



و صلى الله عليك يا ولي العصر ادر كنا

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

A Few Questions To Vali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.)

Admittedly the title seems to suggest that the person (who has posed the questions to Imam a.s.) actually had the distinction of meeting Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.). Hence we would like to clarify at the outset that we have not actually met Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.). However, it is said that letters and messages are "half a meeting". Because, through letters a person 'converses' with the addressee. Thus the style of writing a letter is very different from that of writing an essay or a book.

On the commands of Allah, Hazrat Vali-e-Asr is in occultation right from the commencement of his Imamatus. Hence as opposed to his forefathers (a.s.), Imam's meetings with his Shias have been few and far between. By and large, the problems of the people have been presented before his esteemed self in the form of letters and "Areeza" ("Areeza" is a letter of requests written by the Shias to the Imam of their time). And Imam (a.s.) too has reciprocated in a similar manner. The letters of Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.) are terminologically called as "Tawqee". These Tawqees have been assimilated in several books. Hazrat Ayatullah Syed Hasan Shirazi (may Allah purify his soul) has compiled these letters in a book by the name of "Kalamat-ul-Imam al-Mahdi". This single book contains all the letters of Imam (a.s.) which are found in different books. Originally the book was written in Arabic. Dr. Syed Hasan Sabzwari has translated this book into Persian by the same name. The answers to the questions mentioned below, have been given by Imam (a.s.) himself. These replies have been compiled from various letters that were sent to him (a.s.) in the course of his Ghaibat. To that extent the letters of Imam (a.s.) constitute "half a meeting with him, and the same is being presented in your service. We pray to Allah that this endeavour is accepted by our pure Imam (a.s.) We look forward to that day when we can present to you an interview conducted by personally meeting Imam (a.s.). Inshallah.

Q.1. Where do you live in these days of your occultation?

Ans : Presently, we are living away from the settlements of the oppressors. Till such time that the reins of the worldly governments are in the hands of oppressors and tyrants, Allah has willed for us and for our Shias that I should live away from the people. However, we are cognizant of all your actions. pg. 190

"At this point we are dwelling amidst some remote mountains. The place is surrounded by gardens. I am staying here because of the unbelievers. But very soon I will move to the plains that are not very far from the society." pg. 196-198

Q.2. What is the reason for the Shias being involved in so many calamities and afflictions?

Ans : One of the reasons is that the Shias are perpetrating those actions which the people of the past avoided. These Shias have forgotten the covenant of Allah and have violated it.
pg. 19

"And had our guardianship and protection not been there, then calamities would have surrounded you from all sides and destroyed you." pg. 19

(This connotes that Imam (a.s.) nullifies most of the calamities with his existence. Else the plight of the Shias would have been most pitiable.)

Q.3. In these last days, what is the best mode of keeping one's self safe from evils and corruption?

Ans: Piety and abstinence. I pledge for the salvation of the one who does not desire any rank or position in any acts of evil and corruption. (pg. 190). The believer who possesses the fear of Allah and is prompt in returning the people their dues, will be secure from the evils of the time. And the one who acts miserly in disseminating the bounties of Allah to the people, will be from among the losers on the Day of Judgement. pg. 198-200

Q.4. What are our responsibilities in your occultation?

Ans : Perform those actions which bring you closer to our love and affection and refrain from all those actions that become the cause of our displeasure and dissatisfaction. pg. 192

Q.5. How is it possible to meet you?

Ans : If our Shias (may Allah grant them the taufeeq of obedience) had been united in fulfilling the pledge, then certainly there would have been no delay in our meeting and they would have been graced with this opportunity several times. However, their actions are most unbecoming of Shias, and have kept them away from us. Pg. 200

Q.6. How can we disgrace and humiliate Shaitan?

Ans: Reciting namaz on the dot of time at its very outset (Awwal-e-Waqt) is a cause of disgrace for Shaitan. pg. 202

Q.7. Can a person utilize for his personal use a thing which has been endowed (Waqf) for you?

Ans: If the thing has been handed over to us then the person has no right over it - whether he needs that thing or not. pg. 202

Q.8. What do you have to say about those people who use your things for their own personal benefits?

Ans : To use someone's belongings without his permission is prohibited. Hence the one who considers our money as permissible and usurps, has actually filling his stomach with fire and will surely be thrown in Hell. pg. 206, 342, 344

Q.9. Can we recite namaz before a drawing or fire?

Ans : If the person is not from the children of idol worshippers or fire worshippers then he can recite namaz. pg. 204

Q.10. Which chapter (surah) is recommended for recitation in namaz?

Ans : One who does not recite the chapter of Qadr (surahe "Inna anzalna") in his namaz then his namaz is not accepted. And the one who does not recite the chapter of Tauheed (surahe "Qulho wallah") in his namaz, then his namaz is not pure.

Q.11. But traditions also speak about the rewards of reciting other surahs. For instance, it has been reported from traditions that the one who recites surahe "Homazah" will get the reward equal to this world?

Ans : There can be no disputing that he will get the reward which is mentioned in the traditions (for reciting surahe "Homazah"). But if a person forsakes any surah and recites surahe Qadr and surahe Tauheed, then not only will he get the reward of reciting these two surahs but will also get the reward of the surah which he has left (in order to recite these two surahs). Of course he can recite any other surah that he wishes, but then he will have abandoned something that carries a lot of reward. pg. 214-216

Q.12. Can we eat and drink or do business with a person who earns through illegal means?

Ans : If the person has some other source of livelihood also, then it is not prohibited to eat and drink or do business with him. But if he has no other source of livelihood save his illegal income, then it is prohibited to interact with such a person. pg. 226

Q.13. How can a person focus his attention towards Allah before starting his namaz?

Ans : It is recommended (mustahab) to recite the following in order to concentrate during namaz

وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا عَلَى مِلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَ دِينِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَ بَدَى أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَ مَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ صَلَوَتِي وَ نُسُكِي وَ مَحْيَايَ وَ مَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَ بِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَ أَنَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ. اَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ السَّمِيعِ الْعَلِيمِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ.

Then he should say "Bismillah hir Rahman nir Raheem" and start his prayers. pg. 230

Q.14. What is the order regarding the performance of "Sajdah-e-Shukr" after completing a wajib namaz?

Ans : The "Sajdah-e-Shukr" is among the highly recommended acts and is very much emphasised. Just as an obligatory (wajib) act is superior to a recommended (mustahhab) act, in much the same way, the "Sajdah-e-Shukr" which is performed after a obligatory namaz is superior to the one which is performed after a recommended namaz.. pg. 232-234

Q.15. Will the believers give birth to children in Paradise?

Ans : In paradise, neither will the women become pregnant nor will they have their menstrual cycles. In fact only those things will be available that will be a source of comfort for the eyes and the heart. pg. 240

Q.16. Can we keep Khak-e-Shifa (soil of Karbala) in the grave?

Ans : Yes it can be kept in the grave. And by the command of Allah, the threads of the shroud get mixed with the soil. Pg. 244

Q.17. Can a rosary (Tasbeeh) be made of Khak-e-Shifa?

Ans : There is no adornment for a Tasbeeh more excellent than Khak-e-Shifa. Among the virtues of a tasbeeh made of Khak-e-Shifa is that often a person is lost in his thoughts and just turns the beads of the tasbeeh in his hands, yet he will get the complete reward of reciting that tasbeeh. Pg. 244

Q.18. Can we prostrate on Khak-e. Shifa?

Ans : It is permitted to prostrate on Khak-e-Shifa. In fact, it is a source of distinction. pg. 244

Q.19. Can we prostrate on the graves of Imams(a.s.)?

Ans : You should not prostrate on the graves. However, you can touch your face to the grave. And there is also no harm in performing namaz in front of the grave. pg. 246

Q.20. What do you have to say about those people who exaggerate the position of Ahle Bait(a.s.) and ascribe them with Divinity (Godhood)?

Ans: I and all my ancestors, right from Adam (a.s.) till Mohammad Mustafa (s.a.w.s) are the servants of Allah. Actually, we are aggrieved by those Shias who are ignorant and whose faith is not even equal to the wing of a mosquito. We detach ourselves from all those people who associate us with Allah. pg. 264-266

Q.21. What do you have to say about people like Shalmagani, Sharaee, Nomairee and Abu Khatab who had falsely claimed the status of being your special deputies?

Ans : We announce our disapproval of them and we distance ourselves from such people and also from their followers. We also send our curse on them. Pg. 282

Q.22. What will be the condition of the world and the Muslims before your reappearance?

Ans : Before our reappearance, the hearts of the people will become hard and the world will be full of injustice and inequality. pg. 284

Q.23. Have you appointed anyone as your special deputy in Ghaibat-e-Kubra?

Ans : Before the rising of Sufyani and before the hearing of the voice from the sky, anyone who claims that he can meet me (at will) is a liar and a malicious person. (There is no special representative in Ghaibat-eKubra) Pg. 284

Q.24. Will those Sayyeds (descendants of the Prophet s.a.w.s. who deny your Imam at get salvation?

Ans: Allah does not have any exclusive relation with anyone (i.e. no one is special in front of Allah). If someone denies our Imam at then he is not from us. His example is like the example of Hazrat Nuh (a.s.)'s son. pg. 286

Q.25. Is the time of your reappearance decided? And does anyone have information about it?

Ans:(The time of my) reappearance is in the hands of Allah. And anyone who claims otherwise is a liar. Pg. 288

Q.26. As you do not have a special representative in the major occultation, then who should we resort to for redressal of our religious problems?

Ans : You must refer (your questions) to the narrators of our traditions. We have appointed them as our proof (Hujjat) upon you. pg. 288

Q.27. What is the reason for your occultation?

Ans: Allah mentions in the Quran "Do not ask those things about which if you are told, you will not like it". (Surah Maidah : 101) Pg. 290

Q.28. When will your occultation end and will you reappear?

Ans: Do not inquire about those things that will not benefit you. And don't ask questions about matters that are not your responsibility. pg. 290

Q.29. Is it necessary to pay khums? And is there some particular way in which it should be paid?

Ans: We accept your wealth only with this intention that you should be purified. Otherwise, whatever Allah has bestowed on us is far superior than what He has given you. pg. 286

Q.30. Can the people derive benefit from you while you are in occultation?

Ans : The people can derive benefit from me in my occultation just as they derive benefit from the sun when it is concealed behind the clouds. Pg. 290

Q.31. What are the characteristics and the status of Allah's guides?

Ans : Allah has protected them from all kinds of sins and purified them from all kinds of defects and has made them clean from all sorts of vices. He has appointed them as the treasurers of His knowledge and the custodians of His wisdom. He has made them the focal point of His secrets and has strengthened them with proofs. If all this had not been there then every person would have claimed (this position) and it would not have been possible to discern truth from falsehood. And knowledge would not be distinct from ignorance. pg. 296

Q.32. What is the reason for the sending of Prophets (a.s.) and Imams (a.s.)?

Ans: Allah has sent the Prophets (a.s.) and Imams (a.s.) so that they should command the people towards His obedience and refrain them from rebelliousness, and to inform the people about Allah and about the tenets of His religion. pg. 294

Q.33. How should we test and disgrace those people who falsely claim the status of Imamah?

Ans : Ask them about the Quran and the practical tenets (Ahkaam). Inquire from them about the laws governing namaz. You yourself will be able to gauge their authenticity. pg. 298

Q.34. At any point of time can the earth ever remain devoid of the Proof of Allah (Hujjat)?

Ans : The earth can never remain devoid of the "Hujjat" of Allah - whether he is apparent and manifest or concealed and hidden. pg. 314

Q.35. Who is the Imam after Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.)?

Ans : Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) has appointed that person as his successor and vicegerent whom Allah has kept in occultation. (i.e. he only is your Imam) pg. 314

Q.36. Are the Imams(a.s.) the creators as well as the sustainers (of the people)?

Ans: Imams (a.s.) pray to Allah and He creates and gives sustenance because of their supplications. Allah accepts their invocations and exalts their rank and status. pg. 228 • 330

Q.37. Till when can a person pray for a son?

Ans : A person should pray for a son till the fourth month of pregnancy. pg. 386, 598

Q.38. Can a person take your name in general public meetings or gatherings?

Ans : If you publicise our name, they (the enemies) will make it widespread. If you tell them about our place they will try to reach there. pg. 440

The one who takes our name in an assembly is accursed. pg. 442

(Please note, Hazrat, Hujjat, Vali-eAsr, Baqiyatullah, Imam-e-Zamana, Mahdi etc. are the titles of Imam (a.s.) and not his name).

Q.39. What is the status and position of the narrators of traditions? :

Ans : Have you not read the saying of Allah in which He says,

"And We made between them and the towns which We had blessed, other towns which can be easily seen ..."

Surah Saba : 17 . I swear by Allah, we are those towns, which Allah has blessed, and you are the towns that are apparent. pg. 444

Q.40. To whom does Allah give guidance?

Ans : The one who desires guidance gets it from Allah. The one who endeavours for it, is bestowed with it. pg. 544

Q.41. Is it proper to search for you?

Ans: The one who struggles and strives too much for searching me will (in fact) direct the enemies towards me. And the one who guides the enemies towards me has endangered my life. And the one who puts my life in danger is a polytheist. pg. 548

Q.42. What are the responsibilities of the scholars (Ulema) towards the people?

Ans: They should meet the people with humility, and fulfill the needs of the people. They should be accessible. We will help them in this regard. pg. 564

Q.43. Can we give preference to the needs of the relatives before the needs of others?

Ans: Imam Moosa ibn Jafar (a.s.) says "If the relatives are in want then Allah does not (even) accept your sadqah" pg. 252

Q.44. But what if we have already made the intention of helping someone else?

Ans: Distribute the money among both the parties so that you get the maximum reward.

pg. 252

Indeed, we await that day when we can directly converse with Imame Asr (a.t.f.s.), illuminate our eyes and souls by his luminous light.

Exposition of a Supplication Relating To Imam Mahdi (a.s.)

This supplication begins thus

اللَّهُمَّ ارْزُقْنَا تَوْفِيقَ الطَّاعَةِ

It has been recorded by the eminent traditionalist, Shaykh Abbas Qummi (r.a.), in his renowned compilation, 'Mafatihul Jinaan'. He has reported this invocation on the authority of Shaykh Kafami from the latter's 'Misbahul Mutahajjid'. It is recommended that this supplication be recited after every obligatory namaaz or for that matter at any other time. (This supplication is mentioned in 'Mafatihul Jinaan' before the fifteen supplications of Imam Sajjad a.s.). Considering the veracity of this supplication, and with an eye on brevity, we have not mentioned the chain of transmitters.

١. اللَّهُمَّ ارْزُقْنَا تَوْفِيقَ الطَّاعَةِ

A supplication generally commences by invoking Allah as in, which means 'O Allah'. The very next word, means grant us sustenance. The word sustenance is by and large associated with food and succour. However, this word is also used to imply bounties associated with both this world, as well as the hereafter. In other words, any bounty, aid, assistance, etc., granted by Allah is dubbed as , and this could be in the guise of 'taufeeq' to perform some action or it could be some monetary benefit or an increase in knowledge and recognition (ma'arafat). Granting sustenance is the exclusive domain of Allah as He Himself mentions in the Quran

'Surely Allah is the bestower of sustenance, the Lord of Power, the Strong.'

(Chapter of Zariyat, verse 58)

The words 'Howa' that precedes 'Razzaaq' is an added emphasis on Allah's prerogative in granting sustenance to man. This declaration affirming Allah's sovereignty in the matter of succour in the very beginning of this invocation is an admission of man's absolute helplessness and dependence on Allah. (It must be noted that the Quran alludes to others also like responsibility for granting sustenance. However, these can only perform this duty with permission and assistance from Allah and are by no means His associates.)

It is pertinent to note what Imam Mahdi (a.s.) has beseeched from Allah, under the heading of ارْزُقْنَا. And what Imam (a.s.) has sought under the heading تَوْفِيقًا.

تَوْفِيقًا is derived from وَفَّقَ which means to reform or to rectify. It also means success and fruition. This is again the undisputed right of Allah as expounded in chapter of Hud, verse 88

'And with none but Allah is the direction of my affair to the right issue.'

Thus all success, honour and accomplishment is directly attributed to Allah's assistance and aid. Then, one who wishes to advance in this world as well as the hereafter, must constantly entreat Allah. 'Taufeeq' تَوْفِيقٌ plays a crucial role in the performance of actions. For instance, there could be a youth, strong and capable, who is unable to perform a simple action due to lack of 'taufeeq', while a man twice his age may perform an even more formidable task, like say praying Namaze Shab in severe wintry conditions, with 'taufeeq' from Allah's side. However, it is relevant to note that Allah never acts impulsively. His actions are governed by perfect wisdom and reasoning. In other words, Allah will never grant man 'taufeeq' without some cause. And this cause that draws 'taufeeq's intention (neeyah). And that is why traditions elucidate this concept thus;

'Taufeeq is in proportion with intention.'

"Taa-a" means an attraction, inclination or preference towards someone or something. It is commonly used to denote submission, obedience or compliance. In this supplication implies obedience of Allah's commands and edicts. Indeed, submission to Allah is the key to man's problems relating to the world, and the hereafter. Submission to Allah's commands, is a precursor to man's success, stifles social disputes, wards off Allah's wrath, grants man honour and dignity and averts evil. Then one who obeys Allah's commands will accept death matter-of-factly. He will show urgency in performing all obligatory acts. However, regrettably, today we see the Muslims evading obligatory deeds. Ameerul Mo'mineen (a.s.) protests against this strange trait thus,

'When their God invites them (towards goodness) they flee and abscond. But when Satan entices them they heed his call with urgency and rush towards him.'

(Nahjul Balaga, sermon 166)

One must never forget that all bounties are a direct consequence of our obedience to Allah, for nothing can be achieved without His satisfaction. Subservience to the Almighty gains precedence over all other actions.

٢. وَ بُعَدَ الْمَعْصِيَةِ

'And help us abstain from sin and disobedience.'

Verily abstinence from sins is among Allah's greatest bounties. Disobedience is a result of عصى

خِذْلَان means that Allah abandons the servant and deprives him of His bounties; i.e. He does not care about him. And this only adds to man's depravation and debasement. A Muslim when he sins not only disobeys Allah, but also infringes upon the rights of the Prophet and his progeny (a.s.). That is why Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) declares,

'Undoubtedly the friend of Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) is the one who obeys Allah, even if he bears no blood ties with the Prophet (s.a.w.s.). And the antagonist of Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) is the one who defies Allah even while he boasts of blood ties with the Prophet (s.a.w.s.).

(Nahjul Balagah sermon 96)

Indeed man's behaviour is astonishing. For he evinces urgency in responding to the call of this world, that only invites him to trials, tribulations and misery.

٣. وَ صِدْقَ النِّيَّةِ

'And inculcate sincerity in my intentions.' Intention is the foundations of all our actions, and in fact, the latter are a consequence of the former. An unwavering intention can subdue the weakness of the body. That is why traditions declare,

"The believer's intention surpasses his action and the disbeliever's intention surpasses his action. In this supplication Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) beseeches Allah to purify his intentions from all blemishes like ostentation, vainglory, pride, disbelief, etc. Such a level of purity in our intention is crucial, for actions are accepted by Allah only if our intention is unfettered with such blemishes; else regardless of the effort, our actions will never be acknowledged by Allah. Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) proclaims,

'If one is sincere in his intentions, then Allah will multiply manifold his sustenance.'

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) also declares, 'One who has pure intentions will experience serenity in his heart. For the heart can only get tranquillity from actions that are performed for Allah's sake alone.' Insincere intentions deprive man of his sustenance, hurl him into tribulations and seize barakat' from him.

٤. وَ عِزْفَانَ الْحُرْمَةِ

عِزْفَانَ and عِزْفَانِ means recognition and comprehension. الْحُرْمَةِ means all those things that are prohibited by the Islamic Shariat. In this supplication, Imam (a.s.) implores Allah to help him recognise the forbidden actions, so that he may exercise restraint in this regard. For surely among the signs of the intellect is that the person abstains from prohibited deeds, especially consuming impure food by which blood is produced in the body. Hence when a Muslim eats what is forbidden by the Shariat, the angels in the heavens and the earth curse that person. Moreover, worship on a stomach filled with prohibited food, is akin to a house that is built on water. To the extent that traditions pronounce that a person who forsakes a morsel of prohibited food will get reward that exceeds that of two thousand recommended (mustahhab) units of namaz. But this abstinence is possible only if man can clearly identify the prohibited

actions. Then one who abstains from the forbidden deeds while he is having the ability and inclination, then Allah will avert from him the fire of Hell and grant him entry in Paradise.

هـ. وَ أَكْرَمْنَا بِالْهُدَى وَالْإِسْقَامَةِ

'And grant us honour through guidance and steadfastness.' Verily the best guidance is that of Allah. So critical is guidance that Allah has not delegated it to anyone and has kept this responsibility with Himself. In fact, Allah tells the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) in the chapter of Qasas, verse 57,

(O Prophet) surely you cannot guide whom you love, but Allah guides whom He pleases.'

Then if guidance is with Allah, how does man go about acquiring it? Who are the ones fortunate enough to receive it and the wretched who are deprived of it? There are certain actions the performance of which invoke Allah's guidance and mercy, viz., a) belief in Allah, b) piety, c) repentance and contrition, d) abstinence from sins, e) endeavours in the way of Allah, f) adherence to the Islamic Shariat, g) concern and regard for religion, h) patience and fortitude, i) certitude, j) sincere intentions, k) consultation, l) frequent remembrance of Allah, m) acquisition of knowledge, n) obedience of the Imams (a.s.).

On the other hand there are certain actions that repel Allah's mercy and guidance viz.,

a) Injustice - be it on others, or on oneself by way of sins

b) Disbelief and apostasy

c) Transgression and unrestraint in the matter of sins

d) Extravagance

e) Falsehood

f) To accede to one's desires

g) To act without any ma'soom Imam's leadership. .

h) Doubt and scepticism (after certitude)

Steadfastness connotes following the right path, the path of guidance, as opposed to that of deviation and misguidance, as it is mentioned in the first chapter of Quran thus,

'Keep us on the right path.' And the chapter of Hud, verse 112

'Remain steadfast as you have been commanded.' Steadfastness and uprightness are among the distinctive features of a believer. Allah has given glad tidings to those who observe fortitude and steadfastness in their affairs. In fact this is the best means of leading one's life. Then one who wishes to succeed in the world and the hereafter must embrace these characteristics. For as Ameerul Mo'mineen (a.s.) declares, 'One who is steadfast shall get Paradise, but the one who is afflicted with doubt and disbelief shall get the fire.'

(Nahjul Balaga, sermon 119)

Only after being graced by Allah with steadfastness and guidance can one truly comprehend the meaning of the word **إِشْرَافٌ** which means, 'honour us'. For surely one who is blessed by Allah with these two traits will find honour and esteem in the eyes of Allah and His Prophet (s.a.w.s.).

٦. وَ سَدِّدْ أَلْسِنَتَنَا بِالصَّوَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ

'Direct our tongues to speak truthful and prudent discourses.' Here **صَوَابٌ** means to enjoin upon the right path and **السنه** means tongues. **سَدِّدْ** means honest and rightful discourses, while **حِكْمَتٌ** means reflections and talks marked with wisdom and discernment.

A man's tongue plays a crucial role in moulding his personality. Which is why Ameerul Mo'mineen (a.s.) proclaims,

"The tongue determine man's worth." Just as a woman's grace and beauty is reflected in her visage, a man's character is (disguised) in his tongue. Indeed the tongue is the root of all goodness and evil. A man can never achieve steadfastness in his character unless he first observes this trait in his speech. That is why Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) exhorts us to guard our tongues with the same judiciousness with which we safeguard gold and silver. In fact in this lies the security of man. For this little piece of flesh used with abandon can cause damage more severe and destructive than swords and lances. Hence we must beseech Allah to help us guard our tongues so nothing comes forth from it but guidance and wisdom. We must observe a lot of discretion and caution in our speech. As Ameerul Mo'mineen has put it

'The wise man's tongue is hidden behind his intellect, while a fool's intellect is hidden behind his tongue.'

(Nahjul Balaga, saying 40).

٧. وَ اَمَلًا قُلُوبُنَا بِالْعِلْمِ وَالْمَعْرِفَةِ

'And pervade our hearts with knowledge and recognition.' Indeed knowledge and recognition are such profound concepts that to do justice to them in this short exposition is well-nigh impossible. The great traditionist, Allamah Muhammad Baqir Majlisi (r.a.) has discussed knowledge, recognition and intellect in over two volumes of his celebrated work 'Behaarul Anwaar'. To put it briefly, the Imams (a.s.) have enjoined acquisition of knowledge upon every

Muslim man and woman. In fact few other things in Islam have been emphasised with such vehemence by the Imams (a.s.). Despite all these exhortations Muslims today cut a sorry figure steeped in ignorance and regression. And this state of ignorance among his Shias pains Imame Asr (a.t.f.s.) more than anything else. Our responsibility then, is not only to acquire knowledge, but to disseminate it. Now as far as recognition is concerned, it can only be achieved by strictly adhering to the commands of Allah and His Prophet (s.a.w.s.) as far as obligatory and recommended, prohibited and abominable actions are concerned. And it is important that we always recite the following invocation: 'O Allah, help us recognise ourselves, for surely if we fail to recognise ourselves, we can never recognise Your Prophet. O Allah, help us recognise Your Prophet, for surely if we fail to recognise Your Prophet we can never recognise Your Proof (Imame Asr). O Allah, help us recognise Your Proof, for surely if we fail to recognise Your Proof we shall be deviated from Your religion.'

٨. وَ طَهَّرْ بُطُونَنَا مِنَ الْحَرَامِ وَالشُّبْهَةِ

'And purify our bellies from impure and unclean food.' The unclean food that finds its way in our bellies is deemed impure on the basis of two criteria; first, it is either obtained from unlawful livelihood or from a livelihood on which khums has not been paid. Second, either the food by itself is impure or it has been acquired from an unclean person. For instance, if one acquires some foodstuff from an unbeliever that has been made unclean with the latter's sweat. Such impure food once consumed sows seeds of rebellion against the Almighty. That is why as mentioned earlier one who forsakes a morsel of prohibited food will get reward that exceeds that of two thousand recommended (mustahhab) units of namaz. Apart from the effect on our spirituality, impure food has far reaching repercussions on our issues. The impure blood that flows in their veins incites them to revolt against Allah. However, we often find Muslims, especially Indian Muslims, who are negligent about this aspect and advance lame excuses like, it is not possible for any person living in this country to totally avoid unclean food!! Of course that is not true. We find instances wherein a doctor strongly recommends, say a nonvegetarian patient from eating mutton. The patient actually adheres to the doctor's recommendations and completely stops consuming mutton. If man can go to such lengths to preserve this temporal body, then he should make a more concerted effort for success in the eternal life in the hereafter, and he should constantly endeavour to attain Allah's satisfaction. In this regard it is sufficient to say that impure food is a cause for repudiation of all our prayers and supplications and a means of Imam's displeasure.

٩. وَ اكْشِفْ أَيْدِيَنَا عَنِ الظُّلْمِ وَالسَّرِقَةِ

"And withhold our hands from injustice and theft." Tyranny and injustice are among the major sins. Allah does not guide the tyrant, on the contrary He sends down His chastisement upon him. Tyranny and injustice are the root cause of all sins and transgression, as Quran proclaims,

"And certainly We did destroy generations before you when they were unjust."

(Yunus : 13)

Injustice can be broadly divided under three categories. First is i.e. to take some associate for Allah. 'Shirk' is so heinous that it has been dubbed by the Quran as the

Second is to do injustice to oneself through sins and transgression. The third category involves injustice to others, by usurping their rights or encroaching upon their property. Another form of injustice involves doubting and questioning a tenet or fundamental of religion (please refer Tafsire Ayyashi under Chapter of Anam, verse 82). One must never employ coercion with the old and defenceless. That is why Ameerul Mo'mineen (a.s.) exhorts us thus, 'When your hand advances to perpetrate injustice remember the justice of Allah. And when you wrest control over someone remember the control Allah exercises over you.'

(Behaarul Anwaar vol. 75, page 322)

One who does injustice or commits theft will find himself in a very wretched state on the Day of Judgement. Allah asserts in the Quran

'And the day when the unjust one shall bite his hands, saying: O! Would that I had taken a way with the Apostle.'

(Furqan : 27)

۱۰. وَاغْضُضْ أَبْصَارَنَا عَنِ الْفُجُورِ وَالْخِيَانَةِ

'And lower our gaze at scenes of transgression and treachery.' This statement endorses the verse of the chapter of Nur, wherein Allah commands the believers, men as well as women, to lower their gaze. Indeed among the miracles of Quran is how it has succinctly outlined a mode of living for mankind that is in perfect harmony with his inherent nature and at the same time in line with his spiritual needs. No other philosopher or thinker of any age or school of thought has ever formulated (nor will he ever formulate) a mode of lifestyle that even remotely resembles the one advocated by the Quran.

Islam has forbidden Muslims from casting a glance on the na-mahram. Indeed this is the transgression and treachery of the eyes. On the Day of Judgement all eyes will weep save those that when they are confronted with the forbidden, lower their gaze. Those eyes that are habituated to looking at na-mahram will in the hereafter find rods of blazing fire being driven in their eyes. Looking at the forbidden is a potent poison with which Satan spoils the faith of the believer. On the other hand, the fear of Allah is the anti-dote to this poison. Indeed, the Shia must reflect on it here and now, during the period of occultation. If he desires to look at the forbidden he will never be able to cherish the sight of the luminous countenance of Imame Asr (a.t.f.s.)..

١١. وَاسْتُذْ أَسْمَاعَنَا عَنِ اللَّغْوِ وَالْغَيْبَةِ

'Refrain our hearing from vain talks and backbiting.' Quran declares **"And who keep aloof from what is vain."** (Mo'minoon :3)

All talks that do not involve some discussion about Allah or His Prophet (s.a.w.s.) or the Ahle Bayt (a.s.), can be accounted as vain. Even music is classified as vain and listening to it is forbidden. One who forsakes vain talks will find an elevation in his honour and esteem.

غَيْبَت means to muse over the shortcomings and flaws of a believer in his absence. If indeed those flaws are present in the believer then it constitutes غَيْبَت (backbiting), else it takes the form of life بَهْتَان (accusation). Quran has prohibited the believers from backbiting thus;

'Not let some of you backbite others. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? (Hujrat : 12)

Thus as per the Quran, backbiting of a believer is tantamount to eating the dead brother's flesh. Not only is speaking evil of a believer prohibited, but even lending one's ears to the slanderous talks of the backbiter is forbidden. If it is possible for us, then we should immediately refrain the person from going on any further, and remind him of Allah's displeasure in this regard.

١٢. وَ تَفَضَّلْ عَلَى عُلَمَائِنَا بِالزُّهْدِ وَالنَّصِيحَةِ

"And bless our scholars and the learned with piety and the ability to give sound advice." Indeed if all the scholars of the Islamic nation strive and endeavour in the way of Allah, then most of our problems will be solved. In this supplication Imame Asr (a.s.) beseeches Allah to bestow His grace and benevolence upon the scholars of the Islamic nation. Indeed if the learned of this nation do not propagate Islam with intensity, and do not exhort the Muslims towards goodness and refrain them from evil, then the only logical consequence will be sedition and disputes.

١٣. وَ عَلَى الْمُتَعَلِّمِينَ بِالْجُهِدِ وَالرَّغْبَةِ

'And grant inclination to the seekers of knowledge to struggle hard in their quest for knowledge.' Here there is one thing that must always be kept in mind. The sole objective of acquiring knowledge must be to seek Allah's pleasure and satisfaction. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) declares that one who seeks knowledge for four reasons shall be worthy of a place in Hell, viz., one who seeks knowledge merely to debate with the scholars, or solely to have some vain talks with the fools and simpletons or some aimless discussions, or to invite the people towards oneself or to acquire some wealth from the affluent. (Behaarul Anwaar vol 2, page 38)

١٤. وَ عَلَى الْمُسْتَمِيعِينَ بِالْإِيتَابِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ

'And bless the listeners so that they may respond to invitations of truth and righteousness and lend their ears to sound advice and admonitions.' One must always endeavour to obey and abide by Allah's commands. As Allah asserts in the Quran in the chapter of Baqarah, verse 38

"Then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them nor shall they grieve."

Indeed admonitions keep alive the heart and dispel unawareness and incognizance. The best admonisher is the Quran. Hence we must endeavour to be constantly in touch with this miracle that has come for man's guidance.

١٥. وَ عَلَى مَرْضَى الْمُسْلِمِينَ بِالشِّفَاءِ وَالرَّاحَةِ

'And grant relief and tranquillity to the ailing.'

١٦. وَ عَلَى مَوْتَاهُمْ بِالرَّأَةِ وَالرَّحْمَةِ

'And bestow Your mercy and pardon on the dead.' In the above two statements of the supplication, Imame Asr (a.t.f.s.) implores Allah to reform the condition of the afflicted and dead among the Muslims. These invocations only serve to remind us of our obligations towards the sick and dead amongst us. Indeed in our busy lives today, we seem to have overlooked these two sections of the community. Keeping in mind the implorations of Imam (a.s.) for the indisposed and the dead, we must take out time to visit the ailing and pray for their relief and comfort. And as far as the dead are concerned, we should recite the Quran on their behalf and visit their graves regularly and pray for the forgiveness of their sins.

١٧. وَ عَلَى مَشَائِخِنَا بِالْوَقَارِ وَالسَّكِينَةِ

'And bestow dignity and serenity upon our elders.' The elders play a very pivotal role in the progress of the community. The enthusiasm and fervour of the youth can only be reined in by the experience and foresight of the senior citizens of the nation. However, the elders must work alongside the youth keeping in mind their own dignity and honour. Then they should not do anything to violate this respect and esteem. Indeed the similitude of the senior members of society is that of captain of ship, who even in the storm, does not lose his bearings, but musters up all his experience and expertise, steering the ship towards the shore.'

١٨. وَ عَلَى الشَّبَابِ بِالْإِنَابَةِ وَالتَّوْبَةِ

"And endow the youth with a feeling of repentance and contrition." A man's youth is a period of craze and abandon. The youth should therefore observe caution in this age by obeying Allah, falling in line with His commands and tenets. The juveniles must always bear in mind the

transience of their youth, that will soon be replaced with old age and fatigue. That is why the period of one's youth must be used most judiciously. Surely the fervour and intensity of youth is fleeting, and man must exploit it before it is taken away. Indeed Imam Baqir's admonitions in this regard are most striking. Imam declares, 'If I find a youth not engaged in the acquisition of religious knowledge, I will beat him.' Surely, Imame Asr (a.s.) when he reappears, will punish all those youths who are incognizant of their religious obligations. O Shia youths! If your lives have been steeped in sins till now, turn to Allah and seek pardon with sincerity, so that you may be acquainted with the true essence of religion.

١٩. وَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِالْحَيَاءِ وَالْعِفَّةِ

"And grant our women modesty and chastity" Surely Imame Asr (a.s.) is distressed when he observes the outrageous spectacle of the women of our society with their heads unveiled and exposed. This display of immodesty provokes him into beseeching Allah for instilling modesty among the women. Traditions warn that even if a single strand of hair (of a woman) stands exposed to men, she will on the Day of Judgement be dangled in Hell by that: very strand of hair, (provided of course that this exposure was intentional on her part). However, in their attempt to ape the West, we find people who not only flagrantly violat   the Islamic tenets, but on the contrary are not willing to accept the Islamic injunction on the veil and demand evidence from the Quran and traditions in this regard. The Islamic veil constitutes an independent topic by itself and is beyond the scope of this treatise. Suffice it is to say that both the Quran and traditions of Ahle Bayt (a.s.) have been most vehement in this regard. For further deliberation on this topic, readers are welcome to correspond with our organisation. Quran proclaims

'Do not advance your opinion where you do not have the knowledge.' Modesty is a sign of faith and honour. Chastity is the best form of worship. Ameerul Mo'mineen (a.s.) narrates, 'Chastity is the zakaat of beauty and grace.'

(Ghuraral Hekam)

٢٠. وَ عَلَى الْأَغْنِيَاءِ شَالَتُوا ضِعِّ السَّعَةِ

'And confer humility and generosity on the affluent and wealthy.' Wealth and riches must at no point of time instill any pride and arrogance in us. This is because abundance is like any other bounty of Allah and He can take it away whenever He pleases. In this regard, history is witness over the fate of Qarun and Firaun. When Allah has bestowed wealth to one section of the community, then they should endeavour to share their good fortune with those who are deprived of it, for tradition exhorts us thus,

'And do good to the people like Allah has done good with you.' Never we should deem our intellect, efforts and capabilities responsible for our wealth and fortune. Tradition declares,

'Allah bestows wealth on a fool so that the wise can perceive Allah's role in apportioning sustenance and the helplessness of their own intellect in its provision.'

٢١. وَ عَلَى الْفُقَرَاءِ بِالصَّبْرِ وَالْقَنَاعَةِ

'And bestow patience and contentment on the poor and needy.' Imame Asr (a.t.f.s.) on the one hand exhorts the wealthy to act with humility and on the other hand urges the needy to deal with patience. This is so because Allah has examined the former by their wealth, while the latter have been tried with their poverty and indigence. Man should never complain to Allah about his destitution and penury. On the contrary he should struggle to acquire his livelihood and thank Allah under all circumstances. This is because contentment by itself is good fortune. Contentment is akin to gratitude and protestation to ingratitude. That is why Ameerul Mo'mineen (a.s.) says,

"The contented man is wealthy even while he is hungry and naked."

(Ghuraraal Hikam)

Contentment elevates a man's honour and esteem. Allah accepts easily whatever little deeds such a man has to offer. And it is worth noting that one who is not content in scarcity will never be so in abundance.

٢٢. وَ عَلَى الْغُرَضَةِ بِالنَّصْرِ وَالْعَلَبَةِ

'And arm our warriors with (Your) aid and make them victorious.' This part of Imam's supplication pertains to those warriors who relinquish the comforts of day and forsake their sleep at night only to serve Allah and safeguard His religion.

٢٣. وَ عَلَى الْأَسْرَاءِ بِالْخَلَّاصِ وَالرَّحَةِ

'And grant respite and succour to the captives.' Indeed no one is more aware of the helplessness and powerlessness of the captives than Imame Asr(a.t.f.s.), who has seen so many of his forefathers brave captivity and imprisonment for long periods of time.

٢٤. وَ عَلَى الْأَمْرَاءِ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالشَّفَقَةِ

'And assist the judges to perform (their duties) with justice and compassion.'

٢٥. وَ عَلَى الرَّعِيَّةِ بِالْإِنصَافِ وَ حُسْنِ السَّيْرِ

'And induce the citizens to act with fairness and good ethics.' Indeed if we act as per the exhortations of Imame Asr (a.t.f.s.), we shall find the world a place of shelter and asylum.

٢٦. وَ بَارِكْ لِلْحُجَّاجِ وَالزَّوَّارِ فِي الزَّادِ وَالنَّفَقَةِ وَاقْضِ مَا أَوْجَبْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ الْحَجِّ وَالْعُمْرَةِ بِفَضْلِكَ وَ رَحْمَتِكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ.

'And bless the pilgrims and visitors (of graves of Imams).' And assist them in their pilgrimage that you have made as an obligation upon them. By Your Grace and Mercy, O Most Merciful.'

In the end, Imame Asr (a.t.f.s.) prays for the pilgrims and visitors (of graves of Imams) and beseeches Allah to increase their sustenance and provisions so that they can easily discharge their religious obligations. We conclude this brief exposition with a tradition from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) regarding the visitation (Ziarat) of Imam Hussain (a.s.), the Doyen of Martyrs.

'When Allah wishes goodness and happiness for someone, He instills in his heart love for Imam Hussain (a.s.), and an inclination for his visitation.'

Seeking Mediation of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)

To seek a mediator implies to gain proximity to an individual in order to achieve one's objective through the mediator's recommendation and arbitration. Arabic litterateurs define mediation (tawassul) as

تَوَسَّلَ إِلَيْهِ بِوَسِيلَةٍ، إِذَا تَقَرَّبَ إِلَيْهِ بِعَمَلٍ

Translation, 'When he sought proximity with him through his actions, he aspired to gain his mediation.'
(Lisanul Arab vol. 11, page 724)

Mediation in the light of Quran and traditions

Allah declares in the Quran '**O you who believe! Be (careful of your duty to) Allah and seek nearness to Him and strive hard in His way that you may succeed.**' (Maidah : 35)

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) in exposition of this ayat narrates 'Acquire proximity with Allah through the Imam.'
(Tafsire Qummi, vol. 1 page 168)

Janabe Fatima Zahra (s.a.) proclaims in her sermon, 'Glorify Allah, whose majesty and supremacy command glorification and veneration. And it has been made mandatory upon the residents of the heavens and the earth to seek a mediator towards Allah, and we Ahle Bayt (a.s.) are the mediators appointed by Allah upon His creatures.'

(Sharhe Nahjul Balagha, vol. 2, page 211, by Ibne Abil Hadid)

Thus Quran and traditions alike, exhort the Muslims to secure some arbitrator in order to gain proximity with Allah, and achieve eternal deliverance.

Why seek mediation of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)?

Any Shia is bound to think, 'What is the rationale for us to seek mediation of our Imam? There are several facets to this question.

1. The mandate of Quran and traditions

Quran proclaims

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

Translation, '**O you who believe! Be patient and excel in patience and maintain contact, and be careful of your duty towards Allah, that you may be successful.**'

(Ale Imran : 199)

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) by way of elucidation of the above ayat narrates,

... وَ رَابِطُوا إِمَامَكُمْ

Translation, 'Maintain a special affinity with your Imam.'

(Noorus Saqalain, vol. 1 page 426)

Every Shia must maintain close ties with the Imam of his era. When weighed from the aspect of Arabic grammar, the word رَابِطُوا, is based on باب مفاعله of صيغه امر which implies co-operation and mutual consent, i.e. if a Shia maintains proximity with the Imam of his time, then Inshallah, the Imam will also reciprocate that feeling of affinity and consanguinity. Inshallah, Imam's grace and clemency on us will multiply. To observe this bidding of Imam Sadiq (a.s.) is crucial, and we must spare no effort to secure that feeling of affiliation and proximity with our Imam (a.s.) in order to gain Our Imam's (a.s.) special attention.

2. The status of Imam Mahdi (a.s.)

Traditions accredit Imam (a.s.) with an august and majestic standing. In Dua Nudbah we recite, 'Imam (a.s.) is that door of Allah's mercy that we have to access so as to reach Allah.' He is a path towards Allah's satisfaction and grace. He possesses powers of intercession vis-a-vis the Almighty. He is among the Names of Allah, through which we have been commanded to seek mediation and arbitration. As the Quran declares,

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا

Translation, '**And Allah's are the best names, therefore call on Him thereby.**' (Araaf : 180)

An exegesis of this ayat reveals a tradition from the Aimmah (a.s.), viz., 'By Allah! We are the best names (asmaae husnaa) through which Allah has commanded the Muslims to invoke Him.'

(Mikyalul Makarim, vol. 1 page 271)

Imam always responds to pleas of help and succour, as has been elucidated in his Ziarat. He never rebuffs the distressed and frightened. Indeed he is the means for the redemption of sins. He alone is the defender of the weak and oppressed. And this is the purport of the following statement of Ziarate Jameaa.

One who has associated himself with you has triumphed, and the one who has sought asylum with you is protected.'

3. Observe this practice of turning to their chief in moments of anguish or when there is a fear of strike from the enemies. In fact this has also been the custom of the believers, who in times

of distress and difficulties have left their affairs completely in the hands of their Imam (a.s.), and have sought redressal from him alone. As a matter of fact, among the responsibilities of Imam (a.s.), is that he provides refuge to the hapless and a retreat to the outcast. And in this regard it is observed that if a subject of any King is in distress and is confronted with a calamity or affliction then rationale suggests he should approach his leader, ruler, provided of course, the latter is virtuous and capable. Otherwise, then he will be the subject of intense criticism and censure. And likewise, if in our moments of indigence and grief, we turn to someone other than our Imam for assistance, then we have forsaken one of the crucial obligations enjoined by Allah upon the Muslims and run the risk of incurring His wrath. That crucial obligation has been expounded in

"Then disperse abroad and in the land and seek of Allah's grace." (Jumaa : 10)

By way of elucidation of the above verse Jabir b. Abdullah (r.a.) narrates from Masoomeen (a.s.), "The grace of Allah mentioned in the ayat alludes to the Imams (a.s.).

(Mikyaalul Makaarim vol. 2, pg. 273)

Besides, in the Quran, Allah commands us to enter a house only through its door. Likewise, Allah has designated an Imam in every era, through which the Muslims are commanded to enter into Allah's grace and mercy. And the fact that the Imam (a.s.) of this era is in occultation does not in any way diminish his mediation and arbitration prowess vis-a-vis Allah; for an Imam is Allah's emissary on this earth, and to that extent there is no difference between an apparent Imam and a hidden one. Imam (a.s.) is aware of everything that goes around as he himself proclaims,

'Certainly, we with our knowledge are cognizant of all your affairs and your dealings are never concealed from us.'

(Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 53, page 175)

In another tradition Imam (a.s.) asserts,

إِنَّا غَيْرُ مُهْمِلِينَ لِمَرَاعَاتِكُمْ وَلَا نَاسِينَ لِدِكْرِكُمْ

Translation, We are never neglectful of your guardianship nor are we ever unmindful of your remembrance.

(Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 53, page 176)

And no mountain, bulwark or curtain can ever act as an impediment for Imam (a.s.). In this regard, Syed Ibne Taoos has recorded a tradition in his book, 'Kashful Muhajjah'. 'A companion of Imam Ali Raza (a.s.) narrates, I wrote a letter to Imam (a.s.). In the letter I mentioned about a person who wanted to offer his demands to Imam (a.s.); those demands that he sought from

his God. Imam Raza (a.s.) replied that if he has any requirement, tell him to simply move his lips, and the response (from my side) shall reach him.'

(Mikyal Makaarim, vol. 2, page 273).

In 'Al-Kafi', there is a lengthy tradition narrated by Imam Raza (a.s.), about the elevated station of an Imam. An excerpt of this important narration has been brought below so as to appreciate, although to a very limited extent, the compassionate nature of Imam. Imam Raza (a.s.) pronounces,

الإمام الأنيس الرفيق والوالد الشفيق والأخ الشفيق والأم البرّة بالولد الصغير

.. . Translation, 'Imam is a confidant, an aide, a sympathetic father, an affectionate brother, and a caring mother who nurtures her infant.'

(Al-Kafi vol. 1, page 200)

The above tradition provides us with a glimpse, albeit a fleeting one, of the immense love and affection Imam (a.s.) has for his Shias. Our affliction and grief disturbs him even more than it disturbs us. He treasures us more than our own parents. His love and regard for us exceeds that of the father. For any father is confronted with certain limitations which he just can not breach. For instance, a man's love for his son maybe boundless. In his intense endearment and attachment he maybe willing to dispense all his wealth, even if it is a few million rupees. However, there is a limit to his wealth and riches. And this limitation does not permit that father to expend any more wealth, even though he wants to. This is also the case for other comforts that the father maybe prepared to furnish, but can not due to his obvious limitations. However, these limitations do not impede Imam (a.s.). Imam (a.s.) is Allah's emissary on the earth. He is the Caliph designated by Allah over His creation, he is the Master of the age and exercises complete control over the universe, with Allah's permission. Man's intellect fails to comprehend the powers of the Imam (a.s.). As a matter of fact there is a separate chapter in Usule Kafi titled, الأرض كلها للإمام meaning 'The earth is only for Imam'. There is one tradition in this chapter, wherein Imam Sadiq (a.s.) recounts to one of his companions,

'Do you not know that the world and the hereafter, are both, for the Imam.'

(Usule Kafi, Kitabul Hujjat, vol. 1, page 48).

Now that we are enlightened with the supreme authority of our Imam, it only follows that we advance our demands and needs in front of him, knowing that he will fulfill our needs. He is a sympathetic father for his Shias, and the father always experiences a great deal of gratification in resolving his son's difficulties.

Ways of seeking mediation with Imam (a.s.)

1. Dua (Supplication)

Indeed, there is no paucity of means to invoke and beseech Imam (a.s.). In this regard, the role of supplications cannot be over stressed. One supplication in particular has been reported in Mikyal Makarim, vol. 2, page 271;

O Allah! I ask You for the sake of Your representative and Your Proof, Master of Time, that You help me through him in all my affairs. And Protect me through him from the difficulties of every torturer, dissident and rebel. (Please) help me through him for my efforts are exhausted. And Protect me from every enemy, grief, sorrow, debt, my children and all my family members, my brothers and my close ones, whose deeds do harm unto me. Amin, Lord of the Worlds.

(Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 94, p. 34)

2. Repeated invocation for assistance

An important invocation has been recorded in 'Mafatihul Jinnan', page 108 (Urdu edition). The invocation begins thus;

سَلَامُ اللَّهِ الْكَامِلِ

An invocation is crucial, since it is through entreaties alone, that the afflicted beseeches his master. This invocation in particular, has some exceptional benefits for the Shias. Muhaddithe Noori in his celebrated work, 'Najmus Saqib', chapter 10 (concluding part), comments that within hours of reciting this invocation, his demands were miraculously fulfilled. Besides, there are numerous other instances wherein Shias have experienced immediate and untold results from its recitation.

3. Making a written presentation of one's needs to Imam (a.s.)

This is a very simple and forthright medium of submitting one's demands to Imam (a.s.). Here, a Shia notes down his demands and aspirations and sends it to Imam (a.s.). In India, this practice is especially conspicuous on 15th Shabaan. On this day, the day of birth of our Imam (a.s.), Shias very enthusiastically list their demands on a piece of paper and cast the letters in the sea. However, should this practice be observed only on 15th Shabaan? Do we need our Imam's assistance only on the occasion of his birth? Or is it that a single occasion in a year is sufficient for advancing all our requirements, so that for the rest of the year we discern no need for Imam? God forbid, that is not the case! We must regularly write down our needs that we seek from Imam (a.s.). Surely we can devote some time at least once a week or fortnight to jot down our problems and our state of condition for Imam (a.s.) and then cast the letter in the sea or

embed it in the earth. This is indeed very easy and requires minimal effort. However, neglect and preoccupation with the world has made us neglect this very important medium of mediation and arbitration with Imam (a.s.). And is it necessary that we write to Imam (a.s.) only in moments of distress, and never otherwise? Are we so self-centered that we cannot even send a salutation (salaam) upon our Imam, without being confronted by some difficulty or problem??

4. Conversation with Imam (a.s.)

This is another very facile mode of communicating with Imam (a.s.). Whenever a Shia finds himself alone, regardless of the time, he can converse with Imam (a.s.), first by sending his salutations upon Imam and then by narrating his plight and condition. Nothing can be simpler than this. Inshallah, even Imam (a.s.) will heed that Shia's narration and will pray for him. And every Shia must converse with his Imam at least once a day. For although Imam (a.s.) is aware of our state and condition, recounting to Imam (a.s.) our problems and dilemmas has its own appeal.

Sayyed's Ibne Taoos' testament to his son exhorting him to seek mediation from Imam Mahdi (a.s.)

Sayyed exhorted his son in his will thus, 'O my son Muhammad! Allah, the Almighty conferred His favour and benefit upon me through your birth. I found myself completely incapable and powerless in front of Allah and could never glorify Him fittingly for this favour. And out of gratitude for this bounty, and on Allah's commands, I beseeched Imam (a.s.) on your behalf and sought your servitude in Imam's service. And after that, the misfortunes that afflicted you were also resolved through his mediation and grace. I was graced by Imam (a.s.) in my dreams on several occasions, and he has alleviated my impoverishment with his bounties and favours. His benefaction upon you is too excessive for me to ever adequately express. That is why your love, affection, spirit of sacrifice and devotion for Imam (a.s.) should also be abundant. The extent of your attachment and disposition towards him(a.s.) should please Allah, and gladden the hearts of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and his progeny (a.s.). O my son! Always give preference to Imam's wishes over your own. Pray for (the well-being of) Imam (a.s.) before you commence praying for yourself. Inculcate in yourself the practice of initiating all your works with 'sadaqah' for (the security of) Imam (a.s.), before you remove'sadaqah'for yourself or for your loved ones. If you wish, to faithfully observe his rights, and draw his (a.s.) concern and regard towards yourself, always favour his self over your own. Beseech Imam (a.s.) with unwavering intensity and humility every Tuesday and Thursday, and seek your demands from him. And while seeking your needs from Imam (a.s.), send your salutations upon him and recite the following Ziarat

(This Ziarat has been mentioned earlier.) Then recite the below mentioned verse

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

(Yusuf:88)

This was a confession of intense regret and remorse expressed by the brothers of Hazrat Yusuf (a.s.) to their father (Hazrat Yaqoob) and their brother. Hazrat Yusuf and Hazrat Yaqoob (peace be on both) displayed ample clemency and compassion, and forgave their sins. O our Master! Even if we have disobeyed Allah and distressed your ancestors (a.s.), please forgive us because o our Chief and Guardian, certainly you exceed Yusuf (a.s.) in his clemency, forbearance and compassion. Therefore please deal with us in a manner akin to Hazrat Yusuf's treatment vis-a-vis his brothers, while surely we are most undeserving of such leniency.

(Barnaameh Sa'adat, page 147, by Sayyed Ibne Taoos)

Innumerable instances of Imam's aid and succour

Books abound with incidents wherein aid and relief provided by Imam (a.s.) bears ample testimony to Imam's concern and anxiety for his Shias. There are several books wherein such heartening incidents are reported viz., Behaarul Anwaar, Najmus Saqib, Trysts with Imam (a.s.), Jannatul Mawa, Riyazul Ulama, Minhajus Salah, Al Kalamut Tayyeb, Isbatul Huda, etc. Among those favoured with Imam's grace and presence and blessed with the opportunity to delight with a glance at his countenance were Bahrul Uloom, Aga Zainul Abedeen Salmee, Maulana Muhammad Hussain Qazveeni, Allama Muhammad Taqi Majlisi, Alama Hilli, Shaykh Hurre Ameli, Shaykh Mufeed, Shaykh Hasan Iraqi, Muqaddase Ardabali, Ali b. Mahziyar, Ismail Harqali, among others. As matter of fact every Shia is included in this list, because there exists not a single believer but Imam(a.s.) graces him with a benevolent glance, although most of us are neglectful of this fact. This is all the more perceptible in instances wherein we find ourselves engulfed in calamities with a vicelike hold over us, leaving us disturbed, robbing us of our sleep. Then after a just few token entreaties and supplications we find ourselves alleviated in a flash. It seems almost unbelievable. The reason behind this sudden relief is Imam's benevolence and grace. Imam (a.s.) is never one to seek accolades and adulation, which is why he (a.s.) accomplishes his task and leaves in a hurry, knowing he(a.s.), he has a million other Shias to help. There is an incident involving a person who had lost his way. Imam (a.s.) came to his aid and directed him towards the right path. That person requested Imam (a.s.) to come with him to his house. Imam (a.s.) declined and replied that there were thousands of Shias who were entreating him at that very moment. He had to rush to their rescue just as he had rushed to his. (Mulakate Imam (a.s.) page 289) At least one point becomes crystal clear from the above-mentioned incident-Imam (a.s.) is perpetually engaged in providing relief and comfort to his Shias.

Therefore, a Shia must always seek mediation with Imam (a.s.). There is no prescribed time and place for this mediation. The only conditions for it are sincerity, penitence, pure ethics and a firm conviction. Constant arbitration with Imam (a.s.), revives the individual's wilayat and faith. This is because he is incessantly aware of Imam's satisfaction and pleasure and takes steps to please Imam (a.s.) and avoids deeds that vex him (a.s.). This boosts his faith and wilayat manifold. The Shia in his quest for proximity with Imam (a.s.) bares his innermost feelings to Imam (a.s.) and constantly seeks redressal for his problems. This is a source of constant reassurance to the Shia and keeps him insulated from all frustrations and disappointments. His salvation in the world and the hereafter is assured. These are primarily the reasons why every Shia must repeatedly seek mediation from Imam (a.s.).

Finally, the following statements from Duae Tawassul relating to Imam (a.s.) are noteworthy. (This is a Dua that has been reported on the authority of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.)) We should endeavour to reiterate these words with sincerity and earnestness. Inshallah.

O Inheritor of Hasan, Successor, Proof! O awaited Qaim, Mahdi! O son of God's Messenger! O proof of God over His creatures! O our Lord and Master! We turn to thee, ask thy intercession, and seek access through thee to God. We place before thee our needs. O thou who has standing with God! Intercede for us with God!

Ibne Khaldun vis a vis Traditions about Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)

Personality and prominence often establish or nullify an idea in the minds of the people. Their opinion, often, is of prime importance in understanding a concept. Their opinion creates an impact as compared to that of a common individual. Ibne Khaldun is an eminent scholar of reputation in the Islamic world. His views rule the hearts of a section of Muslims, thus making him popular with titles like 'Allama'.

Ibne Khaldun's views have not left the present day scholars unaffected. And so we delve to study his consideration towards the traditions concerning Imam Mahdi (as). Some scholars have subscribed to his viewpoint and consequently the common masses have been affected with it. Here, before bringing the traditions collected by Ibne Khaldun regarding Imam Mahdi (as) and his standpoint with regards to them, we present the Muqaddamah where he has mentioned those traditions.

Muqaddamah of Ibne Khaldun

Ibne Khaldun has authored a sixvolumed book of history entitled "Kitabul. Abar wa Deevanal Muftada wal Khabar fi Ayyamal Arabe wal Ajam wal Barbar". This book of Ibne Khaldun did not become as popular as the Muqaddamah written on it. The popularity of Ibne Khaldun is more associated with this book. This Muqaddamah is also very popular in Europe, as well. The original Arabic book has been translated into many languages; the English and Urdu translations are easily obtainable in India. Moreover, in some universities this Muqaddamah is a part of the final examination of the Arabic course (Faazil).

It can be said that this Muqaddamah is the seventh part of Ibne Khaldun's book of history. The book was written in a short period of eight to nine months, detailing the principles of history and varied other aspects. It is the collection of all logical and narrative (from traditions) sciences. With all this is also an independent analysis by Ibne Khaldun.

Some people consider the history book of Ibne Khaldun to be the body and the Muqaddamah, the spirit. As, it is this Muqaddamah which has brought him the actual fame.

We have taken this very Muqaddamah to be our subject and review the analysis of Ibne Khaldun. For this treatise we have referred to the Urdu translation of the Muqaddamah by Maulana Raaghib Rehmani Dehlavi and published by Aeteqaad Publishing House, Delhi. It is in 2 volumes. The 52nd part of the second volume is concerning Imam Mahdi (as) and comprises of 18 topics.

Traditions about Imam Mahdi (a.s.)

Ibne Khaldun has quoted twenty one traditions from the companions, and brings them on pages 158 to 173 in the second volume. The narrators include Hazrat Ali (a.s.), Jabir (a.r.), Ibne Masud, Umme Salma, Abu Saeed-e-Khudri, Abdullah ibne Masud, Mohammed ibne Haatiah, Ibne Abbas, Thaubaan, Abdullah ibne Harith ibne Harr, Abu Hurairah, Qurah ibne Ayaas, Ibne Umar, Talha ibne Abdullah, Mujahid, Umme Habibah, amongst others. The narrations are from disparate chains of narrators. Ibne Khaldun himself acknowledges that Tirmizi, Abu Dawood, Baraaz, Ibne Majah, Hakim, Tabrani and Abu Yaala Masuli have brought these traditions in their books. And then he writes, "The rejectors of Mahdi doubt the chain of narrators of these traditions, as we shall see. It is an acclaimed rule that "doubt precedes justification". On that account if a narrator is doubted - for instance if he is negligent, or he has a poor memory, or if some weakness is found in him, or his opinion is not good then this will affect the correctness of the tradition. The tradition will now no longer fit the criteria of authenticity.

(Muqaddamah, 2/158)

Reminder

From the above it becomes clear that the respected Allamah rejects all traditions wherein the narrator is doubted (Muqaddamah, 2/158) directed by the principle 'doubt precedes justification'.

The doubted traditions

Ibne Khaldun brings twenty one traditions regarding Imam Mahdi (as) after the above explanation, and casts doubt on, the narrators and chains of each one of them with these words, 'Because the scholars of traditions have doubted these traditions (concerning Imam Mahdi (as)). Suhaili Abu Bakr Khaithamah has collected all the traditions about Mahdi (as). We present them here.' (Of the twenty one traditions we consider only two of them).

Tradition One : Jabir (ar) says: "The Messenger of Allah, blessings and peace be upon him (and his progeny) said, The denier of Mahdi is an infidel; and the rejector of Dajjal, a liar; and about the denier of the sun rising from the West, I think he said something similar." The narrators of this tradition are Malik ibne Anas from Mohammed ibne Munkadar from Jabir. This series is mentioned by Abu Bakr Asqaaf in his 'Favaaedul Akhbaar'.

Doubt : There is a lot of disorder in the chain of narrators reaching Malik ibne Anas. And even Abu Bakr Asqaaf himself is accused by the Ahle Hadith of fabricating traditions.

Tradition Two : Ibne Masud narrates from Holy Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him (and his progeny), that even if one day remains for the end of this world, the Almighty will prolong

that day such that He will send a person from me or my family, whose name will be my name and his father's name will be my father's name (Tirmizi, Abu Dawood - these are the words of the narrator of Abu Dawood). The chain of narrators is Aasim ibne Abi Najoor from the famous reciter Zareen Habeesh from Abdullah ibne Masood.

Note: Tirmizi and Abu Dawood bring this tradition with their own chain of narrators. Abu Dawood has maintained silence over this tradition. In his famous treatise Abu Dawood writes for whichever tradition I maintain silence, is self-explanatory. (Capable of acceptance as a proof).

Doubt : Imam Ahmad says that he (Aasim) is a pious man, reciter of the Holy Quran, a good and honest person. However, A'amash has a better memory. (Here he is suggesting Aasim has a poor memory). In Ajali's words, opinions about Aasim differ, that is he was considered weak (narrator).

Mohammed ibne Saeed says Aasim was honest, yet he often made mistakes. Abdur Rehman ibne Abi Khatim says, "I told my father, Aasim is called to be reliable. My father commented, 'He (Asim) is not of that calibre (of being reliable).' Ibne Haaliyah has discredited him and has stated, Aasim is of weak memory. Abu Hatim remarks, "According to me he is on the level of truthfulness (i.e. he is truthful), and is a good traditionalist (i.e. his traditions are acceptable), but is not a memoriser of traditions. Nesai has another opinion about him. Abu Jafar Aquili avers: Only he had poor memory. Darqutni opines, "His (Asim's) memory was weak". Yahya Al Qataan declares, "I have observed the person (the narrators) called Aasim who has poor memory. I have heard Sheba say, that Asim b. Abi Bakhud narrated a tradition for us, although people did not have a good opinion about him.

(Muqaddamah, 2 / 159-160)

Note: After these doubts, Ibne Khaldun makes an attempt to answer an objection, "If someone contends that Bukhari and Muslim too have quoted from Asim, and hence Asim is reliable. The reply is, Bukhari and Muslim have not only brought his traditions, but they have brought them along with other narrators. Thus the actual narrator is someone else and this (quoting by Bukhari and Muslim) is only for further substantiation."

(Muqaddamah 2/160)

Fearing, doubts will be casted on other narrators of Bukhari and Muslim, Ibne Khaldun writes (in their defence). The scholars without exception adjudge the traditions of Bukhari and Muslim to be correct. This unanimity of the scholars is the most potent proof and the best evidence for the defence and support of the traditions.

(Muqaddamah, 2/158)

We make the following conclusions from the writings of Ibne Khaldun and the doubts he raises

- (1) Those traditions from doubted narrators are not authentic.
- (2) Doubts have been casted on the traditions of Mahdaviyat and consequently they are unacceptable.
- (3) If the narrator on whom doubt is casted is a narrator of Bukhari and Muslim, the validity of the tradition will not be affected, since the scholars are unanimous about the correctness of Bukhari and Muslim.

It should be noted that after bringing twenty one traditions about Imam Mahdi (as) and after discarding them, Ibne Khaldun writes: "These are all the traditions which the scholars bring about Mahdi and his re-appearance at the end of time. You have noticed that all these are doubted, and it is improbable that any has been spared." (Muqaddamah 2/173)

By calling these traditions rare Ibne Khaldun has not only misled the Muslims, but has actually deviated some.

Now let us make it clear that neither the traditions about Mahdi are rare nor by doubting the narrators the authenticity of the traditions can be shrivelled. Because the truth is:

- (1) The chains of reliable traditions are not in need of scrutiny. Thus by terming the traditions of Mahdaviyat unauthentic by doubting the narrators is against the principles of 'science of traditions'.
- (2) Ibne Khaldun contradicts himself as on the one hand he brings the traditions from twenty one different narrators and on the other hand declares them rare.
- (3) Ibne Khaldun has cited the traditions of Mahdaviyat from a section of prominent scholars like Tirmizi, Abu Dawood, al Baraaz, Ibne Majah, Tabarani and so on. Does this not establish that the doctrine of Mahdaviyat is a fundamental belief and Muslims are unanimous about it. Is it not for this reason that the recent scholars have quoted them?
- (4) The rule, 'doubt precedes justification' is framed by the scholars of traditions, and is not based on Quran and traditions. Besides many of the traditionalists have rejected it. So why has the respected scholar Ibne Khaldun employed only this rule to declare the traditions of Mahdaviyat weak?
- (5) It is incorrect to label the tradition as weak on account of a narrator with weak memory or negligence, as the traditions of Mahdaviyat are authentic on the basis of narrative language, concept and all other aspects.

(6) Ibne Khaldun has himself confessed, "It is pronounced and famous amongst the Muslims that during the end of time, a person will appear from the Ahle Bait who will consolidate the religion and spread justice..." This determines the unity of the Muslims on the doctrine of Mahdaviyat, and this itself is the best proof for the support of this belief.

The article can continue with the flow of such arguments. However, we have demonstrated the validity of this doctrine from varied aspects in the previous issues. Therefore, the claim of Ibne Khaldun of calling the traditions of Mahdaviyat weak is baseless.

Furthermore, it should be noted that Ibne Khaldun was not a traditionalist but was a historian. Thus seeking his opinion to determine the authenticity of traditions is unfitting. And a traditionalist is always preferred instead.

The famous scholar of the Ahle Sunnah, Ahmad ibne Sadeeq Shafeei, rejecting this opinion of Ibne Khaldun, wrote a book, 'Abraaz al Wahm al Maknoon min Kalaam-e-Ibne Khaldun'. This educative book comprising of 150 pages was written in Arabic and printed from Damascus in 1347 A.H. The author very proficiently proves the traditions concerning Mahdi authentic and exposes Ibne Khaldun.

O Almighty! Protect all Muslims from deviation.

The Need Of Recognising Allah's Proof In Worshipping Allah

Allah has created man for His worship. Even wisdom dictates that worshipping God is necessary for man. Obedience to Him is the best way of thanking Him for His bounties. However, wisdom on its own is unable to establish the method of worship, as this is beyond its limit. Those who relied on their wisdom in determining the methods of worship were deviated. They ended up worshipping someone other than Allah.

Allah sent the Messenger to invite the people towards the (worship of the) True God. The Apostles tried to arouse man's 'innate recognition of God through reminders. They taught man the correct way of worshipping Allah so that their worship may become a means of attaining nearness to Him.

The words and actions of Prophets (a.s.) turns the focus of the people towards Allah. The people then beseech Allah regarding all their matters. Here it is necessary to highlight a very crucial point. How do we distinguish between a true and a false Prophet/Imam? In order to discern between the true Prophet/Imam and an imposter we should observe his assertions and conduct. If his words and deeds refrain the people from disobedience and rebelliousness and invite them towards the worship of Allah, then indeed he is a true Prophet/Imam. As against this, if his assertions and conduct incite the people to disobey Allah and alienate them from His worship, then he is an imposter. Here, his falsity is established by his words itself requiring no further proof.

Hazrat Ali (a.s.) asserts, "Recognize Allah by Allah and the Messenger by his message".

(Ref. - Usul-e-Kafi, Kitabut Tawheed, Vol. 1, Pg. 75)

Indeed the sayings of the Ahle Bayt (a.s.) are enough to ascertain the veracity of the claimants.

Ziarate Jaamea fittingly illustrates the eminence of Ahle Bayt(a.s.). In this Ziarat, Ahle Bait (a.s.) have been depicted, "The practical implementation of His revelation, the pillar of His Unity, the witness over His creation, the flag of guidance for His servants, the minarets of light in His cities, the proof and guides towards His path". Allah has safeguarded them from all types of errors, granted them safety from all types of corruption, refined them of all types of impurities and purified them a thorough purifying.

Despite attaining such a lofty station and acquiring complete dominance over other creatures, the impeccable Ahle Bait (a.s.) never invited the people towards themselves. Disdain, self-esteem and ostentation were never a part of their natural disposition. Indeed their natural disposition was in stark contrast to people who are bloated with self-respect and arrogance after attaining some token standing among the people.

Ziarate Jaamea elaborates further the elevated status of the Ahle Bayt (a.s.) thus, "You (Ahle Bait a.s.) recognised the exalted station of God, honoured His splendour, praised His munificence, enacted His message, attested His covenant. You reinforced the bond of obedience to Him and exhorted (the people) towards His obedience secretly and openly. You called unto His way with wisdom and good admonitions. (You) sacrificed your lives in seeking His pleasure. (You) endured patiently hardships in His cause. You established the prayers and paid the poor dues. You enjoined what was right and forbade what was wrong. You endeavoured for Allah excessively..."

Indeed the efforts and endeavours of the Ahle Bayt (a.s.) reaped amazing results for the people and their objective was realised. The Ziarat declares further, "You manifested His summons, made evident His ordinance, firmly established His limits, unfolded the wisdom behind His laws and exemplified His precepts."

The impeccable Ahle Bayt (a.s.) aimed to execute Allah's message. This message spread to the most obscure parts of the world. Today, whatever Islam is evident in the world is largely due to the efforts of the Ahle Bayt (a.s.).

Allah's worship can be performed only in the manner specified by Him. The daily prayers are a means of worshipping Allah only if the prayers are performed in line with His edicts and decree. For instance, if a person supplements the morning obligatory prayers with two additional units, then this prayer will be rejected and cannot be a way of attaining nearness to Allah, as it was not performed in accordance to His explicit commands.

Imam Jafer Sadiq (a.s.) states, "Allah ordered the angels, Prostrate before Adam (a.s.). All prostrated except Iblis, thus manifesting his envy. Allah asked him, what has stopped you from prostrating in front of Adam?' He replied, 'I am better than him as You have created me from fire and him from clay."

Hence the first person to act on conjecture (in the matter of worship) was Iblis. He was proud and arrogant. Pride for him acted as a hurdle in Allah's obedience. Iblis requested Allah, "O my God, excuse me from prostrating before Adam, and I will worship you in such a way that neither the angels nor prophets would worship you". Allah replied, **"I don't need your worship. I desire to be worshipped in the manner I like."** Iblis remained obstinate in his refusal to prostrate: Allah then said, **"Get out from here! Surely My curse is on you till resurrection!."**

(Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 11, pg. 141)

Thus, it is evident even if a person spends his entire life prostrating in front of Allah, but his prostration is not accordance with Allah's wishes, then his worship is worthless. On the contrary it will only serve as means of separation from Allah.

The criterion for belief is not only to attest the unity of Allah (Tauheed) and reject all partners for Him, but also to seek laws of religion from the door that has been declared by Him to be 'His door'. And this 'Door of Allah' are His Messengers (a.s.) and pure Imams (a.s.) Hence, the belief in Nabuwat and Imamatus is an absolute must to consummate the belief in Tauhid.

Imam Jafer Sadiq (a.s.) says, "If someone feels that he can deem the permissible as permissible and the prohibited as prohibited, without the recognition of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.), then he has in fact not reckoned the permitted of Allah as permitted and prohibited of Allah as prohibited. If a person performs prayers, pays the poor-due, performs Hajj and Umrah without the recognition of that personality whose obedience has been made obligatory by Allah, then in reality he has not performed anything! Neither he has prayed nor fasted nor paid the poor-due nor performed Hajj and Umrah nor has taken the ritual obligatory bath nor observed purity nor considered prohibited of Allah as prohibited nor permitted of Allah as permitted. His prayers in reality are not prayers, though he bows and prostrates. His poor-due in reality is not poor-due. Nor is his Hajj accounted as Hajj. All these are deemed legitimate only if they are performed with the recognition and guidance of those personalities whose obedience has been made obligatory by Allah upon the people."

"One who has the recognition of the representative of Allah and acquires the religion and its laws from him alone, only then has he obeyed Allah."

(Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 27, pg. 176)

Indeed Imam Sadiq's tradition in this regard is most amazing. Imam (a.s.) narrates, "One worshipper from Bani Israel worshipped Allah and dried up like a toothpick. However, Allah revealed to the Prophet of that era to inform him, that Allah will not accept his worship even if his worship makes him disintegrate like the flesh of the sheep when cooked, until (of course) he gains proximity to Allah from the door from which He has ordered to approach Him".

(Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 27, pg. 176)

The above mentioned traditions make it amply clear that the recognition of the representative of Allah is an important criterion for His worship and obedience.. Another tradition from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) in this regard is worth noting. This tradition has been recorded by both Shia as well as Sunni scholars. The Prophet (s.a.w.s.) warns,

"One who dies without recognizing the Imam of his time, then his death is that of an ignorant person."

(Yanaabiul Mawaddah, vol. 39, pg. 137)

In today's era, belief in the Imamate of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is the criterion for Allah's worship. In fact, belief in the Imamate of Hazrat Vali-e-Asr (may our lives be sacrificed for him) is the foundation of the entire edifice of our belief and worship. A doubt (about his Imamate) equal to the measure of a grain will take us away from religion and render our actions void. In this context the following incident establishes the necessity and importance of recognizing the proof of Allah.

There was a family in Bani Israel. Any member of this family who worshipped Allah for forty nights would have his prayers accepted. Their entreaties were never rejected by Allah. One person from this family worshipped Allah for forty nights. Thereafter, he beseeched Allah for fulfilment of his desire. But his prayers were rejected. He presented himself before Hazrat Isa (a.s.) and briefed him about his condition. He requested Hazrat Isa (a.s.) to implore Allah on his behalf. Hazrat Isa (a.s.) performed ablution and prayed. Allah replied to him thus,

"O Isa! This servant of mine has not approached Me through the door from which I should be approached. While he is calling Me, he still has some doubts regarding you. Hence, I will not accept his entreaties even if he calls Me in such a way that his neck is broken and his fingers fall apart."

(Usul-e-Kafi, vol. 2, pg. 400, under 'The Chapter of Doubt')

One can well imagine what will be the consequence of disobeying Allah's proof, when the person from Bani Israel only doubting about him. (Allah's proof). When a person beseeches Allah by disregarding His proof, then he has rejected the means of approach appointed by Allah. That is, he has chosen another mode of approaching Allah in grave disregard of the mode endorsed by Him. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) has narrated the following Hadithe Qudsi from Jibrael (a.s.) who in turn narrated it from the Allah, the Almighty who declares, "The one who considers Me worthy of worship, considers Muhammad to be My worshipper and messenger, reckons Ali ibne Abi Taalib to be My caliph, deems the Imams in his lineage to be My proof then out of My mercy I will make him enter Paradise. On the basis of My forgiveness I will deliver him from Hell and give him a place in My neighbourhood. I will ordain My mercy and grace a must for him. I will fulfill My bounties over him. I will enumerate him among my special and sincere friends. If he calls Me, I will reply to him. If he entreats before Me, I will accept his entreaties. If he asks Me, I will grant him. If he is silent, I will initiate. If he does evil, I will give him a place in My benevolence. If he runs, I will call him towards Me. If he returns, I will accept him. If he knocks on My door, I will open My doors for him. But one who does not attest to My unity or testifies to it but does not witness the prophethood of My servant and Apostle Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) or acknowledges his prophethood but does not accede to the Caliphate of Ali ibne Abi Talib or accedes to the Caliphate of Ali but does not accept the Imamate and Wilayat of Imams in his lineage, then indeed he has rejected My bounties. He has deemed My

greatness to be of little value. He has rejected My signs and My book. If he turns towards Me," I will hide Myself from him. If he asks Me, I will not listen to him. If he hopes from Me, I will disappoint him. This is his punishment from My side and I am never unjust to My servants." The last few words underline how important is the recognition of Allah's proof in reaching Allah.

(Kamaluddin, chapter 27, hadith no. 3, pg. 258)

Without the recognition of Allah's proof, deliverance from His punishment is inconceivable. Man may do any number of good deeds on account of his knowledge, but if he does not possess the recognition of the 'the True Imam', then his deliverance is impossible.

Imam Jafer Sadiq (a.s.) declares, "Allah does not feel shy from punishing those who accept an Imam whom Allah has not appointed, though they may be from among the virtuous. And Allah shies from chastising those who believe in an Imam appointed by Him, though they may be from among the sinners."

(Usul-e-Kafi, Kitabul Hujjah, vol. 1, pg. 376)

It should be noted that shyness for Allah is not the same as it is for humans. This only connotes Allah's ways and methods. Definitely, this tradition does not mean that committing sins is excusable for those who acknowledge the "True Imam". On the contrary after gaining the recognition of the 'True Imam', one should distance oneself from sins and transgression, so that it can be established that the followers of the Rightful Imam are well aware of the criteria for his belief.

O Lord! Increase (for us) the recognition of the Imam of the era. With every passing moment illuminate our hearts with his love and grant us more opportunities for his service.