

Content

The Only Path to Global Security

Exegesis of Ziarate Ale Yasin

The Fourth Special Deputy: Ali Ibn Muhammad Samari

The Manifestation of Divine Monotheism
in the Imamate of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)..

The Protectors of Wilayat.

Praying For Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)

The Only Path to Global Security

Again, the world is paying for its deeds. Widespread global unrest, murders, killings, plunder, pillage, confusion, commotion, shortages and scarcities in the market, high prices of commodities, unreliability, straitening of sustenance, etc. are all results and consequences of human vices and misdeeds. Allah the Almighty has drawn the attention of man towards this stark reality in the Holy Quran long back

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ-

"Mischief is manifest in the land and the sea for what the people have earned."

(Surah Rome (30), Verse 41)

Habitually, we tend to blame others for our ills and absolve ourselves. The question is that if everybody is acquitted, then who is to be convicted? The fact is that all of us are jointly and severally responsible. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) cautioned,

"Each one of you is responsible."

The Holy Quran states, 'Each man has been made responsible as per his capacity'.

Rather, the duties that have been imposed on man are far beneath his ability. If the reformation and improvement is not within our ability, it is not our responsibility either. Our liability is confined to the extent of our capacity, be it a city, a village, a locality or a house. If we are completely helpless and powerless, then in the least, we have power over our own selves. We can certainly take steps towards the improvement and betterment of our own selves. Today, if we look at ourselves, instead of others, and strive to the best of our ability to improve, train and purify our inner selves, slowly, its effects will be there for all to see. Gradually, our house will become a home, our locality will be safe and secure, our village will improve and our city will change for the better. As we move from mischief towards improvement, from sins to piety, from evil to good, we will notice that insecurity has transformed into security, killings and murders into brotherhood and fraternity, loot and plunder into honesty and trustworthiness, scarcity into abundance, unreliability into dependability and straitening of sustenance into prosperity and affluence.

When the talk is about mischief, generally, the thought of sins arises and vices like lies, backbiting, slander, abandonment of the obligatory acts and perpetration of the prohibited acts, all appear in the mind. All these are the worst kinds of sins. None has the license to defy his Lord, Allah the Almighty. Divine laws are not man-made laws, where manipulating law-breakers perennially exploit the loopholes. These are divine laws where there is no scope for excuses and pretexts.

Our disobedience and defiance of Allah the Almighty is the cause of our problems and difficulties. But the greatest mischief of man and his biggest sin is the denial of the holy being appointed by Allah as His representative, His Friend and His Caliph on the earth and whose love and obedience has been made obligatory on one and all. None has been allowed to cite excuses for his disobedience, or even being indifferent to his mastership. In a Hadis-e-Qudsi, Allah the Almighty says,

"The greatest obedience is the acknowledgement of My Unity, the verification of My Prophet's Prophethood and submission before those introduced by the Prophet as his successors, and they are Ali Ibn Abi Taalib and the pure Imams from his progeny."

Another Hadis-e-Qudsi declares,

"O Muhammad! If anyone of My servants worships Me to the extent that he becomes like dust particles or dries like a tree but comes to Me refuting your mastership (Imamat), I will never forgive him. Except for the fact that he acknowledges your mastership."

In the first tradition, the acknowledgement of Ahle Bait's (a.s.) mastership has been regarded as the greatest worship, and in the second, its refutation has been deemed as unforgivable. Rather, rejection of the mastership of the Ahle Bait (a.s.) is the destruction of all good deeds performed.

In Surah Yunus (10): Verse 98, the Holy Quran mentions the incident of the people of Prophet Yunus (a.s.). Constant disobedience of Allah's Prophet by this nation had resulted in an impending divine chastisement. But when they repented sincerely from the depth of their hearts, refrained from violation of Allah's commands and became His obedient servants, divine chastisement was dispelled.

The same applies for us as well. The difficulties and calamities of this nation will come to an end only if the people forsake the pseudo-divine leaders (mystics and tantriks) and return to the door of the Ahle Bait (a.s.). The day this nation acknowledges the mastership of the Imam appointed by Allah and introduced by the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.), and will become completely obedient and submissive before him, it will undergo a noticeable transformation. In the words of the traditions,

"It will be fraught with justice and equity as it would be filled with injustice and oppression."

Today, our most important responsibility is that we believe in the infallible Imams (a.s.) appointed by Allah the Almighty and abhor their enemies. Moreover, we should also invite others towards these holy personalities, a series that begins with Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) and ends with Hujjat Ibn al-Hasan, Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.).

SHABAAN 1425 A.H.

The 15th of Shabaan is the day of Imam-e-Zamaan's (a.t.f.s.) birth. On this joyous occasion, we present our heartiest congratulations to all of you. For the sake of Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and his holy Ahle Bait (a.s.), we invoke Allah the Almighty that He includes us among his sincere helpers and supporters. Amen.

Exegesis Of Ziarate Ale Yasin

Over the last two years, we have been covering the exegesis of Ziarat-e-Ale-Yasin. We shall take this discussion forward by elucidating the remaining verses of this important Ziarat.

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ حِينَ تَرَكَّعَ وَ تَسْجُدُ 20.

Salutation upon you, while you bow and prostrate

In the preceding issue, we had already explained the significance of conveying salutations to Imam (a.t.f.s.) while he is engaged in various acts of salaah under the verse:

السلام عليك حين تصلّي

Perhaps it is due to the importance of these two acts (bowing and prostration) that they have been given a special mention. Or it could be a pointer towards Imam's (a.t.f.s.) prolonged bowing and prostration. Even Imam's (a.t.f.s.) revered grandfather - Imam Moosa b. Jafar Al-Kazim (a.s.) has prayed for Imam's (a.t.f.s.) reappearance with a mention of his bowing and prostration. Yahya b. Fazl Nawfali narrates,

"I was in Baghdad in the presence of Imam Kazim (a.s.). Imam (a.s.) had completed Salaah-e-Asr. As per his practice, he (a.s.) raised both his hands towards the sky and recited:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ.

'There is no God save You. You are the First and the Last and the Apparent and the Concealed.'

Imam (a.s.) repeated this sentence 10 times. After invoking Allah in these words, he (a.s.) supplicated,

أَسْأَلُكَ بِاسْمِكَ الْمَكْنُونِ الْمُخْزُونِ الْحَيِّ الْقَيُّومِ الَّذِي لَا يَخِيبُ مَنْ سَأَلَكَ بِهِ أَنْ تُصَلِّيَ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَ أَنْ تُعَجِّلَ فَرَجَ الْمُنتَقِمِ لَكَ مِنْ أَعْدَائِكَ وَ أَنْجِزَ لَهُ مَا وَعَدْتَهُ يَا ذَا الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ.

'I beseech You with Your Concealed and Treasured Name, o Ever Living, o Controller (of all creation), the Name with which when you are invoked, one is never disappointed. Send salutations upon Muhammad and his progeny and hasten the reappearance of the one who will avenge Your enemies. And fulfill the promise you have made to him, o Majestic, o All-Revering!'

The narrator asked Imam (a.s.), 'Who is the beneficiary of your supplication?' Imam (a.s.) replied:

ذَاكَ الْمَهْدِيُّ مِنْ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ.

'He is the Mahdi of Muhammad's progeny (a.s.).'

Thereafter, Imam Moosa Kazim (a.s.) elaborates further on Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s.) excellence:

بَابِي أَسْمَرَ اللَّوْنُ يَغْتَوِرُهُ مَعَ سُمْرَتِهِ صُفْرَةٌ مِنْ سَهَرِ اللَّيْلِ. بَابِي مَنْ لَيْلُهُ يَرْعَى النُّجُومَ سَاجِدًا وَرَاكِعًا.

"May my father be sacrificed on your wheat complexion that has long since turned . yellow due to incessant night vigils. May my father be sacrificed on the starry nights, which find you engaged constantly in bowing and prostration (of the night-vigil prayers)!"

(Beharul Anwaar vol. 86, p. 81)

In the last tradition, mention has been made of Imam's (a.t.f.s.) solemn bowing and prostration in the dead of night. Only Allah is Aware what prayers and supplications keep His best creation engaged. Indeed, what can one say about the intense bowings and prostrations that are offered with such sincerity to Allah, the Almighty. One point worth highlighting over here is that the statement

بَابِي مَنْ لَيْلُهُ يَرْعَى النُّجُومَ

: means that Allah, the Almighty, likes to see His servants alert and vigilant about performing salaah and other acts of worship at its time. It means that one should use the heavenly bounties to dutifully observe one's religious obligations. In this regard, Mulla Mohsin Faiz Kashani (r.a.) records a tradition from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.):

أَحَبُّ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يَرَاعُونَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالْأَظْلَمَةَ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ.

'The most beloved of Allah is the one who is always attentive of the Sun, the Moon and the shadows in remembering (and worshipping) Allah.'

(Khulaasatul Azkaar, p. 6)

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ حِينَ تَهَلَّلَ وَتُكَبِّرُ 21.

'Salutation upon you, when you declare that 'there is no god but Allah'and when you proclaim 'Allah is the Greatest'.

To declare that there is no god but Allah and that Allah is the greatest are among the greatest signs of Allah's Unity (توحيد). It is a declaration of the truthfulness of Islam and its being in compatibility with human nature. Once a Zoroastrian youth, who wished to convert to Islam was introduced by the people to Ayatullah Husain Tabatabai Burujardi (r.a.). The people explained to the revered Ayatullah that the youth wished to embrace Islam. The Ayatullah asked him, 'What did you find so appealing that inclined you towards Islam?' He replied, 'Islam's truthfulness and its compatibility with human nature. The Ayatullah commanded him to recite the Kalamah.

The youth says, 'I heard the Ayatullah recite the Kalemah with such awe and reverence that i never heard anything similar to it ever after that. When he was reciting 'There is no god but Allah', i could feel an awareness of Allah's Unity (توحيد). When the general deputy of Imam (a.t.f.s.) (pls vu) has such an awesome impact in his recitation of the kalemah, then what can one say about the Imam (a.t.f.s.) who has been reciting these divine glorifications since the beginning of the world, rather, even before the initiation of the creation of the world. He is none other than the one who has instructed the proximate angels with these praises.

(For details readers are requested to refer to Beharul Anwaar vol.18, p. 345, Elalush Sharaae', Oyoon-o-Akhbaar al-Reza (a.s.)).

O Allah! Grant us the grace to listen to the divine praises of Imam (a.t.f.s.) in person. We admit our ears are obsessed with prohibited things like music and are unworthy of listening to the pure and chaste recitations of Imam (a.t.f.s.), but Your Boundless Mercy makes us hopeful of being granted this priceless bounty. O Allah! Grant us the grace to recite these holy incantations.

In this regard Imam Muhammad Baqer (a.s.) narrates,

وَمَنْ كَبَّرَ بَيْنَ يَدَيِ الْإِمَامِ وَقَالَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ رِضْوَانَهُ الْأَكْبَرَ وَمَنْ يَخْتَبِرِ اللَّهَ لَهُ رِضْوَانَهُ الْأَكْبَرَ وَيَجْمَعُ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُحَمَّدٍ وَالْمُرْسَلِينَ فِي دَارِ الْجَلَالِ.

'One who declares 'there is no god but Allah' and 'Allah is the Greatest' in front of the Imam (a.t.f.s.), Allah will write for him His great satisfaction. And for one whom Allah writes His great pleasure, He will gather him along with Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.), Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and the Messengers (a.s.) in the House of Majesty.'

(Tafseer-e-Burhaan vol. 3, p. 329 under the exegesis of the **النَّاسُ بِالْفِسْطِ** verse)

Indeed, beholding the Proof (حجّت) of Allah is equal to declaring there is no god but Allah' and of Allah is to declare (ولى) glancing at the slave that He is the Greatest. This is because Imam (a.t.f.s.) is the manifestation of divine majesty and splendour and is the standard-bearer of divine unity. When will we witness that moment when : we can glance at the one who is the best in declaring the Oneness and Greatness of Allah? Indeed, when we will see you, our hearts will swoon and we will uncontrollably exclaim 'الله اكبر' and 'لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ'. Indeed, when we hear you recite الله اكبر and لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ. We will not remain ourselves and will recite

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ حِينَ تَهَلَّلُ وَتُكَبِّرُ.

We shall mention another tradition on this topic to conclude the discussion.

Fuzail relates that either Imam Baqer (a.s.) or Imam Sadeq (a.s.) urged the people,

SHABAAN 1425 A.H.

أَكْثَرُوا مِنَ التَّهْلِيلِ وَالتَّكْبِيرِ فَإِنَّهُ لَيْسَ شَيْئٌ أَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ مِنَ التَّكْبِيرِ وَالتَّهْلِيلِ.

'Recite excessively 'there is no god but Allah' and 'Allah is the Greatest'. For surely there is nothing more beloved to Allah than proclaiming 'there is no god but Allah' and 'Allah is the Greatest'.'

(Al-Kafi, vol. 2, Chapter of Tasbeeh, Tahleel and Takbeer, tradition 2)

Certainly, in today's age, Imam (a.t.f.s.) is the most beloved one of Allah and he is engrossed in reciting that which is dearest to Allah.

22. السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ حِينَ تَحْمَدُ وَتَسْتَغْفِرُ.

Salutation upon you, while you praise Allah and seek forgiveness from Him.

This salutation draws our attention to the fact that among Imam's (a.t.f.s.) regular recitations is extolling and praising Allah, the Almighty, and his oft turning to Him in seeking forgiveness and clemency. Praising Allah and seeking His Pardon is directly proportionate to one's level of recognition. As the latter increases, the former is augmented. Hence, Imam Sadeq (a.s.) informs,

'Everyday, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) used to praise Allah 366 times i.e. equal to the number of veins in his body, in this manner:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ كَثِيرًا عَلَى كُلِّ حَالٍ.

'All praise is for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, as much as possible, in every condition.'

(Al-Kafi, vol. 2, Book of Supplication, Chapter of Praise, tradition 3)

Likewise, Imam Sadeq (a.s.) narrates with regards to seeking forgiveness,

'It was the Holy Prophet's (s.a.w.a.) practice that whenever he departed from an assembly, no matter how small and insignificant, he would seek divine forgiveness at least 25 times.'

(Al-Kafi, vol. 2, Book of Supplication, Chapter of Seeking Forgiveness, tradition 2)

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) himself declared,

وَ أَنَا أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ سَبْعِينَ إِسْتِغْفَارًا.

I seek forgiveness from Allah seventy times.'

(Majmaul Bahrain vol. 3, p. 427)

Indeed seeking forgiveness becomes even more admirable considering that these personalities (a.s.) were infallible and sinless. Perhaps, the unaware and vulnerable are actually deceived by seeking forgiveness of this kind. While seeking forgiveness is the subject of a detailed discussion, we shall try to address it briefly so as to alleviate doubts from the minds of the skeptics.

Seeking forgiveness has several rationales:

1. Seeking forgiveness and clemency is one of the greatest and most laudable acts of worship.
2. The Islamic nation has been bestowed with knowledge due to this exalted worship.
3. This act of worship is one of the best forms of expressing humility and remorse in front of Allah, the Almighty.
4. Every moment, the infallibles (a.s.) are elevated by Allah in degrees. When they look back at their (lower) position, they express contrition and penitence by turning to Allah in forgiveness.
5. **حَسَنَاتُ الْأَبْرَارِ سَيِّئَاتُ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ** The virtuous actions of the righteous are like sins for the proximate servants of Allah.' Let us see how we can understand this better with the help of an example. There is a child who prays salaah and feels that with this he has worshipped Allah in a befitting manner even while his salaah may not be fundamentally correct. As opposed to this, there is a religious scholar whose faith is elevated by degrees. He prays salaah with total concentration and tranquility and with a feeling of abject humility and degradation. After completing salaah in this manner, he collapses in prostration and weeps uncontrollably and exclaims in anguish, 'O Allah! Indeed I have failed miserably in fulfilling the right of Your worship. O Allah! | implore You to forgive me for my shortcomings.'

When the imploring of an ordinary scholar does not astonish us, why should we take exception to the entreaties and beseeching of the infallible Imam (a.t.f.s.)? These immaculate souls were stationed at such high degrees of divine recognition that it is nigh impossible for our imperfect intellects to fathom them.

23. **السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ حِينَ تُصْبِحُ وَ تُمْسِي السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ فِي اللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَى وَالنَّهَارَ إِذَا تَجَلَّى**

'Salutation upon you in the morning and in the evening. Salutation upon you in the night when it darkens and in the day when it brightens up.'

In this Ziarat, we have mentioned the times of day in three places. The first time was when we recited

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ فِي آتَاءِ لَيْلِكَ وَ أَطْرَافِ نَهَارِكَ.

The second and third times are underlined in the above two sentences. What is the reason behind such time-related salutations? This poser is best answered by the personality addressed in this Ziarat. We beseech Allah to hasten the reappearance of Imam (a.t.f.s.) and to give us the grace to hear directly from him the various aspects of this and other Ziaraat and supplications. At this stage all we can say is that:

عِبَارَاتِنَا شَتَّى وَحُسْنُكَ وَاجِدٌ
وَ كُلُّ إِلَى ذَاكَ الْجَمَالِ يُشِيرُ

"Our phrases are many while your splendour is one :

And all of these indicate towards your beauty

24. السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ أَيُّهَا الْإِمَامُ الْمَأْمُونُ.

Salutation upon you - O Protected Imam! According to Arabic Grammar, the word 'مامون' is the Nominal Object of أَمَّن. Its meaning can have various connotations - protected, contented, reliable and trustworthy. It means that Imam (a.t.f.s.) is the leader who has been protected and secured by Allah and He found him so contented that He appointed him (a.t.f.s.) as a leader and guide over His Creatures. Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) is so trustworthy that the archangel Jibraeel (a.s.), the Trustworthy prides over him (a.t.f.s.).

25. السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ أَيُّهَا الْمَقْدَّمُ الْمَأْمُونُ.

Salutation upon you - O the Foremost, the Hope of Creation!

This statement can be translated in two ways. One is by making مامول as the attribute (صفت) and مقدم as the attributed one i.e. O Foremost One, who is the hope of creation. The second way to translate the statement is by reversing the roles of these two words and making مقدم as the attribute one (موصوف) , i.e. O the One who is Foremost in being sought with hope and expectation (by the creatures).

Indeed Hazrat Baqiatullah (a.t.f.s.) is the splendour of hope of all mankind. Rather, he is hope of all Prophets (a.s.), the Successors (a.s.) and most importantly he is hope of Her Majesty Fatima Zahra (s.a.). Every true and righteous Muslim awaits the reappearance of the Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) who is expected to revive the Holy Quran and its edicts:

أَيُّنَ الْمَوْمَلُ لِأَحْيَاءِ الْكِتَابِ وَ حُدُودِهِ.

'Where is the Expected One who will enliven the Book (Quran) and its statutes'?

(Dua-e-Nudbah) Yes, Imam's (a.t.f.s.) reappearance is an event that is eagerly anticipated by all righteous servants. Imam's (a.t.f.s.) illustrious ancestor, Ameerul Momineen Ali b. Abi Talib (a.s.) has also referred to Imam (a.t.f.s.) in this manner:

..... ثُمَّ يَقُومُ الْقَائِمُ الْمَأْمُورُ.....

... then the Qaim (a.t.f.s.), the Expected: One, shall reappear...'

(Al-Ghaibah of No'maani p. 275, Chapter 14, tradition 55; Beharul Anwaar vol. 52, p. 236)

Likewise Imam Jafar Sadeq (a.s.) has also reminisced over Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) with this title.

(Kamaluddin p.334, Chapter 33, tradition 4; Beharul Anwaar vol.48, p.15)

26. السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ بِجَوَامِعِ السَّلَامِ

Salutation upon you with a comprehensive salutation.

This is the last statement of Ziarate Ale Yasin. The reciter of this Ziarat has now reached a stage where he has completed reciting the Ziarat and describing Imam (a.t.f.s.) with the most perfect and choicest of attributes. He is left feeling inadequate and believes that even after recounting Imam's (a.t.f.s.) numerous virtues he has not done enough. He wants to recite further but does not know how exactly to go about this. After all, his limitations do not permit him to relate all virtues and merits of Imam (a.t.f.s.). He is constrained and does not know how to grapple with this dilemma. Instead of endlessly reciting - 'Salutation upon you...' it makes sense to recite a single salutation that can convey a sense of completeness and totality. That is why he recites, 'Salutation upon you with a comprehensive salutation'.

The word **جوامع** is the plural of **جامع**. Gramatically, **جامع** is the Nominal Subject and means 'to collect the scattered ones'. A word that, albeit small in appearance, unravels profound concepts, is referred to as L . In the context of the Ziarat it means - Whenever a salutation is recited and whatever be its kind, may it all be addressed to you O Imam (a.t.f.s.)!

After this we call upon Imam (a.t.f.s.) as a witness and testify that there is no God save Allah and Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) is His Messenger and His worshipper. Then we testify to the Imamat of each and every Imam by name and proclaim the certainty of each and every stage of Resurrection right from death to Heaven and Hell.

27. يَا مُؤَلَّيْ شَقِيٍّ مِنْ خَالِفِكُمْ وَ سَعِدٍ مَنْ أَطَاعَكُمْ فَاشْهَدْ عَلَيَّ مَا إِشْهَدْتَكِ عَلَيَّ وَ أَنَا وَلِيُّ لَكَ بَرِيءٌ مِنْ عَدُوِّكَ.

'O my Master, wretched is the one who has opposed you. Fortunate is the one who has obeyed you. You be a witness to all that I have testified by making you a witness. / come to you in friendship and to your enemy in hostility.'

The above statement enlightens the reader with some critical concepts related to Islamic belief. The reasons for being among the wretched (شقى) and fortunate (سعيد) i.e. among the inhabitants of heaven and hell, are highlighted. In this Ziarat we proclaim - O Master, indeed all those who have disobeyed you have earned the right to enter the Fire of Hell. They are wretched and despicable and their hearts are devoid of the light of guidance. On the other hand, all those who have obeyed your diktats, complied with your instructions and conformed to your standards are among the inhabitants of Paradise. In other words, being wretched and fortunate dictates who will enter Paradise and who will be relegated to : Hell. Another important point that comes out strongly from this is that man is wretched and fortunate based on his own actions. There is no scope for anyone to claim (on the Day of Resurrection) that he was made to enter Hell as he was (inherently) wretched. None can take recourse to the excuse of compulsion and hold his pre-ordained destiny responsible for his evil and corrupt actions. If one is wretched, he is so as a direct consequence of his immoral actions and if he is fortunate, then it is the outcome of his virtuous actions and of course, divine help and grace. After this we declare our friendship and love for the Imams as their Shias and in the same breath we distance ourselves from their enemies. It will not be out of context to mention over here the equal significance that Islam attaches to loving the Ahle Bait (a.s.) and detesting their enemies. No Shia worth his salt can ever be attached to the enemies of Ahle Bait (a.s.) and can never harbour any love and inclination towards them. (In this regard please refer to Surah Ahzab: 13 and its exegesis)

28. فَالْحَقُّ مَا رَضَيْتُمُوهُ وَالْبَاطِلُ مَا اسَخَطْتُمُوهُ وَالْمَعْرُوفُ مَا أَمَرْتُمْ بِهِ وَالْمُنْكَرُ مَا نَهَيْتُمْ عَنْهُ.

'Then truth is what pleases you and falsehood is what displeases you. Your command constitutes goodness and your prohibition signifies evil'.

This statement highlights that the only criterion for determining truth, falsehood, good and evil is the Ahle Bait (a.s.). All that satisfies the Ahle Bait (a.s.) is good even if it appears repulsive to us or even if our defective intellects fall short of grasping the rationale behind it. All that displeases the Ahle Bait (a.s.) is evil even if it appeals to us.

The Holy Quran declares,

”عَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ.

'... Perhaps you may dislike a thing while it is good for you, and perhaps, you may love a thing while it is evil for you...'

(Surah Baqarah (2): Verse 216)

The 19th verse of Surah Nisaa reiterates this concept.

The verse of Surah Baqarah underlines the helplessness and vulnerability of our intellects in determining on the one hand, everything that is good and beneficial for us and on the other, all that is evil and harmful for us. Our intellects at best can only inform us about the truth and falsehood of the general (like honesty, virtue, lies, deceit, etc), and cannot enlighten us about the reason and purpose behind all actions, many of which may apparently even go against the apparent intellect, like struggling in the way of Allah.

This point is well-highlighted in the incident involving Imam Jafar Sadeq (a.s.) and the man from Khorasan. Imam (a.s.) orders the man from Khorasan to leap into the blazing fire-pit. Imam's (a.s.) seemingly preposterous demand is not only at odds with man's inherent nature of self-preservation, but does not find any favour with the intellect either. What the intellect cannot fathom is Imam's (a.s.) implicit objective of revealing the reality of the situation to the Khorasani. Obviously the Khorasani refused to oblige. When the same command was made to Haroon-e-Makki, a close companion of Imam (a.s.), he instantly leaped into the blazing fire-pit without any fuss.

This is also the case with goodness and evil. If Imam (a.s.) commands us towards an act, it is good, and whatever he prohibits is evil. Now that we are aware of this reality, we are duty-bound to give due attention to all our actions and thoughts and must gauge the truthfulness and falsehood of the same in light of Imam's (a.s.) commands and prohibitions.

29. **فَنَفْسِي مُؤْمِنَةٌ بِاللَّهِ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَ بِرَسُولِهِ وَ بِأَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَ بِكُمْ يَا مَوْلَايَ أَوْلِيكُمْ وَ أَخْرُكُمْ وَ نُصْرَتِي مُعَدَّةٌ لَكُمْ وَ مَوَدَّتِي خَالِصَةٌ لَكُمْ أَمِينَ أَمِينَ.**

I have believed in Allah, the One - there is no associate for Him. And I have believed in His Messenger (S.a.w.a.) and in Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) and in the foremost from amongst you as well as those who succeeded them. My help for you is ready at all times and my love for you is sincere. O Allah! Accept our supplication! Accept our supplication!

A point worth appreciating is that the Ziarat employs the second person plural in the finishing line as opposed to the second person singular in earlier sentences. This is because at the end we are addressing all the Imams (a.s.) and our expression of sincere love and help extends to all the Imams (a.s.). It is possible that this verse is referring to the Raj'ah, when all the Imams (a.s.) shall return and avenge the Pharaohs of their times for the oppression and affliction that was heaped upon them.

O Allah! We implore You to grant us the grace to be worthy of being alongside the Imams (a.s.) when they return so that we can also contribute in relegating their enemies to the blazing fire of Hell. Aameen! Aameen!

The Fourth Special Deputy : Ali Ibn Muhammad Samari (r.a.)

Respected readers of Al Muntazar, we had commenced the series on "The Need for Special Deputies" in the 15th Shaaban Special Issue circa 1420 AH. As part of the discussion, we covered the need for deputies and have, so far, thrown light on the lives and times of the first, second and third special deputies of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.). This article is the concluding part of the same series in which we take a look at the life of the fourth special deputy of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.).

Name : Ali

Agnomen (Kuniyyat) : Abul Hasan

Father : Muhammad

The fourth deputy of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) - Abul Hasan Ali Ibn Muhammad attained this special position after Husain Ibn Rauh Naubakhti (r.a.). Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) himself ordered Abul Qasim Ibn Rauh Naubakhti (r.a.) to appoint him to this post.

The Samaris were among those Shia families that were highly respected for their services to Islam in general and the Shiite cause in particular. Hence, his appointment as the fourth deputy was undisputed. Many individuals from this family like Hasan, the son of Ismail Ibn Saleh and Muhammad, the son of Ali Ibn Ziyad were owners of large estates. They had gifted the income from their estates to the eleventh Imam - Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.).

(Pazoohash-e-Peiramoone-Zindegaani-e-Nuwwaab-e-Khaas-e-Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.), p. 304)

Apart from this, some members of Samari family were amongst the supporters of Imam Reza (a.s.). In this way, some of the companions of other Imams (a.s.) also belonged to this family. For example, Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ziyad who served as a representative of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) and Imam Hasan Al-Askari (a.s.). He also wrote a book 'Al-Awsiyaa' in which he clarified doubts on the Imamate of the twelfth Imam (a.s.). The respected Sayyed Ibn Taawoos (r.a.) has made a mention of this book on page number 427 of his highly acclaimed work, 'Mohajj al-Da'waat' (p. 428 of the new edition with Persian translation). Sayyed Ibn Taawoos (r.a.) has brought two incidents from the book 'Al-Awsiyaa' that describe the end of the Abbaside Caliphs Mo'tasim and Mo'taz, the murderers of Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.).

In the same manner, we find that Ali Ibn Ziyad wrote a letter to Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) seeking a shroud from him (a.f.t.s.). Imam (a.s.) replied,

'You will require this only at the age of 80 (i.e. in 270 AH).'

Ali Ibn Ziyad passed away in the year 270 AH and a few days prior to his demise, Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) fulfilled his request. (Kamaaluddin, vol. 2, pp. 501-2)

These few incidents are sufficient to exemplify the importance, nobility and dignity of the members of Samari family. Their illustrious position does not come as a surprise given that over the years, they were active supporters and helpers of the cause of the holy Imams (a.s.).

The Title of the Fourth Deputy

There exists a difference of opinion in the title of the fourth deputy from the aspects of pronunciation and writing. The respected Ali Ghaffarzaadeh, while providing references from learned scholars, has concluded his research on this topic as follows. He says, "His title was *سَمَرِي* or *سَيْمَرِي* or *سَمَرِي* .

In this regard, he records that in Al-Ghaibah of Shaikh Tusi (r.a.), Kamaaluddin of Shaikh Sadooq (r.a.), Al-Kharaaej of Qutbuddin al-Raawandi (r.a.) and other authentic books, the title has come with *سَمَرِي*. There is little doubt in the fact that in books of traditions and narrators, references to *سَيْمَرِي* or *سَمَرِي* are few and far between. Some of the fourth deputy's contemporaries while recording the events of his life have written his title as *سَمَرِي*, while some have recorded it as *سَمَرِي*. The title as *سَمَرِي*, while some have recorded it as *سَمَرِي*. The little *سَمَرِي* is more acceptable and appears more likely vis-à-vis other titles. This is because between Basraa and Waasit, there is a place called *سَمَر* and Aqa Buzurg-e-Tehrani (r.a.) has recorded the name with *سَمَرِي*.

(Pazoohash-e-Peiramoone-e-Zindagaani-e-Nuwwaab-e-Khaas-e-Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.), p. 305)

In short, the title of the fourth deputy was *سَمَرِي*.

The Period of the Fourth Deputy

is remembered as one in which the oppressions and tyrannies of the ruling Abbaside government were at its peak. Consequently, like his predecessors, socially he was not very active and had deliberately limited his interaction with his representatives. However, despite these constraints, he maintained contact with the Shias. In fact, he continued to enjoy the same respect and position amongst the Shias as the preceding three special deputies. It was for this reason that the Shias continued to send their religious financial taxes to him through his representatives.

The details of his date of birth and life history are few and far in books of history. Nonetheless, the relatively short span of his appointment as special deputy of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) has been reported with regular frequency in books.

Ali Ibn Muhammad - A Companion of Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.)

The venerated Shaikh Tusi (a.r.) in his book 'Al-Rejaal' (p. 432) has regarded Ali Ibn Muhammad Samari (r.a.) amongst the companions of Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.).

Apparently, Imam Hasan Al-Askari (a.s.) also corresponded with him through letters. For example, Ali Ibn Muhammad says that on one occasion, Imam Hasan Al-Askari (a.s.) wrote to him,

'A dispute will soon arise which will misguide you such that you will lose your hands and feet. Remain alert of this corruption and safeguard yourself from it.'

After three days, Bani Hashim were involved in an incident due to which they were engulfed with hardships and sufferings. I wrote to Imam Hasan Al-Askari (a.s.) enquiring whether this was the same incident which he had referred to in his letter. He replied,

'No, there is yet another incident. You protect yourself completely from it.'

After a few days, we were informed of the murder of the Abbasi caliph Mo'taz.

(Kashf al-Ghummah, vol. 3, p. 207, Pazoohash-e-Peiramoona -E-Zindagaani-e-Nuwwaab-e-Khaas -e-Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.), p. 304)

This letter shows that he was in contact with Imam Hasan Al-Askari (a.s.).

News of the Unseen - Ali Ibn Muhammad Samari (r.a.)

Like his predecessors, many incidents of nobility are reported about Ali Ibn Muhammad Samari (r.a.). These incidents served a dual purpose. Firstly, they established the strong relationship between him and Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) and secondly, the Shias who witnessed these noble actions never had the occasion to harbour any doubt about his designation as the special deputy of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.).

Shaikh Tusi (r.a.) based on reports from his teachers, narrates an incident from Husain Ibn Ali Ibn Babwayh Qummi (r.a.) - brother of Shaikh Sadooq (r.a.). He reports, 'Some members of Qum which included Imran Saffaar, Alwaiya Saffaar and Husain Ibn Ahmad Ibn Idrees (may Allah have mercy upon them) reported to me that in the year in which my father Ali Ibn Husain Ibn Musa Ibn Babwayh (the father of Shaikh Sadooq r.a.) passed away, they were present in Baghdad.

They report that Ali Ibn Muhammad Samari (r.a.) asked each one of us about the health of Ali Ibn Babwayh and we replied to him that we have received a letter from him that he is fine. Till the time of his death, he kept enquiring about Ali Ibn Babwayh and we kept replying that he

SHABAAN 1425 A.H.

was well. One day, he (Ali Ibn 'Muhammad Samari) asked us the same question and we replied that we had not received the reply to our letter from him. To this, he said, 'May Allah grant you patience on his demise!

We noted the day, month and time of his statement. After about seventeen or eighteen days, we received the news of the death of Ali Ibn Muhammad Babwayh and it was at exactly the same day and time when Abul Hasan Samari (r.a.) had paid condolence to us.

(Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 51, p. 163, tradition 8, from Al-Ghaibah of Shaikh Tusi (r.a.))

Shaikh Sadoog (r.a.) heard this incident about his father 10 years after his demise through reports from Abul Hasan Saleh Ibn Shoaib Taleqani. Taleqani reported this incident from Ahmed ibn Ibrahim Mukhallad who heard Ali Ibn. Muhammad Samari (r:a.) say,

رَحِمَ اللهُ عَلَيَّ بِنِ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ مُوسَى بْنِ يَاوِيَةَ الْقَمِي.

'May Allah have mercy upon Ali Ibn Husain Ibn Musa Ibn Babwayh Qummi.'

(Kamaaluddin, vol. 2, p. 305, tradition 23)

Tauqee - A Signed Letter from Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.)

The last tauqee that was issued during the Minor Occultation (Ghaibat-e-Sughra) bore tremendous historical import. Not only did this letter declare the conclusion of the era of special deputies and herald the onset of Major Occultation (Ghaibat-e-Kubra), but it also carried with it a profound and deep rooted message. .:

This letter was issued by Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) six days before the demise of the fourth deputy and can be found with minor variations in the books of traditions. Prior to his death, Ali bin Muhammad Samari (r.a.) was asked about his successor. In reply to this question, he placed the following letter before the people:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ يَا عَلِيُّ بْنَ مُحَمَّدٍ السَّمَرِيِّ أَعْظَمَ اللَّهُ أَجْرَ إِخْوَانِكَ فِيكَ فَإِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ مَا بَيْنَكَ وَ بَيْنَ سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ فَاجْمَعْ أَمْرَكَ وَ لَا تُوصِ إِلَى أَحَدٍ فَيَقُومَ مَقَامَكَ بَعْدَ وَفَاتِكَ فَقَدْ وَقَعَتِ الْعَيْبَةُ التَّامَّةُ فَلَا ظَهْرَ إِلَّا بَعْدَ إِذْنِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى ذِكْرُهُ وَ ذَلِكَ بَعْدَ طَوْلِ الْأَمَدِ وَ قَسْوَةِ الْقُلُوبِ وَ امْتِلَاءِ الْأَرْضِ جَوْرًا وَ سَيِّئَاتِي شَيْعَتِي مَنْ يَدَّعِي الْمَشَاهِدَةَ قَبْلَ خُرُوجِ السُّفْيَانِيِّ وَ الصَّيْحَةِ فَهُوَ كَذَّابٌ مُفْتَرٍ وَ لَا حَوْلَ وَ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ.

'O Ali ibn Muhammad Samari! May Allah increase the reward of your brothers concerning you (i.e. your demise)! Death will come to you within the next six days. So you complete your works and do not nominate any person after you. The sequence of special deputies will come to and end and the Major Occultation (غيبت كبرى) will commence with your demise. Now the reappearance will occur only with the permission of Allah, after a prolonged period and after the hearts of people are hardened. And such a period will emerge on my Shias when people will claim that they have seen me. Whoever makes such a claim before the advent of Sufyani and the heavenly voice, is a liar, an impostor. There is no strength and power save that of Allah, the High, the Great."

As stated above, when the people enquired from Ali Ibn Muhammad Samari (r.a.) about his successor, he advanced this letter unto them.

Shaikh Tabarsi (r.a.) narrates that some of these people noted down the contents of the letter and left. They returned on the sixth day and found Ali Ibn Muhammad Samari in a state of illness, grappling with death pangs. They enquired once again,

مَنْ وَصِيُّكَ مَنْ بَعْدَكَ؟

'Who is your successor?' He replied,

لِلَّهِ أَمْرٌ هُوَ بِالْغَةِ

'To Allah belongs the affair (of succession), He will fulfill it.'

These were the last words of his life.

One can refer to the following books for this Tauqee: Al Ghaybah by Shaikh Tusi (r.a.), p. 593; Kamaaluddin vol. 2, p. 615; Al Ehtejaaj, vol. 2, p. 874; Behaarul Anwaar vol. 51, p. 63, vol. 25, p. 151 and vol. 35, p. 813; E'laamul Waraa' p. 714; Yaumul Khalas (Persian tr.) vol. 1, p. 403; Ayanush Shiah (Persian tr.) p. 55; Muntakhabul Asar (Old Edn.) p. 993; Yanaabiul Mawaddah (Urdu) p.517.

Analysis of the Tauqee

A meaningful investigation of the above Tauqee indicates that Imam (a.t.f.s.) has drawn the attention of Ali Ibn Muhammad Samari (r.a.) towards various important aspects. Apart from this, this Tauqee is also a conclusive proof of the existence of the Imam (a.t.f.s.) for those who deny it and ridicule the Shias for it.

Some of these aspects are noted here:

1. The prophecy made by Imam (a.t.f.s.) about the demise of Ali Ibn Muhammad Samari (r.a.) within six days. The accuracy of the prophecy proved that the Tauqee was issued from none other than Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.).
2. Imam (a.t.f.s.) ordered Ali Ibn Muhammad Samari (r.a.) not to appoint any person as his successor. With this decree, Imam (a.t.f.s.) sealed the only door for a person to meet him directly. The decree was a pointer to the fact that in the future (during the Major Occultation), none would be able to meet Imam (a.t.f.s.) as and when he pleased. It also implies that there would be no 'designated' special deputy during the Major Occultation, thus falsifying any claimant to that position.
3. The Tauqee marked the commencement of the Major Occultation.
4. Imam (a.t.f.s.) will not reappear but with the permission of Allah.
5. It made it abundantly clear that any person who claimed to meet or to be able to meet Imam (a.t.f.s.) at will would be a liar, an impostor.

An Objection

There is a seeming contradiction in the Tauqee - on one hand we see that if a person claims to meet Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.), he is a liar. However, on the other hand, there are numerous incidents and events reported in books where not only scholars, but also ordinary people have met Imam (a.t.f.s.) and have reported such meetings.

Reply

Allamah Majlisi (r.a.) has replied to the above objection at two places in his book, Behaarul Anwaar. His reply is beneficial even to the scholars after him. We clarify his position on the above issue as follows:

1. As reported by illustrious scholars, one reason could be that the one who claims to have met Imam (a.t.f.s.) would position himself as a medium between Imam (a.t.f.s.) and the people. Since there are several incidents of people having met Imam (a.t.f.s.), it is clear that the scholars believe that the Taugee does not reject the possibility of meeting and seeing Imam (a.t.f.s.). It only rejects the appointment of a special deputy after Ali Ibn Muhammad Samari (r.a.).

2. It is also possible that the one who contends to be able to see Imam (a.t.f.s.) is a liar and an impostor if he maintains that he can get a meeting with Imam (a.t.f.s.) at will. Anyone who makes such a preposterous claim in the Major Occultation is a pretender and deserves to be snubbed.

So, meeting Imam (a.t.f.s.) is not rejected outright in the Taugee. It is just that in the Major Occultation, meeting Imam (a.t.f.s.) voluntarily is not possible. Rather imam (a.t.f.s.) will meet whosoever he wants and hence, the choice of the meeting lies with Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) and not with the people.

The Conclusion of the Chain of Special Deputies

Ayatullah Baqar Al-Sadr (r.a.), writes, "The transformation of the Minor Occultation into the Major Occultation signifies that the objectives and aims of the Minor Occultation had been adequately fulfilled. This elaborate programme protected the Shias from the difficulties arising from the occultation of Imam (a.t.f.s.) and gradually, they made a mental shift from the special deputies and accustomed themselves to referring their religious matters to the scholars. Thus the responsibility to represent the Imam (a.t.f.s.) in the Major Occultation fell upon the just, religious jurisprudents and it became obligatory for the people to follow their rulings in worldly as well as religious matters."

This viewpoint is endorsed by the famous tradition of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) which is regularly quoted,

أَمَّا الْحَوَائِثُ الْوَاقِعَةُ فَارْجِعُوا فِيهَا إِلَى رِوَاةِ حَدِيثِنَا فَإِنَّهُمْ حُجَّتِي عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنَا حُجَّةُ اللَّهِ.

'If any fresh incident occurs (in matters of religious issues), then refer them to the narrators of our traditions. For surely, they are my proofs upon you and I am Allah's Proof.'

SHABAAN 1425 A.H.

This tradition is attributed to a Tauqee issued to the second special deputy Muhammad Ibn Usman Al Amri (r.a.) and many traditionalists have quoted it as such. However, the author of 'Yaumul Khalaas', Kaamel Sulaymani has credited this tradition to the last days of the Minor Occultation and has attributed it to the fourth deputy Ali Ibn Muhammad Samari (r.a.).

(Yaumul Khalaas (Persian tr.) vol.1, p. 303)

Note

It is possible that the tradition may have been reported twice and there is nothing wrong with that. We can understand clearly that the unmistakable message in the tradition is towards the solution of issues and dilemmas that would arise during the Major Occultation.

The Conclusion of the Chain of Special Deputies

The fourth special deputy passed away on 15th Shabaan, 329 AH. His demise was accurately prophesied by Imam (a.t.f.s.) in his Tauqee wherein he informed him of his death within six days.

The period of his deputyship lasted for approximately 3 years from 326 AH to 329 AH. His age coincided with the reign of two Abbaside caliphs - Al-Raazi Billah and Muttaqi.

His grave

Shaikh Abbas Qummi (r.a.) writes in vol. 6, p. 234 of his renowned book 'Safinatul Behaar', 'The illustrious Shaikh Ali Ibn Muhammad Samari (r.a.) was the successor to Husain Ibn Rauh (r.a.) and shouldered the responsibilities of deputyship for a period of 3 years. He passed away in the year 329 A.H., marking the onset of the Major Occultation. His grave is in Baghdad near the tomb of Shaikh Kulaini (r.a.). : Shaikh Tusi (r.a.) records that his grave is in Baghdad at the Khalatji Road off the Abu Etaab river. Nowadays this area is more popular as Sooqul Kutub which is on the eastern bank of the river Dajlah.

For centuries, lovers of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) have been visiting his grave and reciting salutations:

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا عَلِيُّ بْنَ مُحَمَّدٍ أَشْهَدُ أَنَّكَ بَابُ الْمَوْلَى أَدَيْتَ عَنْهُ وَ أَدَيْتَ إِلَيْهِ.

'Peace be upon you - O Ali Ibn Muhammad. I bear witness that you are the door to our Master (Imam (a.t.f.s.)). Certainly you fulfilled the trust presented to you by Imam (a.t.f.s.) and returned the trust to him (a.t.f.s.).'

The Manifestation Of Divine Monotheism In The Imamat Of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)

A fact concealed in the belief in divine monotheism () is that none, except Allah, has the right to rule over others. Even a father does not enjoy any sovereignty over his children. When a father does not possess this right, the question of other individuals ruling over their fellow beings, commanding and prohibiting, appointing them to a position or removing them from it, does not arise. To the extent that man does not have any right over his own self. Therefore, any government or rule that comes into existence without the permission of Allah the Almighty will be unjust and inequitable, and will be considered as an interference in divine affairs. Consequently, if a person or a nation obeys such a government or ruler, he/it has obeyed an oppressor and a tyrant and instead of responding to the divine call, he/it has chosen a way that is other than that of Allah.

Therefore, all the people of the world, who believe in divine unity, should accept a government or a leadership that is from Allah and in which His satisfaction is involved. Whether this patronage and mastership is that of a father over his small children or that of an individual over his self and his wealth. Had Allah not granted this authority to a father over his children, the former would never have enjoyed the right to rule over them. Similarly, had Allah not made man the owner of his self and his wealth, he would neither have had the right to dominate his self and his wealth nor would he have had the power of decision making. Had Allah not made the possessor of unclaimed land as its automatic owner, it would be impossible for man to become its holder. Now, if he claims independent ownership, such a claim would be null and void because he has claimed ownership in Allah's dominion without His permission.

In the holy Shariat of Islam, all the ownership that has been discussed is in some way or the other connected to divine nature (fitrat) and Shariat is in total consonance with fitrat. But even this natural mastership cannot come into the fold of Shariat without the permission of Allah. Since governance and authority is the exclusive right of Allah, none except Him can decide about it. Evidently, Allah has granted some of His servants the right to rule.

From the above discussion, it can be derived that the system of Imamat and leadership in Islam is that some have been given the right of mastership and authority from the side of Allah and with His permission. Thus, the obedience of such persons is obligatory and if their commands and prohibitions are not duly complied with, it would tantamount to a direct violation of Allah's orders. Also, a basic difference between the order of Imam and that of his representative, like the jurists, is that if a jurist gives an order that is in direct contrast with a divine command, defiance of such an order would not be the disobedience of Allah's commands. For, the famous tradition

“لَا دِينَ لِمَنْ دَانَ بِطَاعَةِ الْمَخْلُوقِ فِي مَعْصِيَةِ الْخَالِقِ.”

"There is no religion for the one who obeys. the creature while disobeying the Creator."

(Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 73, p. 393)

would be applicable over here. In a divine government, there is no vertical rule, either in ascending order or descending order. Rather, in a divine government, only Allah rules Sovereign. Just as Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) stated in a reply to a query from Ibn Abbas,

'A divine government means that truth is established through it and falsehood is destroyed.'

If these two objectives are not achieved, such a government can neither be termed as divine nor is it necessary to obey it. Those at the helm of affairs will be accountable for not implementing the commands and prohibitions of Allah. Neither a ruler nor any of his subordinates has the right to disobey Allah and none without exception has the privilege to expect anything else, but divine obedience, from the people..

Another sign of this government is that nobody indulges in exaggeration or dethroning another in achieving any position or rank. If any person or group adopts any of these tactics, then certainly he is not worthy for such a position or rank.

In this system, position implies hardships and difficulties. The more sensitive the position, the greater will be the burden of responsibilities. Also, the value and worth of the position holder depends on his sincerity and good dealings. It is possible that an ordinary laborer, on account of his sincerity and diligence in his work, is dearer and more respected before Allah than the governor of a city.

Adi Ibn Haatim al-Taai told Moaviyah about the style of Ali Ibn Abi Taalib's (a.s.) governance,

لَا يَخَافُ الْقَوِيُّ ظُلْمَهُ وَلَا يَيْئَسُ الضَّعِيفُ مِنْ عَدْلِهِ.

"The strong does not fear his oppression : and the weak does not despair of his justice."

(Mawaaqef al-Shia, vol. 3, pg. 222)

That is, the strong is sure that Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) will not go out of his limits in a rage, due to some extraneous reason. Similarly, a . weak is convinced that he will definitely receive justice at his (a.s.) hands and that his right will not be usurped. Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) himself asserted,

"For me, a weak and feeble person is respected till I don't get his right back for him, and a strong and powerful man is weak and infirm till I don't take back the

rights of others from him." ... Briefly, in this system, the belief in Tauheed will be manifested with all its splendour and glory. There will be no distinctions in this society. National unity will be observed. There will be one religion, one law and one government, a demonstration of constant reformation and progress. Just as some of the commentaries have indicated while discussing about the following verse of the Holy Quran,

فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا.

"Then whoever hopes the meeting of his Lord, he should act righteously and not associate anybody in the worship of his Lord."

(Surah Kahf (18): verse 110)

It shows that 'not associating anybody in the worship of Allah' means that in the government of Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.), one should not accept any other rule. This mastership is exclusively and solely for Allah the Almighty and one should not include or associate anybody in it.

It is recorded that somebody asked Imam Sadeq (a.s.) about the aforementioned verse. He (a.s.) replied,

"The best righteous act is the recognition of the Imams (a.s.). And not associate anybody implies belief in Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) and his offspring (a.s.) as Imams and not to consider others in their caliphate and mastership. That is, not to regard outsiders as eligible for this esteemed position."

(Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 36, pg. 106)

The last block in the series of Imamatus is Hazrat Hujjat Ibn al-Hasan al-Askari (a.s.). We are living in the era of his Imamatus and are benefiting from all the bounties because of his holy existence. All the Imams (a.s.), during their lifetime, had the power to rule, to appoint and to eject a person from a particular office. The same applies for Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) and there is no partner for him in this regard. At the time of his reappearance, conditions will be created so that we derive more benefit from his holy existence. All the obstacles that were in the times of the previous Imams (a.s.), as well as during the occultation of Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.), will be done away with. All divine names like the Master, the Just, the Judge, the Sovereign, the Avenger, the Illuminator, the Subduer, the Manifest, etc. will be displayed with all their magnificence and grandeur. In other words, Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) will be the complete manifestation of these divine names as he is the caliph and ruler appointed by Allah. The position of divine caliphate will radiate and glow because of his holy presence. Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) will be the axis and focal point of all the works that are included as divine affairs.

SHABAAN 1425 A.H.

Allah the Almighty, on account of His infinite wisdom, will grant existence to all things through the medium of Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.). The basis of all of these will be divine monotheism and everything will come into existence with the permission and order of Allah.

: in traditions, the reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) has been deemed as the fulfillment of aims of unity and oneness e.g. one government, one statute, one religion and one society. Allah will help Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) conquer the entire world. In a famous tradition, Jaaber Ibn Abdullah Ansari quotes the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.),

ذَلِكَ الَّذِي يُفْتَحُ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ مَشَارِقُ الْأَرْضِ وَمَغَارِبُهَا.

"He is the one whom Allah will make to conquer the East of the earth and its West (i.e. the entire universe)."
(Kitaabul Arbae'en, pg. 224)

The day of victory will be a great day. According to some of the commentaries of the Holy Quran, this day will be the day of conquest by Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) over the entire universe. It will be the day when the unbelievers, who will bring faith on seeing its greatness, will find that their faith is of no avail to them and they will not be given any respite. There will not remain a village or a hamlet but that the voice of 'there is no god but Allah' will be heard therein.

Islam will be the world religion. The concept of ownership will come to an end. The world will be one. There will be no visa/passport requirements for traveling from one country to another. Today, people have been divided on the lines of country and state. All this will come to an end with the advent of Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.).

Faith will have effects and blessings, and belief in Allah will be manifest, as the Holy Quran states,

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ.

"Had the villagers believed and acquired piety, We would certainly have opened upon them the blessings from the sky and the earth."

(Surah A'raaf (7): verse 96)

The door of blessings from the sky and the earth will be opened. Wars, disputes, polytheistic systems, malice and envy will be converted to fraternity, brotherhood, real peace, pure heartedness and a divine monotheistic system.

SHABAAN 1425 A.H.

The proof for these is the tradition recorded by Ayyashi (r.a.) on the authority of Ibn Bukayr, who asked Imam Moosa al-Kaazem (a.s.) about the verse,

وَلَهُ اسَلَّمَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا وَ إِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ.

"And to Him submits whoever is in the heavens and the earth, wittingly or unwittingly, and unto Him they shall be made to return." ...

(Surah Aale Imraan (3): verse 83)

Imam (a.s.) replied,

"This verse was revealed concerning our Qaem. When he will reappear, he will present Islam to the unbelievers of the East and the West. So, whoever accepts Islam willingly, he will order them to do what the Muslims have been ordered like prayers, fasting, hajj, zakaat, etc. But if somebody does not accept Islam willingly, Imam will kill him. Finally, there will not remain any disbeliever on the face of the earth."

Ibn Bukayr argued, "May I be held your ransom! Creatures are too many to either believe or be killed!" Imam (a.s.) retorted,

"Verily, when Allah intends something, He makes little as more and vice-versa."

(Tafseer-e-Ayyaashi, vol. 1, pg. 182).

In another tradition, under the verse

الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَ آتَوْا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَ نَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ، وَ لِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ.

"Those, if we establish them in the earth, will perform prayers, pay the poor-rate, enjoin good and prevent evil. And with Allah is the fate of affairs."

(Surah Hajj (22): verse 41)

Imam (a.s.) explains,

"This verse is for the progeny of Muhammad. Allah will entrust the East of the Earth and its West for Imam Mahdi and his companions and through them, He will make Islam dominant. Through them, He will destroy the innovations just as fools try to eliminate the truth so that no sign of oppression remains. They will enjoin good and prevent evil. All the affairs will be in the hands of Allah."
(Tafseer-e-Qummi, vol. 2, pg. 87)

Besides these, there are numerous consecutive traditions that explain this goal and in which, the aims of natural desires are discussed. Today, the immoral and the depraved, like those at

the helm of the United Nations, are taking undue advantage of these natural cravings, raise slogans of human rights, justice and equality while rendering the masses even weaker and feebler.

The reason for this is the human nature that desires a government based on justice, equality, security and safety and in which the rights of the people are respected. This is the government and religion that shall appear in the last era with the obedience of a great leader. A leader loved by Allah's friends, Prophets and all of His righteous servants. His rule will encompass the globe. The world will march forward in respond to his call and accept his lofty ideals and aims, a call sounded from the Holy Ka'bah by the son of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) and the light of Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) and Hazrat Zahra (s.a.).

Hoping for the day of the weak and the oppressed, that is, the day of Imam-e-Zamana's (a.s.) reappearance, a day that will bring the : message of peace and security. The day when the world, filled with mischief, sins and corruption will be converted to a heaven brimming with peace, security and justice.

وآخر دعوانا ان الحمد لله رب العالمين

"And our last call is that all praise is Allah, the Lord of the Worlds."

The Protectors Of Wilayat

Criticizing the scholars has always been a pastime among the masses. Whenever there is a discussion related to them, everybody has something to say against them. Each one has a few 'interesting' anecdotes to narrate. In fact, some people are of the opinion that it is their inherent right to criticize them and consider this as a scholarly act. Perhaps they ignore the fact that in this world (with the exception of the infallible Prophets (a.s.) and the Imams (a.s.)) there are several groups of people - good as well as bad. There are traders, workers, laborers, doctors, lawyers, teachers, students, etc, and each of these has categories of good and bad individuals. In a market we find the original as well as the imitation. The solution to this problem is not criticism but to define a yardstick so as to differentiate the original from the imposter. At this point in time, we may not be able to purge all the evils from society. Therefore, in order to safeguard ourselves from deception, it is necessary that we act with foresight and devise a benchmark to distinguish good from evil. With a reliable yardstick, we can easily sidestep the perils.

When we glance at Islamic history, we find scholars emanating radiance, who held nothing back in their endeavors to serve the infallible Imams (a.s.). If it weren't for the illustrious defenders of the mastership (ولایت), most people would have deviated from the true religion.

imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) says regarding such scholars:

'If in the occultation of our Qaim (a.t.f.s.), such scholars would not have been there who would invite the people towards their Imam and guided them towards him; if they would have not protected Allah's Religion with the help of irrefutable divine proofs and rescued the weak followers of Allah's religion from Satanic plots, released them from the traps of the mischief mongers and those antagonistic to the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) (ناصبی), then surely all the people would have become apostates (مرتد) i.e. they would have deviated from the religion. But these are the people who protect the weak Shias just as a captain protects his ship. These people enjoy the greatest position in front of Allah.

(Beharul Anwaar, vol. 2, p. 6, tradition 12)

After the martyrdom of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), nay, right from the time when the people were sure that Allah had chosen the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) to succeed the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) for guidance and that there is no say for anyone else in it, people started devising different ways to deviate the Muslims from the right path. During the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), their clandestine plans remained restricted to their hearts and were not reflected in their tongues and actions. But immediately after his (s.a.w.a.) martyrdom, their schemes unfolded and were

manifested. This fact is evident if we ponder over the incident of Saqifah. The entire episode was not a twist of fate but was staged to hide the plots behind them.

During the life of the infallibles (a.s.), doubts were raised and in every era scholars were present who countered such doubts and guided the seekers of truth to the right path. Among the notable defenders of the Mastership of Ahlul Bait (a.s.) were Salman (r.a.), Abu Zar (r.a.), Ammar-e-Yaasir (r.a.), Meesam-e-Tammar (r.a.), Rushaid-e-Hujri (r.a.), Hujr b. Adi (r.a.), Zuraarah (r.a.), Momin-e-Taaq (r.a.), Hisham b. Hakam (r.a.), Fazl b. Shaazan (r.a.), to name a few.

In the year 260 AH., Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) was martyred and the minor occultation of Imam-e-Asr (a.s.) commenced. Due to the conduct of the people towards Imams (a.s.), the sun of Imamat disappeared behind the clouds of occultation. At that time, different types of people grabbed the opportunity and reared their ugly heads to fill the void left by Imam's (a.t.f.s.) concealment. They thought that as Imam (a.t.f.s.) was in occultation, their paths were clear and the Shias were defenseless, as the source of divine knowledge had been severed.

However, they erred in their contention that the occultation of Imam (a.t.f.s.) marked the end of Imam's (a.t.f.s.) contact with the Shias. Rather' the relation continued, only the mode of leadership and guidance changed. The difference in leadership and guidance is for those who believe in limits and restrictions. However, there is no difference for the one who has control over the era and for whom the whole universe is like a coin on the palm. In reality, the source of divine knowledge and recognition is continuing, it depends on the acquirer and how he benefits from

In the epoch of occultation, the world was never bereft of pure, ethical, and sincere scholars, nor will it be deprived of such personalities in the future. Ameerul Momineen - Ali b. Abi Talib (a.s.) in one of his sermons said:

'Lord, I know that knowledge will not be erased, its sources will not discontinue altogether and You will not leave Your earth without Your Proof. The Proof who lives among the people being well known, but disobeyed or he is afraid and hidden. You will never keep the earth void of Your Proof otherwise Your Signs will be invalidated and Your Friends would be mislead after you have granted them guidance.'

(from here the discussion of scholars commences)

'Where are they and how many are they? They are very few in number but are of great position before Allah, the Majestic.

SHABAAN 1425 A.H.

They follow the Holy Imams (a.s.). (They follow) the guiding leaders (Imams (a.s.)), establish in their selves the discipline of the Imams (a.s.) and practice their way of life. In such conditions, knowledge will lead them to the true faith and their souls then accept the call of the leaders of knowledge. The traditions of the Imams (a.s.) that are difficult for others, are easy for them to understand.

(Traditions concerning the virtues, mastership and obedience of Ahlul Bait (a.s.) and especially the traditions about Wilayat-e-Takveeni as well as Tashreei of Ahlul Bait (a.s.), which their opponents deny, are easily accepted by the 'scholars.)

These scholars acknowledge that following and obeying the Holy Imams (a.s.) is obligatory like following and obeying Allah. They are friends of Allah. They are in dissimulation (e) because of the fear of enemies. Their pure souls have reached a lofty position i.e. physically they are among the people but spiritually they are away from them. The scholars are hidden and silent in the oppressive government and are awaiting the divine kingdom. Allah will soon establish truth with His Words and banish falsehood. Glad tidings to them for their patience and forbearance in the period of occultation. / desire to see them in the era of reappearance. May Allah soon bring us together with them in Paradise along with their pious parents, spouses and children.

(Al-Kaafi, Kitabul Hujjah)

Please do not see the above tradition in the background of the ease and comforts of this time, but consider the era when there was attack on religious beliefs from all sides, restrictions were imposed on revealing one's creed. Government restrictions were the order of the day. Facilities were few. To search just one tradition, enormous traveling had to be undertaken. Electricity was an unthinkable concept then. To hunt books and manuscripts entailed immense struggle and perseverance. Also, the books of the bygone era were unlike the present books, which are far neater, more comprehensive and in very good print condition. The layout of old books was such that it was difficult to distinguish between paragraphs. Moreover, the pages of the books were also not numbered so searching for references and studying them was a frightful task. Keeping in mind the difficulties of the past, we are spellbound when we see the researches of the scholars, their replies to opponents and the references collected. When we see the number of books written, our intellects fail to comprehend as to when these scholars were studying, when they found the time to rest and when they got down to writing. Also, these scholars were not confined to simply studying and writing in one isolated corner of the house. Rather, they were socially active and were in the forefront in solving the difficulties of the people.

The only conclusion that comes to our mind is that all success (taufiqaat) is from Allah and the special attention of the imams (a.s.). Due to this even Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) desired to see these scholars. It is narrated about Shaikh Mufeed (r.a.)

ما كان ينام من الليل إلا هجة ثم يقوم يُصَلِّي أو يطالع أو يدرس أو يتلو القرآن.

'He slept in the night for a short period. Then he got up and prayed or he studied or took his class or taught the Quran.'

(Tahzeebul Ahkaam, Preface, pp. 32 & 33)

Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) said: Our Shia scholars are facing the attacks of Satan. They are replying to objections of Satan and his followers. They are protecting the weak Shias from the attacks of Satan. They have immobilized the enemies (ناصبي) from overpowering the Shias.' 'Indeed, whosoever from our Shias reaches this position; he is superior to the soldiers who are fighting the Romans and Turks by a million grades. This is because the scholars are protecting the religion of our friends whereas the soldiers are protecting the physical boundaries.'

(Al-Ehtejaaj of Shaikh Tabarsi (r.a.), pg. 8)

The above tradition illustrates the position and worth of the scholars who are protecting the religion of the Shias and imparting religious teachings. They are protecting the weak friends of Ahlul Bait (a.s.) from the objections and doubts of enemies.

The appearance of the Satan's attacks and his followers has changed over a period of time, but their aim is same i.e. to keep Shias away from religion. Keeping away from religion not only implies that a person becomes irreligious but it also means that even after possessing a religious background, he does not fulfill his religious duties and responsibilities nor does he have a sense of accountability towards it. The aim is to make the Shias soulless whereby even after watching the degradation and destruction in the society, he does not feel his religious responsibility to take up the cause.

Whatever religious fervour that we observe in the society is the result of the endeavours of the scholars. A lot more still needs to be done. We have to still traverse a long distance.

The Imam of the time is the medium and mercy between Allah and His creation. The bounties that we are receiving from Allah are through the medium of Imam. This reality is well-highlighted in Ziaarat-e-Jaameah in the following verses:

بِكُمْ فَتَحَ اللَّهُ وَ بِكُمْ يَخْتِمُ وَ بِكُمْ يُنَزَّلُ الْعَيْتُ وَ بِكُمْ يُمَسِكُ السَّمَاءُ أَنْ تَقَعَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ وَ بِكُمْ يُنْفَسُ الْهَمُّ.

"Allah has initiated creation through you . and through you, He will end it. Through you, He sends down rain and because of you, the sky does not fall on the earth. And because of you sorrow is relieved."

Besides this Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) has pointed towards his special attention in his Tauqee (a signed letter) to Shaikh-e-Mufeed (r.a.):

إِنَّا غَيْرُ مُهْمَلِينَ لِمُرَاعَاتِكُمْ وَلَا نَاسِينَ لِذِكْرِكُمْ وَ لَوْ لَا ذَلِكَ لَنَزَلَتْ بِكُمْ اللَّأْوَاءُ وَ اصْطَلَمَكُمُ الْأَعْدَاءُ .

"Surely we are not negligent of your protection nor are we forgetful of your remembrance. If it was so, calamities would have surrounded you and enemies. would have crushed you."

(Al-Ehtejaaj, vol. 2, pg. 323)

It is due to the grace of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) that today Shias are protected from most of the calamities. However, whatever little calamities and difficulties we encounter have some divine wisdom behind it. One of the main reasons for these calamities is that due to them we are awake, alert and active. But for the calamities, we would have become negligent.

The scholars have been blessed with the special attention of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.). On some occasions these blessings are apparent. Such apparent blessings have been recorded in books. However, many of these bounties are ignored and neglected. This is because Imam (a.t.f.s.) is not a worldly leader who chases publicity and wants to be in the limelight.

In this regard, numerous books have been written wherein the meetings of Imam (a.t.f.s.) with the scholars have been recorded. It is very clear that propagation of Shiaism, protection and safeguarding of mastership of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) is only possible because of his special attention.

However, a complete book has not yet been written on this topic. If someone takes up this topic and compiles the authentic incidents of Imam's (a.t.f.s.) favors, it will be a great effort in the way of Islam. Its reward will be manifold. It will become a path through which the attention of people will be drawn towards Imam (a.t.f.s.) and pave the way for them to take Imam (a.t.f.s.) as a medium.

We complete this article with an incident, which exemplifies the blessings of Imam (a.t.f.s.) on the Shias. When the son of Ayatullah Sayyed Abul Hasan Isfahaani (r.a.) was martyred, he decided to stay away from the leadership of the society. At that time Imam (a.t.f.s.) sent a message to him through Hujjatul Islam wal Muslimeen al Haaj Shaikh Muhammad Kufi Shustari (who had performed 40 Hajj):

قُلْ لَنْ أَرْخِصَ نَفْسَكَ وَاجْعَلْ مَجْلِسَكَ فِي الدَّهْلِيْزِ وَاقْضِ حَوَائِكَ النَّاسِ نَحْنُ نَنْصُرُكَ.

"Say to him, 'Make yourself available (to the common people). And conduct your gatherings in the drawing room (of your house). And fulfill the needs of the people. We will help you."

(Inaayat-e-Hazrat Mahdi be Ulama wa Maraaje' Taqleed, p. 110)

The last sentence of this Tauqee (توقيع) We will help you'needs to be highlighted. If someone fulfills or takes one step in fulfilling the needs of the Shias - either material or spiritual, Imam (a.t.f.s.) will definitely help him.

May Allah give us Taufeeq to do such work which becomes the cause of Imam-e-Asr's (a.t.f.s.) help and support for us!

Praying For Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)

Supplication (dua) is a subject that holds a very significant place in Islam. A lot of emphasis has been placed on embracing it. In light of traditions, we find that supplication is referred to as a 'weapon' by which man can repel calamities and difficulties and can combat all kinds of problems and tribulations. This 'weapon' provides him with tremendous strength and power and with its help a believer can pierce through all the curtains in front of him and scale such a lofty status that he becomes the cause of happiness and satisfaction of the Prophets (a.s) and Imams (a.s). Traditions of Imams (a.s) highlight numerous benefits that one obtains by supplicating. We mention a few of them over here.

1. Bonding / Relation:

Whenever man is surrounded by difficulties, he generally finds himself alone to deal with them. At such a time, he needs his Creator the most. So it is necessary that his relation with his Creator is exact and enduring and which manifests his humility and modesty before his Lord.

2. Purpose of Worship:

In times of tribulations, worries, homelessness and such other difficulties, man complains only to his Creator. But it is a human shortcoming that man, in his haste, forgets what Allah desires of him. Allah has very clearly conveyed to his Prophet (s.a.w.a) that

“وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ.”

'I have not created men and jinn except that they should worship Me

(Surah Zaariyaat (51): Verse 56)

Similarly, Ameerul Momineen (a.s) says,

الدُّعَاءُ مَخُّ الْعِبَادَةِ.

'Supplication is the essence of worship'.

But man has become so immersed and polluted in this material world that he has forgotten the sayings of the infallible Imams (a.s). He will have to face the consequences of his deeds in this world as well in the hereafter. As Ameerul Momineen (a.s) asserts,

“..... وَإِنَّ الْيَوْمَ عَمَلٌ وَلَا حِسَابَ وَغَدًا حِسَابٌ وَلَا عَمَلَ.”

... today is the day of action and not of accounting while tomorrow is the day of accounting and not of action'.

(Nahjul Balagha; Sermon no 24)

Therefore, it is imperative that we ponder over our actions and take account of ourselves before death overcomes us.

The Almighty Allah, in His infinite Grace, has shown His weak and frail servant the method of asking from Him so that he is guided to the right path. He says in the Holy Quran .

أَدْعُونِي أَجِبْ لَكُمْ.

'Call out to me and I shall answer you'

(Surah Momin (40): Verse 60)

So, it is necessary for man to know the manner of supplicating before he actually invokes. When man is aware of the right way to beseech Allah, he will most surely succeed in reaching his aim.

3. Guidance towards the Right Path:

It is essential to utilize the channel of divine representatives so that our prayers are accepted promptly. These divine representatives are the guides to the correct path. They are also referred to as 'Door of Allah' since Allah is reached (only) through them. Allah mentions about this in the Holy Quran

..... وَابْتَغُوا إِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيلَةَ.

'And seek a medium to reach Him'

(Surah Maidah (5): Verse 53)

Prayers are accepted by sending benedictions (صَلَوَات) and blessings upon these venerated personalities, as it is solely due to them that calamities and difficulties are dispelled from the universe.

4. Who are these chaste personalities?

They are the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) and his progeny about whom he (s.a.w.a) had willed .

إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمْ الثَّقَلَيْنِ، كِتَابَ اللَّهِ، وَ عَشْرَتِي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي، مَا إِنْ تَمَسَّخْتُمْ بِهِمَا لَنْ تَضَلُّوا بَعْدِي.

'Surely I am leaving among you two weighty things - the Book of Allah and my Ahle Bait (a.s.). If you fasten unto both of them, you will never go astray...'

The Ahle Bait (a.s.) are those respected personalities who are bestowed with the choicest of divine blessings. In today's era, it is Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) who is the link between the Creator and the creatures and is the access to divine pleasure. These chosen individuals are the ones

who have taught mankind the method of worship and prayer. Their speech and assertions rank only below the Words of Allah and are far superior to the words of other creatures. It is for this reason that those who hear their sayings are compelled to confess, 'Your words are light'...

5. Subjects in Supplications:

It is clearly explained in all Islamic teachings that merely asking from Allah is not sufficient. Rather, the prayers should be accompanied by actions, efforts and steadfastness. So, the one who is desirous of sustenance, should actually strive for sustenance, along with his supplications. Same is the case with the one who wants to acquire knowledge and repel ignorance. We find in our supplications various topics connected with ethics and divine laws. For instance, supplications like Jawshan-e-Kabir, Makaarem ul Akhlaq are brimming with moral teachings. It is necessary for a true believer that he should adorn himself with the characteristics mentioned in these supplications. Invocations like Abu Hamzah Sumaali highlight the fact that Allah's Mercy and Grace are dominant over His Anger and Displeasure. Dua-e-Nudbah on the other hand exemplifies how divine proofs arrived successively for man's guidance. The supplication makes a mention of the chain of guidance right from the first divine representative - Hazrat Adam (a.s) till the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) and then continues till his last successor - Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s). It also mentions the troubles inflicted upon them. Yet another supplication is Dua-e-Faraj, which states that Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) is the (rightful) successor of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) and will fill this world with justice and equality like it would have been filled with oppression and tyranny before him. After his reappearance, the slogan of

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ عَلِيُّ وَلِيُّ اللَّهِ

'There is no God except Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, Ali is Allah's slave' will get universal recognition and Allah will be worshipped in the best possible manner.

6. Etiquette of Supplication:

In his book, 'Mishkaat al-Anwaar', the great Shia scholar Allamah Majlisi (r.a) writes 'Supplication is a conversation with the One to Whom we present all our needs and wants. Thus, it is necessary that man understands the real meaning of supplication and prays to Allah from the depth of his heart. Among the things to be kept in mind while supplicating is adopting a feeling of complete humility and helplessness, which are the two traits that we embrace even when seeking our needs from mere mortals. As a result, it is even more important that we hold fast to these priceless traits while seeking our needs in Allah's Court. Secondly, when a person asks for a favour from another servant of Allah, then he (i.e. the seeker) is willing to do everything for that person (i.e. the benefactor) and is not negligent about it, so that the benefactor is satisfied and happy with him. At the same time, the person who requires the

favour will not do anything to upset the benefactor. Precisely, the same attitude is necessary while beseeching Allah. The true worshipper will always strive to perform those actions that are the means of Allah's obedience and proximity. In this regard, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) has said

الدَّاعِي بِلَا عَمَلٍ كَالرَّامِي بِلَا وَتَرٍ.

'The one who supplicates (prays) without action is like the archer who shoots without a bow

(Beharul Anwaar, vol. 93, p. 312)

One of the requisites for the early fulfillment of supplications is to have a high level of recognition. As the person rises in the levels of recognition, his supplications will be accepted that much faster. A person said to Imam Kazim (a.s) 'O son of the messenger of Allah! We pray to Allah but our prayers are not being answered' Imam (a.s) asked, 'Do you even recognise the one from whom you are asking?'

Another point to be kept in mind while supplicating is that our imploring and beseeching should be accompanied by crying and weeping. The more one expresses his helplessness and humility before Allah's Majesty, the more quickly He will respond.

The person should keep his prayers only to himself because Allah, the Honourable and Merciful likes the one who prays to Him in privacy. Imam (a.s) says

فَأَقْبِلْ بِقَلْبِكَ فَظَنَّ حَاجَتَكَ بِالنَّبَابِ.

'Pray from your heart and be sure that your prayers will be accepted' While supplicating, one should pray for other believers before he prays for himself. Hence, when a person is eager that his supplications be accepted quickly, he should first supplicate for others, which acts as a means for early acceptance of his own supplications. Imam Sadiq (a.s) says in a tradition

مَنْ قَدَّمَ أَرْبَعِينَ رَجُلًا مِنْ إِخْوَانِهِ فَدَعَا لَهُمْ، ثُمَّ دَعَا لِنَفْسِهِ، أُسْتَجِيبَ لَهُ فِيهِمْ وَ فِي نَفْسِهِ.

'The one who prays for his forty believing brothers before he prays for himself then his supplications for others and himself will (certainly) be accepted.'

(Beharul Anwaar vol. 39, p. 383)

From these traditions, it becomes clear that if we are desirous of our supplications being accepted by Allah, it is necessary that we pray for the Imam of our time - Hazrat Sahebuz Zaman (a.t.f.s). It is because certainly Imam (a.t.f.s.) has been delegated with the task of distributing divine bounties.

One factor that plays a major role in the acceptance of our supplications is sending 'salawaat' (blessings) upon the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) and his infallible progeny (a.s). Imam Sadiq (a.s) says

كَانَ الدُّعَاءُ مَحْجُوبًا حَتَّى يُصَلَّى عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ.

'The supplication remains concealed until 'salawaat' is sent on the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) and his progeny (a.s)'

(Al-Kafi vol. 2, pp. 491-493)

7. Reason for Praying for Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s):

As we are aware, Allah has promised to avenge the oppression perpetrated on His Prophets and their Successors (a.s.). Particularly, the transgressions and cruelty inflicted on Imam Husain (a.s), the doyen of martyrs. He has also pledged that finally Islam will be the universal religion and polytheism will be wiped out from the face of the earth. Justice demands that once a promise is made it must be fulfilled and this covenant assumes even more serious proportions considering that it is made by none other than Allah, the Almighty. So for an early and swift fulfillment of this divine promise, it is necessary that we pray for Imam-e-Zamana's (a.t.f.s) well-being and earliest reappearance. Imam (a.t.f.s.) has himself urged the Shias

وَ أَكْثِرُوا الدُّعَاءَ بِتَعْجِيلِ الْفَرَجِ، فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ فَرَجَكُمْ.

'Pray for the early reappearance because in it lies your deliverance.'

(Beharul Anwaar vol. 52, p. 29)

Praying for the earliest reappearance of imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s) is a very important responsibility of the Shias. Besides, there are numerous benefits that emanate when one supplicates for Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s).

8. The benefits of praying for Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s):

There are numerous benefits of praying for Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s) in this world as also in the hereafter. Here we enumerate a few of these benefits:

Rewards in this world:

(1) To pray for Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s) is in fact

a way of being attached with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a). Imam Baqir (a.s) narrates

صَلَّةُ الْأَرْحَامِ تُرَكِّي الْأَعْمَالَ وَ تَمْنَى الْأَمْوَالِ، وَ تَدْفَعُ الْبُلُوغَ، وَ تُسَيِّرُ الْحِسَابَ، وَ تُنْسِي فِي الْأَجْلِ.

SHABAAN 1425 A.H.

Joining relations (Sil-e-Rahm) purifies the actions, increases wealth, wards off calamities, makes accounting easy and postpones death.'

(Beharul Anwaar vol. 47, p. 111)

(2) Calamities are turned away and there is an increase in sustenance.

(3) Our other supplications are answered because of it (praying for Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s)).

(4) It prepares a person for meeting Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s) - whether he is ..awake or asleep.

(5) It increases bounties.

(6) Allah's Help is always at hand for him and he is able to overpower his enemies. As Allah says in the Holy Quran

إِنْ تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ.

'If you help (the cause of) Allah, He will help you'

(Surah Muhammad (42): Verse 7)

(7) The Shias will be revived at the time of Imam's (a.t.f.s.) reappearance - as is mentioned in Dua-e-Ahad.

(8) The Shias remain steadfast on religion and are secure from the corruptions of the last . . .era.

(9) The Shias are protected from divine chastisement.

(10) The one who prays regularly for the early reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s) is considered like the one who has prepared the grounds for his reappearance.

Rewards in the Hereafter

Allamah Syed Mohammed Taqi Isfahani (r.a.), in his book 'Mikyalul Makarim' has written numerous advantages of praying for Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s). We mention a few of them here under:

(1) The one who prays for the early reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s) becomes entitled to receive the intercession of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) and his progeny (a.s).'

(2) He will receive the intercession of Imam Mahdi (a.s) on the Day of Judgment.

(3) His sins will be forgiven

(4) He will receive the reward of avenging the blood of Imam Husain (a.s).

SHABAAN 1425 A.H.

- (5) The light of the Holy Quran will guide him.
 - (6) He will get the honour of being among the nearest servants of Allah.
 - (7) Seventy thousand of his sins will be forgiven
 - (8) His heart will be contented on the Day of Judgment
 - (9) He will get the reward of twenty Hajj and Umra.
 - (10) One thousand of his wishes will be fulfilled on the Day of Resurrection.
 - (11) Angels seek forgiveness for the one who prays for Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s).
 - (12) Satan becomes fearful and crestfallen
 - (13) The person gets 1/3 reward of the entire mankind
 - (14) He will get glad tidings at the time of his death, in Barzakh and in Qiyamat.
 - (15) He will get the reward of being martyred while being in the army of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s).
 - (16) The proximate angels attend gatherings in which there are supplications for Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s).
 - (17) In the light of authentic traditions, praying for Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s) during occultation is better than praying for him after his (a.s) reappearance.
- (9) Special occasions for praying for Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s):

In the same book, particular instances and times have been mentioned for praying for Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s).

- (1) Day of Arafah (9th Zilhajj)
- (2) Eid-ul-Fitr
- (3) Eid-ul-Zoha
- (4) Dahyul Arz (25th Zilqad)
- (5) Day of Aashoora
- (6) Night of 15th Shabaan
- (7) Day of 15th Shabaan

- (8) Month of Ramazan
- (9) 6th night of the month of Ramazaan
- (10) 12th night of the month of Ramazaan
- (11) 18th & 19th night of the month of Ramazaan
- (12) 21st of month of Ramazaan
- (13) After mourning for Imam Husain (a.s)
- (14) After reciting the ziarat of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s)
- (15) While crying due to the fear of Allah
- (16) On acquiring a new bounty or when some difficulty gets solved
- (17) At the time of grief and sorrow
- (18) At the time of calamities
- (19) After reciting Tasbeeh
- (20) Before praying for our family members
- (21) Day of Ghadeer
- (22) Throughout the day and night
- (23) In gatherings (majaalis) where affairs of AhlulBait (a.s) are discussed and their enemies are cursed.
- (24) Praying continuously for forty days. (25) In the month of Moharram

(10) Places that have been El greatly emphasized for praying for Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s):

Just as special occasions have been mentioned for praying for Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s), likewise, particular places have been enumerated for remembering Imam (a.t.f.s.). Some of them are mentioned below:

- (1) In Masjid-ul-Haraam.
- (2) In the planes of Arafah.

SHABAAN 1425 A.H.

(3) In Sardaab (in the house of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) in Saamarraa - Iraq).

(4) In those places that are associated with Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s). Like Masjid-eSehlah, Masjid-e-Sa'sah, Masjid-e-Jamkaran, Masjid-e-Kufa, etc.

(5) Near the holy grave of Imam Husain (a.s)

(6) Near the holy grave of Imam Reza (a.s).

(7) In Saamarra, near the holy graves of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s) and Imam Hasan Askari (a.s)

Conclusion:

Finally, we pray to Allah that He should accept our humble efforts. We are well aware that our insignificant efforts are of no value. Yet we are hopeful of His Mercy and Forgiveness and pray to Him

يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ مَسَّنَا وَ أَهْلْنَا الضُّرُّ وَ جِئْنَا بِبِضَاعَةٍ مُرْجَاةٍ فَأَوْفِ لَنَا الْكَيْلَ وَ تَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْزِي الْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ.

...O King! We and our entire family have been afflicted by distress. And we have brought with us insufficient measure. So give us full measure and be charitable to us. Surely Allah rewards those who are charitable.

(Surah Yusuf (12): Verse 88)

Pens have dried up but tears continue to flow the moment the agony of separation from the beloved is felt in the heart. So much so, that a voice echoes in the ears which says 'Be patient, he will surely come'. Yet a thought keeps crossing our minds, 'But when?' As days keep passing by while praying for Imam (a.s), the vision gets more blurred, the back feels more burdened and the hair gets whiter. Death is hastening towards us at relentless pace and soon will grip us in its clutches. In this silent and dark night, a voice emanates from the heart

مَتَى تَرَانَا وَ نَرَاكَ وَ قَدْ نَشَرْتَ لِرِوَاءِ النَّصْرِ تُرَى

When will you see us and we see you while you are seen hoisting the flag of victory.

(Dua-e-Nudbah)