completion of the preface, it is appropriate to discuss why the author chose to write this book

و انما الباعث لقديم هذا الكتاب.....--

'Surely, the reason for compiling this book (Muntakhab al-Asar) is to make the readers aware of the occultation and to expose and falsify the claims of the false Mahdis during the last era. This has assumed importance because our enemies do not miss out on any opportunity to create a rift between the Muslims and inflame the fire of hatred so as to keep Muslims involved and engrossed in conflicts and dissent. One such rift that has engulfed the Muslim community in crisis is the subject of the Promised Mahdi'

(Preface, pg. 6-7)

This statement of Ayatullah Lutfullah Saafi is particularly relevant when you consider that so many individuals have claimed Mahdaviyyat on the pretext of eliminating falsehood and establishing peace. We find several imposters who were low on morals but very high on greed for wealth and status from nations like Iran, India and Africa who claimed to be the Promised Mahdi.

The author further elaborates that these imposters abused and whitewashed the minds of the common masses by attributing themselves with the characteristics, signs and other facets narrated by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) for Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). Since the common Muslim was not well-versed with these prophetic forecasts about the Mahdi, he proved easy prey for these imposters.

فَجَمَعْنَا طَائِفَةً مِنْ هَذِهِ الْأَخْبَارِ وَاسْتَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهَا مِنَ الْكُتُبِ الْمَعْتَبَرَةِ عِنْدَ الْخَاصَّةِ وَالْعَامَّةِ.

'That is why we have collected these traditions (related to the Mahdi) from the reliable books of the Shias as also the Ahle Sunnah.'

(Preface, pg. 8)

10 Parts and 100 Chapters

It is an uphill task to give a concise introduction and enlighten about the concepts of a book that runs into more than 500 pages. We seek grace from Allah and help from Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s.) in introducing this book and in highlighting its rich concepts in the best possible manner.

First Part (Pg. 10-14)

Imams (a.s.) are 12 in number (الْأَيْمَةُ اثْنَا عَشَرَ). This part has 8 chapters.

Jaabir b. Samarah says that he heard the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) saying:

'There will be 12 caliphs after me'. Then, he (s.a.w.a.) said a sentence which I could not hear. Later my father told me that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said, 'They will all be from the Quraish'.

(Part 1, Chapter 1, Tradition 1)

Jaabir b. Samarah relates, "The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) prophesied,

'This religion will remain of great importance till the time 12 caliphs will be in it. On hearing this, the people cried out Allah is Great!

This led to an uproar in the crowd. After that he (s.a.w.a.) said something which I was not able to hear clearly. I asked my father later about what the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had said. He replied that the Holy Prophet had forecasted:

All of them (12 caliphs) will be from Quraish.'

(Part 1, Chapter 1, Tradition 2)

The author has sourced this tradition from Sunan-e-Abi Dawood.

(Kitab Al Mahdi vol. 2, pg. 207, Egyptian edition)

By introducing such traditions sourced from Abu Dawood (one of the most reliable Ahle Sunnah scholars) in Kitab Al Mahdi, the author has proved beyond doubt that Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is among the 12 caliphs of Islam prophesied by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). He writes:

"Undoubtedly, by recording such traditions in his book Kitab Al Mahdi, Abu Dawood has made it clear that he believes that Imam Mahdi is among the 12 caliphs, else why would he record such a tradition under that chapter in his celebrated book.'

(Muntakhab al-Asar, pg. 12)

It should be noted that the belief in 12 Imams (a.s.) 'Aimma Isna Ashar' pertains only to the Shia Imamia. Others have the belief that Islam will not perish until there are 12 caliphs in its midst. Some others maintain that the respect and importance of Islam is only there till the 12 caliphs exist, while some hold that till the time the 12 caliphs exist, Islam will survive till the Day of Judgment and the existence of the 12 caliphs is linked to the existence of the world. Some acknowledge that there will be 12 caliphs and they will be from the clan of Bani Hashim; this is similar to the Shiite belief about the 12 caliphs.

The crux of all the traditions is that there will be 12 caliphs; one succeeding the other. Readers should note that the characteristics of the 12 caliphs can only be found in the 12 Imams of the Ahle Bait (a.s.)..

(Pg. 14, footnote)

In this part, there are several other chapters, some of which have been mentioned below: 1. The number of caliphs (of Islam) is similar to the number of caliphs of Bani Israel.

2. Imams (a.s.) are 12 in number and the first among them is Ameerul Momeneen Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) and the last is the son of Imam Hasan al-Askari, the Promised Mahdi (a.t.f.s.).

Second Part (Pg. 141-319)

In this part there are 49 chapters, in which traditions regarding Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) have been compiled from reliable Ahle Sunnah and Shia books.

Although, we cannot reproduce all the topics in these chapters over here, we have short listed some of the important topics like the tidings regarding the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is from the house of the Holy Prophet (Ahle Bait (a.s.)), Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is from the progeny of Imam Husain (a.s.), as also Imam Sajjad (a.s.) and in this way from the progeny of the other infallible Imams (a.s.) of the Ahle Bait (a.s.) ending in his father, Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.).

Janabe Umme Salmah (r.a.) says that she heard the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) saying:

هُوَ مِنْ وُلْدِ فَاطِمَةَ

He (Mahdi) is from the sons of Fatimah (s.a.)

(Pg. 191)

Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said:

I swear by the One Who has the power over my being, without doubt, the one (Mahdi) behind whom Hazrat Esa (a.s.) will offer prayers (namaz) is from us. The he put his hand on the shoulder of Imam Husain (a.s.) and said: He (Mahdi) will be from his (Imam Husain's (a.s.) progeny.'

(Pg. 199)

Tradition 2 of Chapter 27

Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) said to Asbagh b. Nubaatah (r.a.),

'He (Mahdi) will indeed go into occultation while the ignorant will say that Allah is not in need of the progeny of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.).'

(Pg. 255)

Third Part: (Pg. 320-358)

In this part, there are three chapters; one regarding the birth of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), the other about the peculiarities (related to birth) and the time of birth and the third about the condition of Imam's (a.t.f.s.) mother.

Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) informs: 'The vicegerent of Allah and a sign over His creatures and the caliph after me was born on the night of 15th Shabaan in 255 Hijri at dawn.'

(Pg. 320)

In this part, after compiling various traditions on Imam's (a.t.f.s.) birth, the author has written a long, approximately 20-page footnote, which in fact, can make for a small booklet. The author has collected the views of over 65 prominent and revered Ahle Sunnah scholars regarding the birth of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). There are some Indian names in this list like Maulvi Ali Akbar b. Asadullah Maudoodi Hindi, Shaikh Abdul Al Rahman Hindi, Shah Waliullah Dahelvi (author of Tohfa Isna Ashariyyah and father of Shah Abdul Aziz) and Fazil Rashiduddin Dahelvi. After reading the footnote, it becomes apparent that several Ahle: Sunnah scholars are of the view that Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) was in fact born in the year 255 Hijri.

Fourth Part (Pg. 358-400)

In this part there are three chapters:

- 1) Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s.) meeting with some people in the minor occultation (Ghaibate Sughra).
2. Imam's (a.t.f.s.) miracles during that period.
3. Imam's (a.t.f.s.) special companions.

All traditions in this part are of utmost importance. As opposed to narrating only one tradition from each chapter, we have explained the concept of these traditions.

1. During the short occultation, the four special deputies (Nuwwab-e-Khaas) used to regularly meet Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.).
2. Apart from the four special deputies, many other people have met Imam (a.t.f.s.).
3. Imam-e-Zamana (act.f.s.) was often seen in the environs of the Holy Ka'aba.
4. Imam's (a.t.f.s.) uncle - Jafar has seen him several times. On the demise of Imam's (a.t.f.s.) grandmother, (Imam Hasan Askari's (a.s.) mother) Jafar created a ruckus at her burial. Imam (a.t.f.s.) was present at that time.

5. Ali b. Mahziyaar Al Ahwaazimet Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.).

6. Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) taught 30 people the supplication to be recited at the Pillar of Mustajaar, which is one of the four pillars of the Holy Kabaa.

Apart from these concepts the esteemed author, in this footnote, has discussed and given many arguments on various important topics. The reason for occultation and the incidents of the cellar (sardaab) and the bickering and squabbling of the enemies have been answered here. In addition to this, the honesty, trustworthiness and reliability of the four special deputies have also been discussed.

Fifth Part (Pg. 401-420)

In this part there are two chapters, about Imam's (a.t.f.s.) condition in the major occultation (Ghaibate Kubra), his miracles and about the people who have had the good fortune of meeting him in this period.

In the first chapter itself, the incident of Ismail b. Al Hasan Al Herqali's meeting with Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) is narrated.

The first chapter of this part mentions incidents in which Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) either miraculously cured a person or gave him freedom from an oppressive ruler. We are narrating the seventh tradition, which emphasizes the benefits and characteristics of invoking Allah through the Imams (a.t.f.s.).

This incident occurred in Rabi al-Awwal circa 442 Hijri. Abul Wafa Shirazi says that the ruler of Kirman, Abu Ali Ilyas, had captured and imprisoned him. His courtesans had informed him that the ruler had already decided to punish him. As a result, he was very depressed and used to pray to Allah through the media of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the immaculate Imams (a.s.).

He narrates, 'One Thursday after reciting a supplication I fell asleep. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) came in my dream and said to me:

'Only ask those things from me, my daughter (Janabe Fatima (s.a.)) and my sons. (Hasan (a.s.) and Husain (a.s.)) that will make you closer to Allah's worship and acquire His pleasure and consent. Yes, O my brother! Abul Hasan (Hazrat Ali ((a.s.) is the one who will take revenge from the one who has oppressed you!

'I asked the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) how he would take revenge against the one who has oppressed me, when he himself had a rope around his neck and was unable to do anything? His right was usurped while he did not utter a single word! The narrator says that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was surprised and told me:

'This was a promise which I have taken from him (a.s.) and a command which I have given him and he will for surely fulfill it and will give full justification in this regard. Destruction is for the one who has fought against the appointed one of Allah. As far as Ali b. Husain is concerned, he is the one who will give deliverance from the clutches of evil rulers and creatures. (i.e. for deliverance from evil rulers and creatures one should seek help from Ali b. Husain (a.s.) and from Muhammad . b. Ali (Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.)) and Jafar b. Muhammad (Imam Sadiq (a.s.) seek the hereafter and through them you should ask for Allah's obedience. Through Moosa b. Jafar (Imam Moosa Kazim (a.s.) one should ask from Allah for a fortunate ending and through Ali b. Moosa Raza (a.s.) you should ask safety from famine and storms. Through Muhammad b. Ali (Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) ask Allah for sustenance and through Ali b. Muhammad (Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.)) ask Allah for taufeeq for recommended prayers, good deeds with brothers and for divine proximity and from Hasan b. Ali (Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.)) seek the hereafter.

And when there is a sword on your head and the hands of the enemies reach your neck, ask help at that moment from Saahebus Zamar (a.t.f.s.). Surely, he will help you.'

The narrator says - 'I called out in my sleep **يَا صَاحِبَ الزَّمَانِ أَدْرِكْنِي** even though I had itself exhausted my strength. The guards were unshackling me when I woke up.'

(Pg. 409)

The second chapter is about those who have seen Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) during the major occultation. The first incident is about Muqaddas-e-Ardabeli (r.a.). He had a conversation first with Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) in his shrine in Najaf and then with Imam-e-Zamaana (a.t.f.s.) in Masjid-e-Kufa.

Eight incidents are narrated involving those who had the good fortune of meeting Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) in the major occultation.

Sixth Part (Pg. 421-469):

In this part there are 11 chapters mentioning the signs of reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) and incidents which will occur before the reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) informed:

The verse has been revealed in favor of Qaem-e-Aal-e-Muhammad (a.s.). When Imam-e-Zamana (at.f.s.) will recite two rakat prayer in Maqaam-e-Ibrahim (a.s.), he will be the distressed (referred to in the Quranic verse). He will pray to Allah and Allah will grant the supplication and will solve his difficulties and will make him the ruler of the earth.'

(Part 6, chapter 1, tradition 5)

Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) forecasted: 'At that time what will be your state when your ladies will become disrespectful to you, your youth will indulge in bad actions and you will neither exhort towards good nor prohibit from evil.' I (Salman) asked: O Prophet of Allah will this really come to pass? He (s.a.w.a.) said:

Yes, and still worse will be that virtue will be considered as vice while vice will be considered as virtue.

(Part 6, chapter 2, tradition 3)

All traditions in this part are pertaining to the people living in this era. We are already witnessing some of the foretelling. Many of the prophetic forecasts have already come to pass and given the state of the world, indications are that the balance will also come to pass very soon.

In the third chapter, one tradition has been narrated from Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.):

"When a caller from the sky will announce 'Truth is with the progeny of Muhammad, the name of Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s.) will resonate everywhere and the masses will be extremely joyous (at his reappearance)."

(Part 6, chapter 3, tradition 19)

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) has said: 'A caller will call out to Hazrat Qaim (a.t.f.s.) with his father's name...on that day Hazrat Qaim (a.t.i.s.) will reappear.'

(Part 6, chapter 4, tradition 2)

One person asked Imam Sadiq (a.s.): 'When will your Qaim reappear?' Imam replied:

'When deviation will be widespread, guidance will be sparse, tyranny and oppression will be excessive, morals and guidance minimal. Men will satisfy themselves with other men and women with other women. Jurists will be inclined towards the world. People will prefer poetry and poets; the innovators in religion will be transformed into monkeys and pigs. Sufyaani will be killed and Dajjal will rise...'

(Part 6, chapter 9, tradition 5)

Seventh Part (Pg. 470-483)

In the 12 chapters in this part, the conditions after the reappearance have been discussed. Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) narrates a tradition:

SHABAAN 1427 A.H.

'Allah will make Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) and his companions the rulers of the East and West. Islam will be the dominant religion. Through Imam (a.t.f.s.) and his companions, Allah will eliminate innovation and ignorance just as falsehood and ignorance eliminate the truth. Then there will be no trace of oppression. They will exhort towards good and refrain from evil. Eventually, the consequence of the affair is with Allah alone.'

(Part 7, chapter 1, tradition 1)

When Qaim of Aale Muhammad (a.t.f.s.) will reappear, Allah will congregate the people of East and West. They will assemble in the same manner as the rain clouds gather (just before the rains).

(Part 7, chapter 2, tradition 1)

Imam Baqir (a.s.) predicted: 'Without doubt, Hazrat Esa (a.s.) will descend on the earth before the Day of Judgment... Hazrat Esa (a.s.) will recite prayers behind Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.).'

In a long tradition, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) has said:

The day Dajjal will emerge, 70,000 Jews, illegitimate children, drunkards, musicians, men indulging in vain talks and sport, ignorant Arabs and women will join forces with him. He (Dajjal) will make adultery, sodomy and all other prohibited acts permissible. Matters will reach a stage that man will indulge in excesses with women (adultery) and boys (sodomy) openly. The whole world will be conquered by him except Makkah, Madinah and the graves of the Imams (a.s.). He will cross all barriers and the earth will be overwhelmed with his and his helpers' atrocities. Finally, he will be slain by Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), behind whom Hazrat Esa (a.s.) will pray.'

(Part 7, chapter 9, tradition 2)

Imam Baqir (a.s.) says: 'When our Qaim will reappear, Allah will perfect the intellects of His Servants and this will make their bodies flawless.'

(Part 7, chapter 12, tradition 1)

Eighth Part (Pg. 483-486)

In this part there are two chapters, which contain the conditions of Imam's companions and helpers.

Ameerul Mo'mineen (a.s.) informed: 'The companions of Mahdi (a.s.) will be young and the number of their old ones will be very few, like kohl in the eyes of salt in the meal.'

(Part 8, chapter 1, tradition 3)

Ninth Part (Pg. 487-491)

There are three chapters in this part in which the period of Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s.) caliphate, and the condition of the people in his era, have been explained.

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) was asked: "How many years will the Qaim rule the world?" Imam informed:

'For seven years, where each year is similar to your seventy years.'

Tenth Part (Pg. 492-525)

In this there are seven chapters.

About the Promised Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) warned:

'Anyone who denies the Qaim (a.t.f.s.), (who is) from among my sons, has actually denied me!

The Importance of Awaiting (Intezaar)

Imam (a.s.) declared, May Allah have mercy on the one who has abandoned his aspirations for our sake. May Allah have mercy on the one who enlivens our affairs!'

The narrator asked, 'And if I die before the reappearance of Hazrat Qaim (a.t.f.s.)? Imam (a.s.) replied:

Among you are the ones who say that if I am alive at the time of Hazrat Qaim (a.t.f.s.), I will help him. They are like the ones who have fought alongside Imam (a.s.) and attained martyrdom.'

(Part 10, chapter 2, tradition 4)

The chapters after this have supplications, whose recitation has been emphasized. The author has collected many supplications and has also mentioned references from other books.

About Muntakhabul al-Asar, the great scholar Agha Buzurgh-e-Tehrani (r.a.) writes, 'I have not seen any book (in so much detail) on this topic (Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)).' Shaikh Habeeb Muhajir Aalemi has written in his book: 'It is necessary for every believer that he should have a personal copy of this book.'

O Allah! Please increase our recognition and enlist us among Imam's (a.t.f.s.) companions and helpers. Aameen!

Exegesis Of Imam Zamana's Ziarat

As has been customary for the past few years, we shall discuss the exegesis of Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s.) Ziarat in this issue of Al-Muntazar. This year we have short listed Imam's (a.t.f.s.) Ziarat on Friday for discussion. Before we proceed with the exegesis of the Ziarat, it is important that we first appreciate the importance of Friday in Islam.

Importance of Friday

Islam accords great importance to Friday. While all days of the week belong to Allah, Friday stands out for its significance.

1. Imam Moosa Kazim (a.s.) informs:

Allah has created the Prophets (a.s.) and the successors (a.s.) on Friday.'

(Behaarul Anwaar vol. 15 pg. 22 narrated from Basaaeral-Darajaat)

2. Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) narrates:

'Friday has been named as Juma'h (جمعه) because on this day Allah assembled all the creatures and extracted a covenant from them concerning His Unity (Tauheed), the Prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and the guardianship of Ameerul Momeneen - Ali b. Abi Talib (a.s.).'

(Tahzeebul Ahkaam by Shaykh Tusi (r.a.). vol. 3 pg. 3)

3. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) informs:

Friday is the day of worship. So worship Allah as much as possible on that day.'

(Behaarul Anwaar vol. 59 pg. 18, 19)

4. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) explains:

'Friday is the day of Eid for the Muslims.

It is greater in merit than Eidul Fitr and Eiduz Zoha. The greatest of Eid is Eid-e-Ghadeer which was on 18th Zilhajj and even that incident occurred on a Friday. Our Qaim (a.tif.s.) will also reappear on Friday. Even the Day of Judgement will come to pass on Friday.'

(Behaarul Anwaar vol. 59 pg. 26)

5. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) declared:

الْجُمُعَةُ سَيِّدُ الْأَيَّامِ.

'Friday is the chief of all days.'

(Behaarul Anwaar vol. 40 pg. 47)

6. Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) revealed:

'The excellence of Fridays of the month of Ramazan over Fridays of other months is like the superiority of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) over other prophets.'

(Wasaa'ilush Shia vol. 10 pg.-363)

7. Friday is associated with Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.). Sitr ibne Abi Dalf met Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) while he was in Mutawakkil Abbasi's prison (may Allah curse him). Sitr inquired: 'o my master, there is a tradition from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) the meaning of which is not clear for me. Imam asked him to narrate the tradition. Sitr recounted:'

لَا تُعَادُوا الْأَيَّامَ فَتُعَادِيَكُمْ.

Don't disobey the days, else the days will disobey you.' Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) clarified, 'Yes, in this tradition the days refer to us (Imams (a.s.) until the time the heavens and the earth survive. Then Saturday refers to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), Sunday refers to Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.), Monday refers to Hasnain (a.s.), Tuesday refers to Imam Ali b. Husain (a.s.), Imam Muhammad b. Ali (a.s.) and Imam Jafar b. Muhammad (a.s.). Wednesday refers to Imam Moosa b. Jafar (a.s.), Imam Ali b. Moosa (a.s.), Imam Muhammad b. Ali (a.s.) and me (Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.). Thursday refers to my father Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) and Friday refers to my grandson (Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) who will be surrounded by a group of the truthful ones. This is the meaning of the days, therefore do not disobey them, else in the hereafter they shall disobey you.'

After mentioning the above tradition, the eminent scholar and narrator of supplications and Ziaraat - Sayyid Ibne Taoos (r.a.) has recorded the Ziaraat of the Imams (a.s.) for the days of the week. The most reliable of traditionalists - Shaikh Abbas-e-Qummi (r.a.) has also recorded the Ziaraat for various days in his distinguished compilation - Mafaateehul Jinaan.

The exegesis of Imam's Ziarat on Friday

(١) السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا حُجَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي أَرْضِهِ.

'Salutations be upon you O Allah's Proof on His Earth.'

The word Salaam سلام has been explained at length in the exegesis of Ziaraat and supplications in the earlier editions of the Al Muntazar magazine. In the interest of brevity, we do not wish to reiterate that over here. Suffice it is to say that when a believer salutes his Imam, he is invoking peace and security for him.

In the salutation, the word **حجت** is worth noting. It means proof or evidence. Its plural is **حجج**. The word finds mention in the Quran in several places like Surah Baqarah (2): Verse 150; Surah Nisaa (4): Verse 165; Surah Shura (42): Verse 115. In all three verses, the word has been employed to mean of proof/evidence. For instance, in Surah Nisa, Allah declares:

رُسُلًا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَ مُنذِرِينَ لِنَلَّا يَكُونُ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةً بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ.

(We sent) apostles as the givers of good news and as warners, so that people should not have a plea against Allah after the coming of) apostles...'

Just like the prophets (a.s.) and apostles (a.s.) were Allah's Proofs, the infallible Imams (a.s.) also shared this status. In one tradition, the prophets (a.s.), the successors (a.s.) and the Imams (a.s.) have been described as Apparent Proof (**حجت ظاهر**), while the intellect has been described as concealed proof (**حجت باطن**). This tradition is popular as the 'Tradition of Ibne Sikkit'. In this tradition, Ibne Sikkit (r.a.), an eminent and reliable Shia and an expert in Arabic literature, asked Imam Ali Reza (a.s.), "Why has Allah granted different miracles to the Prophets (a.s.)?" When Imam (a.s.) replied to this query, he asked again, 'At present (since there are no Prophets (a.s.)), who is the divine proof on the earth? Imam responded,

"The intellect because it is through the intellect that you can establish the . credentials of Allah's genuine proof (Hujjat) and differentiate from the pretenders. In this way, you can reject the imposter and snub his claims."

(Al Kafi vol. 1 pg. 24, Behaarul Anwaar vol. 1 pg. 105)

It is apparent from the tradition that the Imam is the apparent proof while the intellect is the concealed proof. In other words, the Imam is the apparent intellect, while the intellect is concealed Imam. The one who possesses intellect and understanding will most certainly confess to the Imam of his era. Conversely, the Shia of the Imam obviously boasts of intellect and comprehension that have led him to the recognition of the Imam. Only those with intellects that have been veiled (with sins and transgression) reject the Imam of the truthful Imam. That is why the Imam is Allah's ultimate proof after whom the people are left with no excuse or plea against Allah.

An important note

The word **أَرْضِهِم** means Allah's Earth. The pronoun **o** refers to Allah. However, the earth referred to in the Ziarat does not only hint at this earth that we see around us. Rather it refers to all the worlds that have been created by Allah. The following tradition is a pointer to this reality.

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) informs:

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ أَلْفَ عَالَمٍ كُلُّ عَالَمٍ مِنْهُمْ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ سَبْعِ سَمَاوَاتٍ وَ سَبْعِ أَرْضِينَ مَا تَرَى عَالَمٌ مِنْهُمْ أَنَّ لِلَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَالَمًا غَيْرَهُمْ وَأَنَا الْحُجَّةُ عَلَيْهِمْ.

Surely for Allah, the Almighty, there are 12,000 worlds. Each of these worlds is larger than the seven skies and seven earths. These are the worlds that can be seen (by the human eye). Apart from these worlds there are several worlds that can't be seen (by the human eye). I am Allah's Proof on all these worlds.'

(Tafsire Noor al-Saqalain vol. 1 pg. 16, tradition 72 narrated from al-Khesaal vol. 2 pg. 171-172)

The world is never devoid of Allah's Proof

A belief that is well-established for the Shias is that the earth is never devoid of Allah's Proof even for a moment. If Allah's Proof is not there in the world, it will collapse. Rather, the entire universe will be destroyed. In this context, Imam Sadiq (a.s.) warns:

لَوْ بَقِيَ الْأَرْضُ بِغَيْرِ إِمَامٍ لَسَاخَتْ.

If the earth remains devoid of Allah's Proof, it will be destroyed.'

(Al-Kaafi, vol. 1, 'Kitaab al-Hujjah')

The infallible Proof of Allah has been described by Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) in a sermon:

قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ خُطْبَةٍ خَطَبَهَا بِالْكُوفَةِ طَوِيلَةً ذَكَرَهَا: اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّهُ لَا بَدَلَ لَكَ مِنْ حُجَجٍ فِي أَرْضِكَ، حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ حُجَّةٍ عَلَى خَلْقِكَ يَهْدُونَهُمْ إِلَى دِينِكَ، وَ يُعَلِّمُونَهُمْ عِلْمَكَ. كَيْلًا يَتَفَرَّقَ أَتْبَاعُ أَوْلِيَانِكَ، ظَاهِرٍ غَيْرِ مُطَاعٍ، أَوْ مُكْتَتِمٍ خَائِفٍ يَتَرَقَّبُ. إِنَّ غَابَ عَنِ النَّاسِ شَخْصُهُمْ فِي حَالِ هُدُنْتَهُمْ فِي دَوْلَةِ الْبَاطِلِ فَلَنْ يَغِيبَ عَنْهُمْ مَبْنُوثٌ عِلْمُهُمْ وَ آدَابُهُمْ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مُثَبَّتَةٌ وَ هُمْ بِهَا عَامِلُونَ، يَأْتِسُونَ بِمَا يَسْتَوْحِشُ مِنْهُ الْمُكَدِّبُونَ، وَ يَأْبَاهُ الْمُسْرِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ، كَلَامٌ يَكَالُ بِلَا تَمَنٍّ، مَنْ كَانَ يَسْمَعُهُ يَعْلَمُهُ فَيَعْرِفُهُ وَ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَ يَتَّبِعُهُ وَ يَتَّبِعُهُ نَهْجُهُ فَيَصْلُحُ بِهِ، ثُمَّ يَقُولُ: فَمَنْ هَذَا وَ لِهَذَا يَأْرُرُ الْعِلْمُ إِذْ لَمْ يُوْجَدْ حَمَلَةٌ يَحْفَظُونَهُ وَ يُؤَدُّونَهُ كَمَا يَسْمَعُونَهُ مِنَ الْعَالِمِ، ثُمَّ قَالَ بَعْدَ كَلَامٍ طَوِيلٍ فِي هَذِهِ الْخُطْبَةِ: اللَّهُمَّ وَ إِنِّي لِأَعْلَمُ الْعَيْبَ أَنَّ الْعِلْمَ لَا يَأْرُرُ كَلْمُهُ وَ لَا يَنْقَطِعُ مَوَادُّهُ، فَإِنَّكَ لَا تُخْلِي أَرْضَكَ مِنْ حُجَّةٍ عَلَى خَلْقِكَ، إِمَّا ظَاهِرٍ مُطَاعٍ أَوْ خَائِفٍ مَغْمُورٍ لَيْسَ بِمُطَاعٍ، لِكَيْلًا تَبْطُلَ حُجَّتُكَ، وَ يَضِلَّ أَوْلِيَاؤُكَ بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَهُمْ.

Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) delivered a lengthy sermon at Kufah in which he (a.s.) mentioned as follows,

"O Allah! It is imperative for You to have proofs in Your earth; one proof after another upon your creation that they (the proofs) may guide them to your religion and teach them Your knowledge so that the followers of Your friends are .. not scattered (regardless of these proofs being) apparent without being obeyed, or concealed, apprehensive and expectant. Even if their personas are concealed from the people in times of peace in an unjust government, their vast knowledge will never be concealed from them and their etiquette will be firmly entrenched in the hearts of the believers. They (the people) will act upon them, be familiar from what the deniers feel alienated and the extravagant (disbelievers) in Allah deny. A word that is priceless, whoever hears it, understands it, recognizes it, believes in it, follows it and treads its path, is reformed with it." Then he (a.s.) said, "From this and for this the knowledge is covered when the carriers who protect it and convey it as they have heard from the learned (Imam) are not found."

Thereafter, after a lengthy talk in this sermon he (a.s.) said,

"O Allah! I surely know the unseen that the knowledge - in its entirety - will not be covered nor will its substance be eliminated. For indeed, You will not leave Your earth devoid of a proof upon Your creatures, whether he is apparent and obeyed or apprehensive and concealed without being obeyed, lest Your proof is not invalidated and Your friends are not deviated after you have guided them."

Era Of Occultation – A Time Of Ordeal And Examination

Introduction

The present era, in which we are living, is known as 'Ghaibat Kubra' (major occultation). It is a period when there is no special representative of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) through whom we can contact him or correspond with him (a.t.f.s.). This era will continue till as long as Allah wishes and Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) does not reappear. When he (a.t.f.s.) does reappear, people will be blessed with the opportunity to meet him in person. They will get the good fortune of presenting themselves in his honourable presence. Thus, till Imam (a.t.f.s.) does not reappear and remains in occultation, we will be deprived of numerous priceless blessings. Among the most important characteristics of the major occultation is that it is the era of ordeal and tribulation.

1. Absence of (physical) contact:

In 'Ghaibat Sughra' (Minor Occultation) too, Imam (a.t.f.s.) was not known to the people. However, it was possible for the people to be in touch with him through the 'special representatives'. People used to approach the 'special representatives' with their queries and problems, who in turn, would - with Imam's (a.t.f.s.) permission - meet him (a.s.) and forward those queries. Imam (a.t.f.s.) would then give their replies. But in the year 329 AH, after the demise of the fourth special representative Janab Ali b. Muhammad Seymouri (r.a.), this arrangement came to an end and thus began the period of major occultation. During this occultation people cannot directly meet or approach Imam (a.t.f.s.). The Imam (a.t.f.s.) of our time is not visible to us like the Imams (a.s.) of the previous era. But we are sure that he is alive. He lives on this very earth and moves among the people. But no one knows his residence that he may approach him. Thus the separation from the Imam of the time is the greatest calamity for the true believers

2. Tyrant Rulers:

One of the calamities of the present times is the absence of a fair, honest and impartial government based on true Islamic principles that enliven the human spirit and values. When we look around us, we find man-made, oppressive and tyrannical laws imposed upon the masses by corrupt and dishonest leaders who are at the helm of affairs. Thus we find that oppression is commonplace in all parts of the world. The more one tries to suppress these oppressions through force and tyranny, the more aggressively they raise their heads.

3. Trial and Examination:

This is the age of ordeals and tribulations. The biggest calamity of the time is that our Imam (a.t.f.s.) is concealed from our eyes while tyrants are ruling the world. The dark clouds of oppression are found everywhere. It is highly probable that a person may make a blunder and fall into the valley of deviation. Among the many perils of the present times, three of them are most dangerous.

(a) Materialistic inclinations:

Without doubt materialism and materialistic desires are man's undoing. Every individual is busy in fulfilling them and is not satisfied till he achieves his desire. But the problem is that before he achieves one particular worldly desire, another one takes shape and he aspires to fulfill this latest desire. In doing so, the individual does not distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate, permissible and prohibited means. The consequence of all this is that first, the person begins to take Islamic laws lightly. Then he overlooks the limits of the (Islamic) laws and finally he reaches a stage where he rebels against the Lawmaker (Allah). Thus the person goes completely out of the boundaries of religion.

(b) Mental Stress:

In today's era people in general and Muslims in particular are leading a stressful life. At every step there are so many difficulties and doubts that keeping one's faith safe and secure has become an uphill task. A lot of sacrifices are required to protect one's faith and belief.

(c) Objections:

As the period of Imam-e-Zamana's (a.t.f.s.) occultation is prolonged, the objections raised by the enemies of Islam and Ahlul Bait (a.s.) keep on increasing. Various new objections are being raised while old ones are being presented in a new form. In today's busy life, no one has the time to refer to authentic Islamic books or learned scholars and give replies to these objections. The result is that an issue that was till yesterday an objection' has today taken the shape of 'a doubt'. The belief in Hazrat Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is affected. The Imam - believing in whose Imamate is the essence of one's life and the strength of the religion - is set aside. As these problems grow, the intensity of the calamities (on the believers) too increases due to which remaining steadfast on the religion of Ahlul Bait (a.s.) is becoming difficult with each passing day.

In traditions, this period of occultation is referred to as the era of trials and examinations. This is a stage when the steps of an individual can falter if he does not continuously seek help from Allah and His Messenger (s.a.w.a.). If we don't seek refuge in them, then in today's ever

increasing stressful lives and social pressures, a small lapse or error will lead to the destruction in the Hereafter.

Traditions have described this period in various ways. Their scrutiny will give a clear picture about the ordeals of this era. We have the good fortune of enumerating a few of the trials and tribulations mentioned in traditions. Along with Shia traditions we have also mentioned the traditions mentioned by the Ahle Sunnat.

1. The earth will be filled with oppression and tyranny:

Both Shias and Sunnis have mentioned numerous traditions in this regard. 'He (Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)) shall fill the earth with justice and equity just as it was filled with oppression and tyranny before him'.

Oppression does not only mean that an individual is wrongly hitting or hurting another - individual. Or he slaps an orphan. 'Oppression' has vast and extensive implications. To deviate from the path of justice and equity' is one meaning of oppression while 'to stray away from the straight path (Seerat Al Mustaqeem)' is another connotation of oppression. Thus polytheism is a kind of oppression as opposed to Tauheed (Belief in One God), just as Kufr (denial) is a kind of tyranny as opposed to Nabuwat (Prophethood) and hypocrisy is a form of oppression as opposed to Imamat. Hence, all those people who are the opponents of Tauheed, Nabuwat, and Imamat etc are all implicated in (committing) one form of oppression or another. And the distressing part is that the majority of the people are deviated from the 'straight path' and the world is full of oppression. This of course is a matter of belief and faith. As far as physical forms of oppressions and injustices are concerned, then each one of us has experienced them and there is no need to elaborate. Thus, every sphere of life - belief, actions, individual, social, political and economical, is replete with inequities and injustices.

When Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) reappears, this earth will be purified from all forms of oppression; justice and equity shall reign supreme in every corner of the world. Injustice and tyranny shall be completely wiped out from the face of the earth. Inshallah.

2. Corruption shall be widespread:

Hazrat Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) forecasted,

The reappearance of the Qaim (a.t.f.s.) shall not come to pass until such a time that the dark shadow of fear looms large over the people. People shall be engulfed in all forms of corruption and calamities and earthquakes shall be frequent.

(Al-Ghaibat of Nomani, pg. 235).

In another tradition, Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) predicted,

In those times, corruption shall be widespread and terrible conditions of misguidance shall prevail.'

(Ibid. pg 153)

Similar traditions can be found in the books of the Ahle Sunnat. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) has mentioned,

Times will come closer and work will reduce. People will become self-centered and selfish; malice will be commonplace while corruption and conflicts will raise their heads.

(Sahih-e-Bukhari, vol. 9, pg. 161)

In another place he (s.a.w.a.) mentions,

I foresee that corruption has made a place in your homes, just as I see rain falling on your houses.'

(Sahih-e-Muslim, vol. 8, pg. 168)

In the Arabic language, the word "Fitna" (4) is used in different meanings. (a) Trial & Examination:

The Holy Quran mentions

أَلَمْ أَحَسِبِ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ

'Do men think that that shall be left alone on saying "We believe" and they shall not be tried?'

(Surah Ankabut (29): 2)

Under this verse, Imam Musa Kazim (a.s.) explains will be los se

They shall be tested like gold. Then he (a.s.) continues and says w Swab **يَخْلَطُ الذَّهَبُ**

'They shall be purified in the same way that gold is purified

(Al-Ghaibat of Nomani, pg. 202)

Gold is purified by being heated and treated in fire. Similarly, one of the meanings of the word 'fitna' is in these times (of major occultation) is that you shall be examined and shall be tested in the furnace of tribulations so that you become pure and chaste.

(b) Deviation & Sins:

'Faatin' (فَاتِن) is that individual who has deviated from the right path and has gone astray. Thus one of the names of Satan is 'Faatin'. This word is used in a similar sense in the Holy Quran too. In Surah Bani Israel, Allah says

وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَفْتِنُوكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوحِيَْنَا إِلَيْكَ.

'These people... the polytheist... Are trying to deviate you from the path that We revealed upon you.'

(Surah Bani Israel (17): 73)

Hence if the word 'Fitna' is interpreted in this sense, then the traditions that speak about it would mean that in the last era, such kinds of talk shall be prevalent due to which people will deviate from the true and correct path.

(c) Killing and bloodshed :

Allah the Almighty says

إِنْ خِفْتُمْ إِنْ يَفْتِنِكُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا.

'If you fear that those who have become polytheist shall kill you ...'

(Surah Nisa (4): 101)

The present scenario of the world bears testimony to this fact that all around, terror has been unleashed and everywhere there is violence, killings and bloodshed. Thus, if we look closely, then all the meanings of 'fitna' (فِتْنَه) are relevant in these daunting times. In the last era, not only are people getting deviated from the true religion, and are frustrated with it, but even safety and security have vanished for the practitioners of true religion. Killing and looting has become widespread. Thus remaining steadfast on the true religion is a severe test in this era.

3. Difficulties and Calamities:

In traditions, calamities and difficulties have been mentioned as one of the features of this period. People will be engulfed in such severe and acute calamities that they will wish for death..

In a lengthy tradition, Imam Baqir (a.s.) says,

Hazrat Qaim (a.t.f.s.) will appear among the people at a time when they will be living in fear. Earthquakes will be common and people will be surrounded by corruption and difficulties.

Plague will spread; there will be a terrible war amongst the Arabs and grave differences of opinions among the people. Religion will be scattered while circumstances would keep on changing continuously. These calamities will be so severe that every morning and evening an individual would pray for death. All this will be due to the troubles every person will receive from his fellow being. People will eat each other.'

(Beharul Anwaar, vol. 52, pg. 231)

A person desires death only when he is surrounded by calamities and the whole society is a victim of deviation. Today, the world finds itself surrounded by calamities mainly due to the actions of a few defiant, oppressive, cruel, merciless, self-centered, proud, devilish, human-faced but animal-natured individuals. These oppressions are being perpetrated upon the world under different pretexts while every day new kinds of weapons of destructions are being unleashed. Every day, violence erupts in a new form and the day is not far when the whole world becomes a heap of gunpowder.

What is surprising is that those who possess a huge arsenal of armaments and are capable of wreaking maximum havoc upon mankind and whose substantial portion of trade revenue comes from the sale of arms and defence equipments, are the same nations who are today blowing the trumpet of being the guardians of mankind'!!! On one side they supply arms and ammunitions to the terrorists in order to further their business interests and on the other side, they are waging a war against terrorism!!!

In such turbulent times, the only thing that gives solace to man is the belief in the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s.). This belief grants an inner strength to an individual, enabling him to confront all kinds of trials and difficulties

4. Confusion and rebellion:

Hazrat Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) narrates 'For them is confusion and occultation in which some people will be deviated, while some will be guided.'

(Kamaaluddin, pg. 289).

Due to the occultation of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) people shall be in a state of confusion and rebellion.

(a) Confusion in beliefs:

Innocent people and those who are not well versed in the teachings of Islam will be confused by the various doubts and objections being raised in society.

(b) Confusion in replies:

When objections are raised, people will not be able to find a genuine and dependable place from where they can elicit convincing replies to the objections with which they are confronted.

(c) Confusion concerning Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.):

Due to his (a.t.f.s.) prolonged occultation, people shall be in perplexity. They will demand - Where is Imam (a.t.f.s.)? How is he? Why is he not reappearing? Why does he not change the present circumstances?

(d) Confusion concerning the leader:

There will not be a single leader whose authority will be unanimously accepted. Today, the large number of leaders has created more confusion in the minds of the people.

5. Sharp differences:

In a tradition, Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) asserted,

'I give you glad tidings of the Mahdi who will appear from my progeny at a time when there will be severe differences among the people and they shall be victims of earthquakes. He (a.t.f.s.) will fill the earth with justice and equity.'

(Al-Ghaibat of Shaikh Toosi (a.r.), pg. 111)

In one tradition, Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.), while mentioning the characteristics of this era says,

There will be grave differences among the people while religion will be scattered. There will be widespread chaos.'

(Al-Ghaibat of Nomani, pg 235)

In another tradition, Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) says,

'Soon corruption (فتنه), differences and factions shall become evident (among people)

(Sunan of Ibne-Maajah, pg. 2, tradition 1,310)

He also said 'The thing that I fear most for my nation is those leaders who shall lead them astray.'

(Sunan of Ibne-Maajah, 2 / 1304)

Differences in opinions and beliefs are the evident face of oppression and deviation. It is a bitter reality that confronts each one of us in every sphere of life - religious, political, social, economics, etc. These differences have gripped us so firmly that everywhere there is unrest and people are clashing with each other. Killing and bloodshed has become commonplace and routine.

In every era, there have been certain people who invite others towards falsehood. Right from the demise of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) till date, this has been the case. Even today, you find people who are oblivious of the Hereafter and are busy inviting others towards the false religions of Qadianism and Bahaim. Then we witness individuals who, on the basis of their deviant views and opinions, have fractured the religion into numerous small sects and have weakened the nation. They have drawn the people away from those matters that are important and vital for their progress. On the one hand, false, religions are way ahead on the path of progress, while we are still grappling with personal differences and disputes.

6. Differences concerning Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.):

While narrating the similarity of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) with the past prophets (a.s.), Imam Baqir (a.s.) says,

'In "differences concerning him", he is like Prophet Isa (a.s.). Some people might say that he is yet to be born while some others might say that he was already born but he died later while some others may say that he was killed.

(Kamaluddin, pg. 327).

Imam Jafer Sadiq (a.s.) declared, By Allah! Your Imam shall remain hidden from you for a long time. You will be tried and examined in those times. To such an extent that some people shall say that "He has died or he has gone in some cave. While the believers will be shedding tears for him.'

(Kamaluddin, pg. 347)

All sects of Islam are unanimous in their belief of Mahdaviyat. All Muslims believe that in the last era, a person shall appear from the progeny of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), whose title shall be Mahdi and whose name shall be the same as the name of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). He shall fill the earth with justice and equity just as it was filled with injustice and oppression before him. But the differences arise concerning his lineage etc. Whether he is from the progeny of Janabe Fatima (s.a) or from some other progeny? Whether he is from the progeny of Imam Hasan (a.s.)

or Imam Husain (a.s.)? Is he born or will be born in the future? If he is already born, then is he still alive? Or is he dead? If he is alive then where is he? When shall he come?

These differences arose among the Muslims because they did not act upon the commands of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). In a very authentic and reliable tradition, Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) exhorted:

I leave behind you two precious things." One is the book of Allah - the Quran, and the other is my Ahle Bait (a.s.). If you fasten unto both of them, you shall never go astray. They shall never separate from each other till they meet me at the Pond (Hauz-e-Kausar)'

Since the majority of the people did not attach themselves to the Ahle Bait (a.s.) and did not draw from their teachings, they are victims of acute differences among themselves. And as long as this world turns its back on the Ahle Bait (a.s.), they will continue to meet the same fate

7. Misguided Rulers:

When Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was asked about the reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.), he (s.a.w.a.) replied !

'Allah has revealed to me that the reappearance (of Imam Mahdi) will take place at a time when knowledge shall diminish and ignorance will become widespread... Rulers shall be unbelievers while the reigns of the government shall be in the hands of sinners. Their friends and helpers will be oppressors. Their scholars shall be corrupt and immoral.'

(Kamaluddin, pg. 251)

Hazrat Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) says, Beware! The rulers will be unbelievers and atheists and distance themselves from the honest people. Rulers and judges will expect bribes in order to pass (favourable) judgments and will always crave for more (bribes)'

(Muntakhab al-Asar, pg. 429)

In Sahih-e-Muslim, a tradition from Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) has been narrated in which he (s.a.w.a.) says,

'After me such rulers shall come who will not follow in my footsteps. They shall not follow my practices (Sunnah). Such people shall be born among them whose heart will be of the devil while their bodies will be of humans'

(Sahih-e-Muslim, vol. 6, pg. 20)

From the above traditions a few important points become evident:

(a) These rulers will be from Muslim lineage and progeny

(b) The misguided teachings and training of their families and of the society is the cause of their deviation. When such rulers, who are the products of the corrupt society, sit in authority, then nothing but oppression and corruption can be expected from them. This deviation (from the true religion) had started right after the demise of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). It was due to this initial deviation that the Bani Umayyah and the Bani Abbas became rulers. The Islam that emphasised on fearing Allah (piety), self-restrain, faith and good actions and invited people towards these noble traits was ignored. The followers excused their rulers from pursuing these righteous qualities. Thus, fearing Allah, self-restrain, faith and honesty were abandoned not only as primary criteria, but also as secondary qualifications for being appointed as a ruler. Its evident examples are found all around us. Hence, injustice and oppression shall continue to increase in the society till such rulers are at the helm.

8. Test and ordeal:

Hazrat Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) narrates, "That time (of reappearance) shall not come to pass but after you have become despondent and hopeless. No, I swear by Allah, till you are separated from each other. No I swear by Allah, till you are severely tested. No I swear by Allah, till the time that the unfortunate ones become unfortunate while the fortunate ones become fortunate'

(Kamaluddin, pg. 346)

In another tradition he (a.s.) says, 'What will be your condition at that time when you shall be without an Imam or guide and you will be disgusted with each other. At that time you shall be severely examined and you shall be differentiated and sieved.'

(Kamaluddin, pg. 348)

The great Ahle Sunnah traditionalist Ibne Maajah, in his Sunan narrates a tradition from Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) wherein he (s.a.w.a.) says

'How (difficult) will be the times that shall soon descend upon you! People shall be severely tested. At the end, low and degraded people will remain, who will break their pledge. They shall fight and oppose each other and this is surely going to occur?

(Sunan-e-Ibn-e-Maajah, vol. 2, pg. 1,307)

In one tradition Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) has enumerated the trials and tribulations of the last times. If we ponder over these traditions then it seems that the Imams (a.s.) are narrating the present scenario as if it was occurring right before their eyes! He (a.s.) says,

'I swear by Allah in whose hand is my life! Things will not turn out as you wish till the time that you spit on each others faces or call each other liars. Thus only a few from among my Shias shall remain (steadfast) like the kohl in the eyes or the salt in the food. I will explain this to you with an example. Suppose a man has a large quantity of wheat. He cleans it and keeps it in a room and it remains there for a period of time. Later when he sees the wheat he finds that there are pests in it. He removes that wheat from the room, cleans it and puts it back once again in that room. He repeats this after every few days. Finally he is left with only a small quantity of wheat free from pests. The same shall happen to you. You shall be separated and distinguished from each other. Only those among you shall remain who shall not be affected by any kind of corruption or tribulation.'

(Al-Ghaibat of Nomani, pg. 209 - 210)

These traditions give us an idea about the conditions of the last era and how severe will be the difficulties befalling a believer. These tribulations shall act as a litmus test for recognising a true believer. A majority of the believers shall succumb to these ordeals and get deviated while only a small number shall remain steadfast. The words 'people shall falsify each other and spit on each other's faces' can mean that when a person becomes selfish and egocentric and cannot escape from the clutches of these vices, then he does not tolerate any kind of attack on his ego and opinions. This greatly pampered ego becomes so sensitive that the person is unwilling to accept any kind of opposition to his views as he always considers himself to be correct. Thus, he considers any form of resistance (of his views) as his denial and an attack on his personality and is always ready to retaliate. He considers the noble traits of patience, forbearance and restraint as a sign of helplessness and cowardice. Thus whoever confronts him with any other) opinion he falsifies it and rejects it, outright.

'Spitting on the face can be taken in its literal meaning or it could also be interpreted as 'giving vent to one's fury'. To express the hatred that every individual has for his fellow being and to criticise someone for hours together for a small mistake can also be inferred from the phrase 'spitting on the face' It is obvious that in such circumstances, to control one's self, to remain steadfast on religion and to follow the teachings of Ahle Bait (a.s.) requires a lot of patience. To keep the hearts free from the satanic whisperings and then to love those people in the heart, to pray for them and seek forgiveness for them is a Herculean task. It is like holding a smoldering piece of coal in the palm or like thrusting the hand in a thorny branch.

Why will a believer have to undergo such severe examinations? It is because the 'Universal Government that will be established by Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) - a government that will be unlike any government the world has ever seen, right from its inception - such a unique and matchless universal regime shall require equally steadfast and dependable helpers. This is because all these affairs are not going to be established through a miracle, but through the righteous actions of the pure and steadfast helpers. Thus these rigorous ordeals and examinations are essential in order to have formidable and unwavering aides. The Holy Quran too has spoken about trials and examinations in various verses.

مَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَذَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَىٰ مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ حَتَّىٰ يَمِيزَ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ.

'Allah shall not leave the believers in their present condition. Until He separates the evil from the good...'

(Surah Aale Imran (3): 179)

In the same Surah, Allah the Almighty, says

وَ لِيُمَحِّصَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَ يَمْحَقَ الْكَافِرِينَ. أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُدْخَلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَ لَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَ يَعْلَمِ الصَّابِرِينَ.

And that He may cleanse those who believe and deprive the unbelievers of (His) blessings. Do you think that you shall enter paradise until Allah does not know those who strive from among you and He knows those who are patient?

(Surah Ale Imran (3): 141 - 142)

One thing that should be borne in mind is that Allah examines the believers not because He is unaware of their piety and degree of belief. Rather, these ordeals serve the purpose of awakening the latent capacities of an individual. The pure are filtered from the impure. We become stronger by burning in the intense heat of the gruelling and challenging circumstances. Otherwise, everyone's condition is evident for Allah.

Our responsibilities

Through the above mentioned traditions, our Imams (a.s.) have given us a graphic explanation and a complete picture about the conditions of the last era. But does our responsibility end only by knowing these. traditions? No. Rather, it increases manifold. Some of these responsibilities include:

(a) Rectification:

This is because the present condition of the society is a result of our own actions. As the Holy Quran mentions 'Corruption has spread on the land and the oceans because of the hands of men have earned'.

i) Also Allah the High mentions in the Holy Quran, 'Surely Allah does not change (the conditions of) a nation until they themselves change (their own conditions)'

(Surah Raad (13): 11)

ii) Therefore, if the current state of affairs is a result of our moral decay and sinful actions, then the improvement of the society can only materialise if every individual pays attention to his own self and takes steps to perfect his moral character.

(b) To turn towards Imam (a.s.):

When a person suffers from any kind of physical ailment, then he visits a doctor for its rectification. Similarly, if we find that our religion, actions and morals have become flawed and defective, then it is essential that we turn towards Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) and present ourselves before his sacred presence. Because Allah has appointed him (a.s.) for the purpose of the spiritual cleansing and upliftment of the people. Naturally, we ourselves will have to go to the doctor, present our case to him, listen carefully to his advice and act upon it and not give in to our personal opinions and inclinations.

Similarly, if we are desirous to improve ourselves, actions and character, then we should focus and turn towards Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) and present ourselves in his (a.s.) holy presence. We should weep and plead before him and with utmost sincerity and request him for the rectification of our selves. Allah has granted him (a.t.f.s.) such immense powers that a single "spiritual glance" from his side upon the servant is enough to cause a transformation in the individual. Just as Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) turned the hearts of the polytheist towards Islam and persuaded them to lead a positive and beneficial (Islamic) life. Or how Imam Husain (a.s.) brought about a change in Janabe Zohair (r.a.) and Janabe Hurr (r.a.). Certainly, Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) is in occultation but he is not oblivious of us. He is conscious and is a witness to each and every action that we perform. In one 'tauqee' he (a.s.) says 'Now we are residing far from the dwellings of the oppressors, since Allah considers this best for us as well as our Shias till the time the tyrants rule the world.

فَأَنَّا نُحِيطُ عَلَمًا بِأَنْبَاءِكُمْ وَلَا يَعْزُبُ عَنَّا شَيْءٌ مِّنْ أَخْبَارِكُمْ.

'However, our knowledge encompasses all the news concerning you and nothing about you is concealed from us'

If this is the case, then we should take ourselves in his sacred presence and beg for our rectification and improvement. For this, we don't have to go anywhere. What is required is that from the bottom of our hearts, we should repent for our sins and attach ourselves to him (a.t.f.s.) and call upon him (a.t.f.s.). And to make our prayers more effective, we should mention the calamities that befell upon Imam Husain (a.s.) and ask Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) to fulfill our wishes for the sake of Imam Husain (a.s.). Neither our actions are of any value nor is our character such that we can present ourselves before Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) without a strong mediation and hope to receive his blessings. The grief of Imam Husain (a.s.) is the best means for the fulfillment of our wishes. As Imam Mahdi (a.s.) says

'I pray for the believer who cries on the calamities that befell my grandfather Imam Husain (a.s.) and prays for my reappearance?

(Mikyalul Makaarim, vol. 2, pg. 36)

(c) Patience:

It is one of the crucial responsibilities in these difficult and testing times. Here patience has a few aspects. But before elaborating on those facets it is necessary to first understand that patience does not mean that a person remains a passive spectator to all that is happening around him. Rather, 'patience' implies 'steadfastness' and 'resoluteness'. As the Holy Quran says,

'One hundred patient individuals are equal to two hundred individuals (who lack patience).'

It means that patience is that attribute that amplifies the might of an individual and increases it manifold.

(i) Patience on oppression:

Today, oppression is common and is at its peak. Rulers are inventing newer means for tormenting the people. In such testing times, glad tidings are for those believers who adopt patience and protect their religion. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) narrates,

Don't you know that the one who is awaiting our affair (rule) and in the process is patient upon the difficulties and fear, then on the Day of Judgment, he shall be in our group?

(Beharul Anwaar, vol. 52, pg. 256, tradition 147)

(ii) Patience on calamities:

When the guardian of the house is away then all kinds of problems descend upon it. This is because the enemies come out of their hiding places. 'In this period of occultation, Imam-e-

Zamana (a.t.f.s.) is not apparently present among the people. Hence, they are engulfed in various kinds of problems. Abu Saleh Kanani once met Imam Sadiq (a.s.) and said, 'O Abu Abdillah! I complain to you of the anguish caused to me by my children and brothers. (These are words of Abu Saleh, yet today everyone has a similar complain). Imam Sadiq (a.s.) replied,

O Abu Saleh! Surely truth has a government and falsehood too has its government. In both these reigns, people of the opposite group are humiliated. The least of the troubles that a believer shall receive in the reign of the false government is oppression from his children and humiliation from his brothers. If a believer gets any comfort during the dishonest government then in return he will certainly face some kind of difficulty or calamity. Either in matters relating to his body or children or wealth. Till such time that Allah does not purify him from all the filth that has accumulated on him due those worldly comforts. So that when the true government is established he should get his complete reward. So be patient and remain contented.'

(Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, pg. 447, tradition 12)

This tradition gives us an idea that in the days of major occultation, troubles and difficulties will not be only from the polytheists and oppressors i.e from outsiders, but even from our near and dear ones. We have mentioned earlier that to remain steadfast on the true religion, act upon the teachings of Ahle Bait (a.s.), to perform our religious obligations for the sake of Allah, not to act against the tenets of the religion inspite of the accusations and criticism of the people, is the highest level of patience. In these circumstances, the best example for us is Hazrat Hujjat b. Hasan Askari (a.t.f.s.). His right (of caliphate) was usurped, he had to go into occultation, the objections raised against him, the oppressions that engulfed his Shias, living far away from the people, living a prolonged life in occultation - these are calamities and difficulties which he (a.t.f.s.) has been enduring for over 1,000 years. These tribulations are beyond human understanding and perception.

We should sincerely beseech and beg in front of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) by the means of Imam Husain (a.s.) that he grant us the twin noble traits of being patient and steadfast on religion. Undoubtedly, this is the only door that can grant us security from the destruction of the present era.

اللَّهُمَّ عَجِّلْ فِي فَرَجِ مَوْلَانِ صَاحِبِ الزَّمَانِ

O Allah! Hasten the reappearance of our master Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.).

The Guardianship Of Mastership (Wilaayah) – Shaikh Sadooq (a.r.) And His Debate With A Denier

The standard bearer of Shiite faith and the defendant of Wilaayah, Shaikh Abu Jafar Muhammad b. Ali b. Hasan b. Babwayh Qummi (r.a.), popularly known as Shaikh Sadooq, is among the stalwarts of the Isna Ashariyya scholars. A fourth century scholar, Shaikh Sadooq (r.a.) has participated in many a debate in the defense of Shiaism. His relentless safeguarding of Shia beliefs and painstaking efforts in the service of Islam have stunned the most malicious critics of Shiaism.

In the earlier issues of Al Muntazar, glimpses of Shaikh Sadooq's (r.a.) life and books have been narrated in vivid detail. What follows is a discussion of Shaikh Sadooq (r.a.) mentioned in the foreword of his own remarkable compilation - Kamaaluddin wa Tamaamun Nemah. The discussion had taken place in the court of Rukn al-Daulah, wherein a denier raised his skepticism about Imamah and Shaikh Sadooq had refuted his notions. The entire dialogue is reproduced below:

Denier: It is imperative on your Imam to revolt and come out of occultation because soon the Romans will overcome the Muslims.

Shaikh Sadooq (r.a.): In the time of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) the number of disbelievers were much more than our times. By the command of the Almighty, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) kept his mission of prophethood a closely guarded secret for forty years. Even after that, he disclosed it to the select few who earned his trust. This he did for three years. At one stage, the infidels of Quraish unanimously decided to boycott and ostracize the Bani Hashim and all those who supported the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Consequently, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), along with his companions and family took refuge in the She'be Abi Talib and resided there for three years.

Now listen! If skeptics would have asked as to why the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) is not rising when the polytheists have subjugated Muslims, we would have replied that when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) left for She'be Abi Talib, it was at the instance of Allah and remained in occultation with His consent. Even the reappearance of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) in Makkah was not on his own accord; rather, it was at the behest of the Almighty.

The details of the Holy Prophet's (s.a.w.a.) return to Makkah are related thus: the pact to boycott the Bani Hashim was signed by 40 signatories of various tribes of the Quraish. The document was kept in the custody of Zuma'ah b. Aswad. Allah revealed to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) that the termites had eaten up the whole document barring portions that bore Allah's Name.

SHABAAN 1427 A.H.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) apprised his uncle Hazrat Abu Talib (a.s.) of this miraculous development. Hazrat Abu Talib (a.s.) immediately left for Makkah to meet the chieftains of Quraish and inform them about this amazing phenomenon. When the chiefs and leaders saw Hazrat Abu Talib (a.s.), they presumed that perhaps he had buckled under pressure and now wanted to hand over his nephew to the Quraish so that they could either kill him or make him renounce his claims of Prophethood. Encouraged at this presumption, they treated Hazrat Abu Talib (a.s.) quite reverentially and gave him a warm reception.

However, Hazrat Abu Talib (a.s.) had no such plans. He addressed them, 'o People of Quraish! I have never heard my nephew lying. And he had informed me that the Almighty Allah has revealed to him that He had sent termites to devour all the oppressive clauses pertaining to sanctions and leave those portions that bear Allah's Name. So, O Quraish, the document has now become mere fodder for termites that have spared nothing except His Name.'

Stunned by this revelation, the Quraish sought to see the document and were shocked to find that the document was exactly as described by Hazrat Abu Talib (a.s.). After this turn of events, some of the Quraish leaders embraced Islam while others persisted in their infidelity. However, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) along with his kith and kin returned to Makkah. Ditto shall be the circumstances of our Imam (a.t.f.s.). Whenever Allah will permit, he will reappear from his occultation.

Denier: It can be inferred from your statement that Allah holds much bigger sway on the infidels than the Imam then why has He given respite to His Enemies and why doesn't He annihilate them, while they deny His existence or associate others with Him?

Shaikh Sadooq (r.a.): Allah does not have any fear that these people will manage to wriggle out of His Power and Authority that He makes haste in their retribution. There is none who can question Allah about His Actions, while He can question anyone.

'He cannot be questioned concerning what He does and they shall be questioned.'

(Surah Anbiya (21): 23)

The questions of 'why' and 'how' in context with Allah does not arise. Similarly, Allah cannot be criticized about the reappearance of Imam (a.t.f.s.). Imam (a.t.f.s.) is in occultation by His Command and whenever He Wishes, He will make him reappear.

Denier: I cannot believe in an Imam who I cannot see. And until the time I don't see him, his mastership is not acceptable to me.

Shaikh Sadooq (r.a.): Then it is equally imperative for you to admit that even Allah's Authority is not acceptable to you since you have not seen Him either. Similarly, even the authority of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) is not mandatory on you since you have not seen him.

Irritated at this strong argument, the denier turned towards Rukn al-Daulah and addressed him thus:

Denier: O Amir, just look at what the Shaikh is saying that Imam is not seen because Allah too is not visible?!

Rukn Al Daulah: You have distorted his statement and alleged something totally misleading to him. This is an indication of your defeat and an admission of your helplessness and loss of face.

Similarly, those who argue with us about our Imam (a.t.f.s.) resort to all kinds of inane and illogical arguments which are lame attempts to mislead the common folks.

(Kamaluddin Wa Tamamun Nemah, Shaikh Sadooq (r.a.), foreword pg 87-88, Persian Translation, vol. 1, pg 179-180, Urdu translation, vol. 1, pg 110, 111)

Reminder:

Since this debate of Shaikh Sadooq (r.a.) was with a denier, who had some measure of belief in Allah's Existence, he discussed about Allah on the premise of His Existence and did not try to prove His Existence first. Therefore, the learned Shaikh cleverly employed the argument of God's Invisibility and not His Existence.

Deniers (Agnostics) are also those groups of people who are cynical about God's Existence. They are opposed to a religious code of beliefs and conduct and with this bent of mind they misrepresent and ridicule religious beliefs. Hence, the infidels alone are not called deniers; even those people who are skeptical towards Allah's Existence fall in this category. We should distance ourselves from them and seek Allah's Help in countering their twisted arguments.