

Recognition of  
Imam-e-Asr (a.s.),  
the only path  
of salvation



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ يَا وَلِيَّ الْعَصْرِ (عج) أَذْرُكُنَا

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the only path  
of salvation**

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the only path of salvation

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## Recognition of Imam-e-Asr (a.s.), the only path of salvation

The Holy Quran has described an attribute of the believers as follows:

أَمَّنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ  
وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْ رُّسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا  
سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ

**“The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers, they all believe in Allah and His angels and His books and His Messengers, We make no distinction between any of His Messengers, and they say: We hear and obey. Our Lord (we seek) your forgiveness and to You is the eventual course.”<sup>1</sup>**

One of the characteristics of the believers is that they believe in all that has been revealed by Allah.

Allah, the Almighty mentions the characteristic of Jews as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Baqarah (2), verse 285

...أَفْتُوْمُنُونَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ...

“...Do you then believe in a part of the book and disbelieve in the other?...”<sup>1</sup>

At another place in the Holy Quran, He says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ اللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيَقُولُونَ نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا

“Surely those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messenger and desire to make a distinction between Allah and His Messengers and say: We believe in some and disbelieve in others and wish to take a path in between.”<sup>2</sup>

## Religion - Absolute Submission

Religion, in the sight of Allah, is to completely submit to Him.

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ...

“Surely the (true) religion with Allah is Islam...”<sup>3</sup>

Ameerul Momineen Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) has defined Islam as follows:

الْإِسْلَامُ هُوَ التَّسْلِيمُ

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Baqarah (2), verse 85

<sup>2</sup> Surah Nisa (4), verse 150

<sup>3</sup> Surah Aal-e-Imran (3), verse 19

*“Islam is submission.”<sup>1</sup>*

Thus, a true Muslim is the one who submits completely to every order of Allah, the Almighty.

The sign of a believer is that he believes in every word of Allah but those who accept certain things and deny certain things cannot be termed as believers.

## **Aim of creation**

Allah, the Almighty has declared His worship as the purpose of creation of man.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

**“And I have not created the Jinn and the men except that they worship Me.”<sup>2</sup>**

Any action will be considered as worship only if it is performed according to the orders of Allah. When Shaitaan demanded to worship Allah of his own discretion, Allah said:

إِنَّمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ مِنْ حَيْثُ أُرِيدُ

*“I wish that I should be worshipped the way I want.”<sup>3</sup>*

The verses of the Holy Quran and the reliable traditions of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) order us to adhere and follow Ahle Bait (a.s.) because this very adherence and following is established as the only means of salvation in the hereafter.

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Kaafi, vol. 2, pg. 45

<sup>2</sup> Surah Zaariyaat (51), verse 56

<sup>3</sup> Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 60, pg. 274



## Condition for acceptance of actions

- ❖ Janab Mohammad ibn Muslim (a.r.), one of the most reliable and trusted companion of Imam Mohammad Baqir (a.s.), narrates the following tradition from Imam (a.s.):

كُلُّ مَنْ دَانَ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِعِبَادَةٍ يُجَاهِدُ فِيهَا نَفْسَهُ وَلَا إِمَامَ لَهُ  
مِنَ اللَّهِ فَسَعْيُهُ غَيْرُ مَقْبُولٍ وَهُوَ ضَالٌّ مُتَحَيِّرٌ وَاللَّهُ شَانِي الْأَعْمَالِ

*“One who wishes to follow the religion of Allah with intense worship but does not believe in the Imam appointed by Him, none of his efforts will be accepted. He is deviated, perplexed and Allah dislikes his actions.”<sup>1</sup>*

- ❖ Janab Abu Hamza Sumaali (a.r.) has narrated the following tradition from Imam Mohammad Baqir (a.s.):

إِنَّمَا يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ مَنْ يَعْرِفُ اللَّهَ فَأَمَّا مَنْ لَا يَعْرِفُ اللَّهَ فَأَمَّا يَعْبُدُهُ  
هَكَذَا ضَلَالًا قُلْتُ جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ فَمَا مَعْرِفَةُ اللَّهِ قَالَ تَصَدِّقُ اللَّهَ  
عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَتَصَدِّقُ رَسُولِهِ ص وَمُؤَالَاةِ عَلِيِّ ع وَالِإِتِّمَامِ بِهِ وَ  
بِأَمِّتِهِ الْهُدَى ع وَالْبِرَاءَةِ إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مِنْ عَدُوِّهِمْ هَكَذَا  
يُعْرِفُ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ

*“Only he worships Allah who recognises Him, and the one who does not recognise Allah worships Him like the deviated ones (those people who worship Allah without His recognition).*

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Kaafi, vol. 1, pg. 183, 374

*Abu Hamza (a.r.) asked: May I be sacrificed upon you, what is the recognition of Allah?*

*Imam (a.s.) replied: To testify Allah and His Messenger (s.a.w.a.) and to accept the Wilayat and Imamate of Ali (a.s.) and the Imams (a.s.) after him and to dissociate from their enemies. This is how Allah is recognised.”<sup>1</sup>*

From such traditions, it is quite clear that religiousness and worship is not possible without the recognition of Imam (a.s.). A person can fulfil the aim of his creation only if he possesses the recognition of his Imam (a.s.). Thus, recognition of Imam (a.s.) is necessary for worship. If there is no recognition of Imam (a.s.), there is neither religiousness nor worship. Now that the religion and worship of such person is worthless, he will not die as a Muslim because only those people die as Muslims whose religion and worship is accepted by Allah. And, Allah accepts only that religion and worship which is accompanied with the recognition of Imam (a.s.)

## **Recognition of Imam (a.s.)**

There are numerous traditions that clearly mention that no action is acceptable to Allah without the Wilayat of Ahle Bait (a.s.). Scholars of Shia and Ahle Sunnah, both, have recorded these traditions in their books. With this brief explanation, the meaning of the following tradition will be clear.

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

**مَنْ مَاتَ وَلَمْ يَعْرِفْ إِمَامَ زَمَانِهِ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً**

*“One who dies without recognising the Imam (a.s.) of*

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Kaafi, vol. 1, pg. 180

*his time, dies the death of ignorance.”<sup>1</sup>*

The same tradition has been narrated from Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) as follows:

Narrator asked Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) about this tradition that was narrated by his ancestors:

أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ لَا تَخْلُو مِنْ حُجَّةٍ لِلَّهِ عَلَى خَلْقِهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَأَنَّ  
مَنْ مَاتَ وَلَمْ يَعْرِفْ إِمَامَ زَمَانِهِ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً  
فَقَالَ إِنَّ هَذَا حَقٌّ كَمَا أَنَّ النَّهَارَ حَقٌّ  
فَقِيلَ لَهُ يَا ابْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ الْحُجَّةُ وَالْإِمَامُ بَعْدَكَ  
فَقَالَ ابْنِي مُحَمَّدٌ وَهُوَ الْإِمَامُ وَالْحُجَّةُ بَعْدِي مَنْ مَاتَ وَلَمْ  
يَعْرِفْهُ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً

*“Until the Day of Judgement, the earth cannot remain without a Hujjat of Allah upon His creation and that the one who dies without recognising the Imam of his time dies the death of ignorance.*

*Imam (a.s.) said: This tradition is as true as this day*

*He (a.s.) was asked: O the son of the Messenger of Allah! Who is the Hujjat and Imam after you?*

*Imam (a.s.) said: My son Mohammad is the Hujjat and Imam after me and the one who dies without recognising the Imam of his time, dies the death of*

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Saaqib fil Manaaqib, ibn Hamza Tusi, pg. 495

*ignorance.*<sup>1</sup>

Nowadays, some people who present themselves as intellectuals, educated and researchers, declare this tradition to be weak thereby to prove that the recognition of Imam (a.s.) of the time is not necessary for someone to die as a Muslim or a believer. In this context, they also say that the birth of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) is not proved by reliable reference and traditions. The discussions pertaining to the birth of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) has been detailed out to some extent, in a separate book.

By declaring this tradition as weak, these people are not only trying to demean the importance of recognition of Imam (a.s.) of the time but trying, in vain, to make the entire belief of Imamat of Ahle Bait (a.s.) as unnecessary.

It is so because if a tenacious tree is to be uprooted, the initial attack is not directly on its root but, first its branches are cut off and then the root is attacked. The primary objective of these people is the Imamat and the teachings of Ahle Bait (a.s.).

Pleading sincerely to Allah, His Messenger (s.a.w.a.) and Ahle Bait (a.s.), we hereby present a few important points related to this tradition.

## **Method of narrating tradition**

Traditions are narrated in two ways:

1. The exact words, as narrated by Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and Imams (a.s.), should be quoted without any change. This is

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<sup>1</sup> Kamaaluddin, pg. 409-410; Kifaayatul Asar, pg. 296; Wasaaelush Shia (Aal al-Bait), vol. 16, pg. 246; Mustadrakul Wasaael, vol. 18, pg. 187

possible only when the narrator has a strong memory and remembers each and every word.

2. The narrator does not remember the exact wordings but he remembers the concept. He expresses the concept in his own words but without any addition or reduction.

If a tradition is narrated by many narrators, then the first type of traditions are called as *“Tawaatur-e-Lafzi”* and the second type of traditions are called as *“Tawaatur-e-Ma’nawi.”*

This tradition has been narrated by numerous scholars with exact wordings while some other scholars have mentioned its conceptual meaning. On the basis of these traditions, it can be said with absolute certainty that existence of an Imam (a.s.) is necessary in every era and his recognition is the cause of salvation from the death of ignorance.

Allamah Majlisi (a.r.), in his book *“Behaarul Anwaar”* (vol. 23, chp. 4, pg. 76-95), has recorded forty traditions on this subject though some self-proclaimed scholars of modern times consider the traditions of Behaarul Anwaar as weak. Such things can be said by only those who have not studied *“Behaarul Anwaar”* because Allamah Majlisi (a.r.) has quoted all the traditions along with reference to books. Thus, to declare the traditions of *“Behaarul Anwaar”* as weak is to declare all the books of traditions as weak. In the recent edition, the reference is been mentioned along with its page number. So, if one does not have trust on *“Behaarul Anwaar”*, he should refer to the original book and then decide on the reliability of the tradition. Besides Allamah Majlisi (a.r.), many other scholars have recorded such traditions in their books.

This tradition of recognising the Imam (a.s.) of the time has been narrated from both the aspects i.e. exact words and conceptual

meaning. Moreover, such traditions have been narrated by Shia as well as Ahle Sunnah scholars. Ahle Sunnah do not believe in Imamah and therefore, narration by them is itself a proof of reliability of such traditions and it is impossible to deny them.

First, we will quote a few traditions narrated by the Shia scholars and later, we will mention the traditions narrated by the Ahle Sunnah scholars.

## Tradition of “Recognition of Imam (a.s.) of the time” and Shia scholars

1. Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) was asked about this tradition that whether this tradition, narrated from your ancestors, is correct?

أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ لَا تَخْلُو مِنْ حُجَّةِ اللَّهِ عَلَى خَلْقِهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَأَنَّ  
مَنْ مَاتَ وَلَمْ يَعْرِفْ إِمَامَ زَمَانِهِ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً  
فَقَالَ إِنَّ هَذَا حَقٌّ كَمَا أَنَّ النَّهَارَ حَقٌّ

*“Until the Day of Judgement, the earth cannot remain without a Hujjat of Allah upon His creation and that the one who dies without recognising the Imam of his time dies the death of ignorance.*

*Imam (a.s.) said: This tradition is as true as this day.”<sup>1</sup>*

2. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) narrates from Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Kamaaluddin, pg. 409-410; Kifaayatul Asar, pg. 296; Wasaaelush Shia (Aal al-Bait), vol. 16, pg. 246; Mustadrakul Wasaael, vol. 18, pg. 187

مَنْ مَاتَ لَا يَعْرِفُ إِمَامَهُ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً

*“One who dies without recognising his Imam (a.s.), dies the death of ignorance.”<sup>1</sup>*

3. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) said:

إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لَا تَصْلُحُ إِلَّا بِالْإِمَامِ وَمَنْ مَاتَ لَا يَعْرِفُ إِمَامَهُ  
مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً وَأَحْوَجُ مَا يَكُونُ أَحَدُكُمْ إِلَى مَعْرِفَتِهِ إِذَا  
بَلَغَتْ نَفْسُهُ هَذِهِ وَأَهْوَى بِيَدِهِ إِلَى صَدْرِهِ يَقُولُ لَقَدْ كُنْتُ عَلَى  
أَمْرٍ حَسَنٍ

*“The earth cannot survive without an Imam and the one who dies without recognising his Imam (a.s.), dies the death of ignorance. Recognition of Imam (a.s.) will be most needed when the soul reaches here. At that moment, Imam (a.s.) pointed out towards his chest with his blessed hand saying: Indeed, I am on a good affair.”<sup>2</sup>*

The last moments of life are the most important because it is decided at that time whether the death was on faith or ignorance. At this sensitive moment, the recognition of Imam (a.s.) will be cause of salvation from death of ignorance i.e. disbelief and deviation.

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

قَالَ أَبِي: مَنْ مَاتَ لَيْسَ لَهُ إِمَامٌ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً

<sup>1</sup> Mahaasin-e-Barqi, vol. 1, pg. 92; Ghaibat-e-No'mani, pg. 129

<sup>2</sup> Mahaasin-e-Barqi, vol. 1, pg. 154; Sawaabul Aa'maal, pg. 205

*“My father (a.s.) said: One who dies and does not have an Imam (a.s.) for him, dies the death of ignorance.”<sup>1</sup>*

5. Imam Mohammad Baqir (a.s.) said:

مَنْ مَاتَ وَلَيْسَ لَهُ إِمَامٌ فَمَوْتُهُ مِيتَةُ جَاهِلِيَّةٍ وَلَا يُعْذَرُ النَّاسُ  
حَتَّى يَعْرِفُوا إِمَامَهُمْ وَمَنْ مَاتَ وَهُوَ عَارِفٌ لِإِمَامِهِ لَا يَضُرُّهُ  
تَقَدُّمُ هَذَا الْأَمْرِ أَوْ تَأَخُّرُهُ

*“One who dies while he does not have an Imam (a.s.) for him, his death will be death of ignorance. No excuse shall be accepted from the people in this regard until they recognise their Imam (a.s.). And as for the one who dies while he has recognised his Imam (a.s.), hastening or delay in this affair does make any difference for him.”<sup>2</sup>*

6. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) said:

يَا يَحْيَىٰ بْنَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ مَنْ بَاتَ لَيْلَةً لَا يَعْرِفُ فِيهَا إِمَامَهُ مَاتَ مِيتَةَ  
جَاهِلِيَّةٍ

*“O Yahya ibn Abdillah! One who spends a night in which he does not recognise his Imam (a.s.), his death will be death of ignorance.”<sup>3</sup>*

It is clear from this tradition that to spend even one night without the recognition of Imam (a.s.) of the time, is to live a

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<sup>1</sup> Mahaasin-e-Barqi, vol. 1, pg. 155

<sup>2</sup> Mahaasin-e-Barqi, vol. 1, pg. 155

<sup>3</sup> Ghaibat-e-No'mani, pg. 127



life of ignorance.

7. Imam Ali Reza (a.s.), through his forefathers, narrates from Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) who narrates from Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as follows:

مَنْ مَاتَ وَلَيْسَ لَهُ إِمَامٌ مِنْ وُلْدِي مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً

*“One who dies and does not have, for him, an Imam (a.s.) from my progeny, dies the death of ignorance.”<sup>1</sup>*

This tradition mentions that the recognition of the Imam which will safeguard men from the death of ignorance is not the recognition of every Imam, but it is the recognition of that Imam who will be from the lineage of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)

8. Janab Sulaym bin Qais al-Helaali says: “I heard the following tradition from Janab Salmaan (a.r.), Janab Abuzar (a.r.) and Janab Miqdaad (a.r.) that Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said:

مَنْ مَاتَ وَلَيْسَ لَهُ إِمَامٌ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً

*“One who dies and does not have an Imam (a.s.) for him, dies the death of ignorance.”*

Janab Sulaym bin Qais says: “I presented this tradition to Janab Jaabir (a.r.) and Janab ibn Abbas (a.r.). Both of them said: They have said the truth and a good thing and we are witness to it as we ourselves have heard it from Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

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<sup>1</sup> Uyoon-e-Akhbaar al-Reza (a.s.), vol. 2, pg. 58; Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 23, pg. 81, h. 18; Kanzul Fawaaed of Karaajaki, pg. 151

Janab Salmaan asked Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.): “You have said that one who dies and does not have an Imam (a.s.) for him, dies the death of ignorance. Who are these Imams (a.s.)?”

He (s.a.w.a.) said:

*“O Salman! These are my inheritors. Anyone from my nation dies without having the recognition of these Imams (a.s.), his death will be of ignorance. If he is unaware of them and bears enmity with them, he is a polytheist. And, if he is unaware of them but does not bear enmity with them nor does he befriend their enemies, he is an ignorant but not a polytheist.”<sup>1</sup>*

It is also stated in this tradition that the Imam (a.s.), whose recognition is the cause of salvation from the death of ignorance, is not any Imam but the one who is from the progeny of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and his inheritor.

9. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) said:

*“One day Imam Husain (a.s.), after praising Allah, the Almighty and sending salutations upon Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), said to his companions:*

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاللَّهُ مَا خَلَقَ الْعِبَادَ إِلَّا لِيَعْرِفُوهُ فَإِذَا  
عَرَفُوهُ عَبَدُوهُ فَإِذَا عَبَدُوهُ اسْتَعْنَوْا بِعِبَادَتِهِ عَنْ عِبَادَةِ مَنْ  
سِوَاهُ فَقَالَ لَهُ رَجُلٌ يَا أَبَا أَنْتَ وَأُمِّي يَا ابْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ مَا مَعْرِفَةُ  
اللَّهِ قَالَ مَعْرِفَةُ أَهْلِ كُلِّ زَمَانٍ إِمَامَهُمُ الَّذِي يَجِبُ عَلَيْهِمْ

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<sup>1</sup> Kamaaluddin, pg. 231; Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 23, pg. 88, h. 31

*“O people! By Allah! Indeed, Allah has not created the servants but that they recognise Him. So, when they recognise Him, they will worship Him. When they will worship Him, they will become needless of worshipping others.*

*At that moment, a person asked: O the son of the Messenger of Allah, may my parents be sacrificed upon you! What is the recognition of Allah?*

*Imam (a.s.) replied: Recognition means that people of every era should recognise the Imam (a.s.) of their time whose obedience is obligatory upon them.”<sup>1</sup>*

Here, only those traditions have been mentioned in which the word ‘Recognition’ is used, otherwise there are many more traditions other than these in which the recognition of Imam (a.s.) has been mentioned as necessary in different ways.

An ordinary person, who is not familiar with Arabic language, if he ponders upon the translation of these traditions, it will become very clear for him that the recognition of Imam (a.s.) is necessary to save him from the death of ignorance and disbelief. And that too, of an Imam (a.s.) who is from the progeny of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Aren’t these traditions, in different ways, declaring the recognition of Imam (a.s.) as necessary and obligatory?

Not just Shia scholars, but the reliable scholars of Ahle Sunnah have also quoted many traditions on this subject though they may not be

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<sup>1</sup> Kanzul Fawaaed, pg. 328; Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 23, pg. 93, h. 40

“Mutawaatir” in terms of its exact wordings but they are certainly “Mutawaatir” from its conceptual aspect. Janab Mahdi Faqih Imaani has written a book on this tradition titled as “*Shanaakhte Imam Raahe Rehaai Az Marge Jaaheli*” (Recognition of Imam – path of salvation from the death of ignorance). In this book, the great scholar has done a detailed discussion on the subject quoting traditions, both, from the Shia as well as Ahle Sunnah sources. The author has quoted traditions on various topics but here we will quote only those traditions in which death without the recognition of Imam (a.s.) has been stated as death of ignorance. He has quoted these traditions from seventy reliable books. We present a few of them as follows:

(1)

مَنْ لَمْ يَعْرِفْ إِمَامَ زَمَانِهِ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً

*“One who does not recognise the Imam of his time, dies the death of ignorance.”<sup>1</sup>*

(2)

مَنْ مَاتَ بِغَيْرِ إِمَامٍ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً

*“One who dies without an Imam, dies the death of ignorance.”<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Sahih Muslim, Al-Jam-o-bain al-Sahihain, Mohammad bin Futooh Hamidi Jawaahirun Nazeed, 2:59

<sup>2</sup> Abu Dawood Ziyaali, Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal, 3:446, Majmauz Zawaa'id, 5:218

(3)

مَنْ مَاتَ لَيْلَةً وَلَيْسَ فِي عُنُقِهِ بَيْعَةَ إِمَامٍ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً

*“One who dies at night and does not have the allegiance of an Imam on him, dies the death of ignorance.”<sup>1</sup>*

(4)

مَنْ مَاتَ وَلَا إِمَامَ لَهُ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً

*“One who dies and does not have an Imam for him, dies the death of ignorance.”<sup>2</sup>*

(5)

مَنْ مَاتَ وَلَمْ يَعْرِفْ إِمَامَ زَمَانِهِ فَلَيْبَسَتْهُ إِنْ شَاءَ يَهُودِيًّا وَإِنْ شَاءَ نَصْرَانِيًّا

*“One who dies while he does not recognise the Imam of his time, he may die, if he wishes, as a Jew or if he wishes, as a Christian.”<sup>3</sup>*

(6)

مَنْ مَاتَ وَلَمْ يَعْرِفْ إِمَامَ زَمَانِهِ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً

*“One who dies while he does not recognise the Imam of*

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<sup>1</sup> Nadeem al-Fareed, Allamah Muhaqqiq Abu Ali Ahmad ibn Mohammad ibn Yaqub Sakawiya

<sup>2</sup> Al-Mughyaar wa al-Muwazanah, Allamah Mutakallim Abu Jafar Askaafi, pg. 24

<sup>3</sup> Masaaelul Khamsoon, Mohammad ibn Fakhr al-Raazi, sanad 47, pg. 384

*his time, dies the death of ignorance.”<sup>1</sup>*

(7)

مَنْ مَاتَ وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْهِ إِمَامٌ جَامِعٌ فَقَدْ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً

*“One who dies and does not have an Imam upon him, indeed his death is a death of ignorance.”<sup>2</sup>*

(8)

مَنْ مَاتَ وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْهِ إِمَامٌ فَمِيتَةٌ جَاهِلِيَّةٌ

*“One who dies and does not have an Imam upon him, then his death is a death of ignorance.”<sup>3</sup>*

(9)

مَنْ مَاتَ وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْهِ طَاعَةٌ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً

*“One who dies and does not have anyone’s obedience upon him, dies the death of ignorance.”<sup>4</sup>*

(10)

مَنْ مَاتَ وَلَيْسَ لِإِمَامٍ جَمَاعَةٌ عَلَيْهِ طَاعَةٌ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً

*“One who dies and does not have obligation of obedience of any Imam upon him, dies the death of*

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<sup>1</sup> Sahih Muslim, 8:107, Mulheqaatul Ahqaaq, 3:85

<sup>2</sup> Al-Kuna wal Asmaa, Hafiz Rawlaabi, vol. 2, pg. 3, published in Hyderabad

<sup>3</sup> Kanzul Ummaal, h. 1037

<sup>4</sup> Kanzul Ummaal, h. 14861

*ignorance.”<sup>1</sup>*

There are many more traditions on this topic. One thing that is common in all these traditions is that the death without the recognition of Imam is the death of ignorance. Every tradition mentions the death of ignorance and everyone knows that the death of ignorance means the death of disbelief, hypocrisy and deviation. The consequence of such death is destruction and eternal chastisement. It is necessary to die on Islam to achieve salvation just as Hazrat Yaqub (a.s.) took a covenant from his sons “لا تموتن الا وانتم مسلمون” (You’ll should certainly not die until you are Muslims). Therefore, in order to die as a Muslim, it is necessary to have the recognition of the Imam (a.s.) of the time.

## **Narrators of the tradition**

If these traditions had been quoted by only one or two narrators, then it could be objected due to the limited number of narrators however, these traditions have been quoted by various narrators and companions whose narrations have been considered to be reliable by the scholars. Following are the names of some of the narrators:

1. Zaid ibn Arqam
2. Aamir ibn Rabia Anzi
3. Abdullah ibn Abbas
4. Abdullah ibn Umar ibn Khattaab
5. Uwaymir ibn Malik known as Abu Dardaa

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<sup>1</sup> Majmauz Zawaaid, 5:219

6. Ma'az ibn Jabal

7. Moawiyah ibn Abi Sufiyaan

Above are the narrators from whom the Ahle Sunnah have narrated in their "Sehaah" and other books of traditions. There are other traditions on this subject in which it is stated, thus:

مَنْ فَارَقَ الْجُمَاعَةَ شِبْرًا فَمَاتَ مَيِّتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً

*"One who distances himself from the group even by one span dies the death of ignorance."<sup>1</sup>*

مَنْ خَرَجَ مِنَ الطَّاعَةِ وَفَارَقَ الْجُمَاعَةَ فَمَاتَ مَيِّتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً

*"One who leaves obedience and distances himself from the group dies the death of ignorance."<sup>2</sup>*

The common thing in both the above traditions is that the death of a person who dies without recognising the Imam (a.s.) of his time is the death of ignorance. And the death of one, who abandons obedience and the group, is also the death of ignorance.

From these traditions, it is clear that it is never possible that a person, who is devoid of the recognition of his Imam and distances himself from the group and obedience, will not die the death of ignorance. Or, the one who is attached to obedience and the group and does not have the recognition of Imam (a.s.), his death will not be the death of ignorance because in that case neither recognition of Imam (a.s.) nor affiliation with any group will be necessary. Instead, just one thing will suffice. Rather, it means that distancing

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<sup>1</sup> Sahih Bukhari, 2:13, vol. 9:590

<sup>2</sup> Sunan-e-Bayhaqi, 8:156-157



from the group, whose leader is the Imam (a.s.) appointed by Allah, will lead to death of ignorance. If a small group of people recognises Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and obeys him and on the other hand, if a large group of people who are attached to their group while being faithful and obedient towards it but does not recognise the Prophet (a.s.) of their time, will both of them remain safe from the death of ignorance or only the group that recognises Prophet (a.s.) of their time will be saved from the death of ignorance. The answer would be, certainly, the group that possessed recognition of the Prophet (a.s.) of their time while the majority of the group members, who did not possess the recognition of their Prophet (a.s.), will die the death of ignorance. On this basis, the criterion for salvation is the recognition and obedience of the representative appointed by Allah and not the group one belongs to.

Some people insist on the group as the criterion because most of them are attached to the group and are deprived of the recognition of Imam (a.s.) of the time, appointed by Allah.

### **The group and its obedience**

The Holy Quran has ordered the obedience of some people and forbidden the obedience of some others. Allah, the Almighty has commanded to obey Him, His Messenger and “Ulool Amr” (people with authority):

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ  
مِنْكُمْ...

**“O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the**

**Messenger and those in authority from among you...”<sup>1</sup>**

Allah has forbidden the obedience of following people:

...وَلَا تُطِيعُ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ...

**“...do not follow him whose heart We have made unmindful to Our remembrance and he follows his low desires...”<sup>2</sup>**

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ وَلَا تُطِيعِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ...

**“O Prophet! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah and do not comply with (the wishes of) the unbelievers and the hypocrites...”<sup>3</sup>**

فَلَا تُطِيعِ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ

**“So do not yield to the rejecters.”<sup>4</sup>**

وَلَا تُطِيعُ كُلَّ حَلَّافٍ مَّهِينٍ - هَمَّازٍ مَّشَاءٍ بِنَبِيٍّ - مَّنَّاعٍ لِّلْخَيْرِ  
مُعْتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ

**“And yield not to any mean swearer. Defamer, going about with slander. Forbidding of good, outstepping the limits, sinful.”<sup>5</sup>**

...وَلَا تُطِيعُ مِنْهُمْ أُمَّةً أَوْ كُفُورًا

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Nisa (4), verse 59

<sup>2</sup> Surah Kahf (18), verse 28

<sup>3</sup> Surah Ahzaab (33), verse 1

<sup>4</sup> Surah Qalam (68), verse 8

<sup>5</sup> Surah Qalam (68), verses 10-12

**“...and obey not from among them a sinner or an ungrateful one.”<sup>1</sup>**

Despite enjoining extensive goodness with parents, Allah, the Almighty has commanded to not obey them at two places in the Holy Quran:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا...

**“And We have enjoined on man goodness to his parents, and if they contend with you that you should associate (others) with Me, of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them...”<sup>2</sup>**

وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا،  
وَصَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا...

**“And if they (parents) contend with you that you should associate with Me what you have no knowledge of, do not obey them, and keep company with them in this world kindly...”<sup>3</sup>**

In the aforementioned verses, obedience of the following people has been forbidden:

1. Those whose hearts are oblivious of Allah’s remembrance
2. Those who follow their desires

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Dahr (76), verse 24

<sup>2</sup> Surah Ankaboot (29), verse 8

<sup>3</sup> Surah Luqmaan (31), verse 15

3. Disbelievers
4. Hypocrites
5. Liars
6. Those who make false oaths
7. Those who backbite
8. Slanderers
9. Those who call towards polytheism

From the aforementioned verses, it is clear that none of the above qualities will ever be found in “Uloom Amr”, the obedience of whom is commanded by Allah.

Now if salvation from the death of ignorance means affiliation to a group and its obedience, then is that group or the leader of the group, appointed by its members, free from all the above mentioned flaws? A person with limited knowledge of history is aware that the group and its rulers were oblivious of the remembrance of Allah and followed their own desires. Lying, backbiting and so on were their habits. Therefore, in the traditions, the group from whom distancing is prohibited is the one led by an infallible Imam (a.s.), who is free from all kinds of defects and shortcomings.

Only the one who recognises the Imam (a.s.) of his time and associates himself with the group whose leader is an Imam appointed by Allah, will be saved from the death of ignorance.

### **What is the death of ignorance?**

The “age of ignorance” refers to the period before the advent of Islam i.e. the period before the proclamation of Prophethood by Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Some of the peculiarities of that period are

as follows:

### **Beliefs**

There were no signs of Tauheed. Idolatry was common everywhere and each tribe had its own idol. They did not believe in Qiyamat (resurrection) rather considered it to be impossible. They believed that this world is everything, that one day they would die and there was no idea of any kind of resurrection whatsoever. Therefore, they did not believe in any kind of reckoning.

There was no imagination of Justice, Prophethood and Imamat. The chief of the tribe was the master of everything.

### **Culture**

There were no traces of knowledge and no system of education. Ignorance was common everywhere. Justice and human values did not exist. Family prejudices were on the rise. Women were not respected and girls were buried alive and they took pride in doing so.

### **Morality**

There was immodesty everywhere. They considered the clothes to be a Najis (impure) thing and hence, they would remove them and used to circumambulate (doing Tawaaf) naked. Fornication was common. The flags on top of the houses indicated them to be the centers of adultery and fornication. For trivial matters, they used to shed each other's blood for years together. Caravans and travellers were looted. Somehow, they used to include illegitimate children in their families. There was absolutely no law and order, alcohol was common everywhere and they ate the flesh of the dead.

## Literature

One thing that was at its peak during that period was the Arabic literature. Its eloquence was restricted only to its superficial words whereas the articles and ideas in it were ignorant. They would praise their horses, camels, wine, women, beloved and so on. There was pride and arrogance in killing and looting.

## Mention of ignorance in the Holy Quran

Such kind of ignorance has been mentioned in many verses of the Holy Quran:

### (1) First verse

...يُظَنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ...

**“...they entertained about Allah thoughts of ignorance quite unjustly...”<sup>1</sup>**

This verse is related to the battle of Ohud when people were doubting and rejecting the help and support that would be coming from Allah. Thus, one of the ways of ignorance is to doubt on the promise of Allah.

### (2) Second verse

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى...

**“And stay in your houses and do not display your finery like the displaying of the ignorance of yore...”<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Aal-e-Imran (3), verse 154

<sup>2</sup> Surah Ahzaab (33), verse 33

Thus, the revealing of beauty by women in the presence of Na-Mahram men is a sign of the age of ignorance.

### (3) Third verse

أَفَحُكْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْغُونَ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حُكْمًا لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ

**“Is it then the Judgement of (the times of) ignorance that they desire? And who is better than Allah to judge for a people who are sure?”<sup>1</sup>**

The Jews expected the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) to give rulings in their favour i.e. the ruling should not be based on truth but based on prejudice. Thus, deciding in the interest of an individual, family or a group, thereby ignoring the truth and reality, is a sign of the age of ignorance.

### (4) Fourth verse

إِذْ جَعَلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْحَمِيَّةَ الْحَمِيَّةَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةَ...

**“When those who disbelieved harboured in their hearts (feelings of disdain), the disdain of (the days) of ignorance...”<sup>2</sup>**

This refers to the time when Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was about to visit Makkah. The disbelievers then said: “What would people say if we let them come here who killed our father, our brothers and relatives? Our dignity will be lost.” The people of Makkah were not ready to embrace the truth despite their defeat. Thus, being prejudiced in accepting the truth, is ignorance.

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Maidah (5), verse 50

<sup>2</sup> Surah Fath (48), verse 26

Hazrat Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) says:

الْحُكْمُ حُكْمَانِ حُكْمُ اللَّهِ وَحُكْمُ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ فَمَنْ أَخْطَأَ حُكْمَ اللَّهِ  
حَكَمَ بِحُكْمِ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ

*“There are two types of orders. One is the order of Allah and other is the order of ignorance. So, one who turns away from the order of Allah will judge based on ignorance.”<sup>1</sup>*

One who does not possess the recognition of the Imam (a.s.) of his time, his death will be the death of ignorance. Regardless of his physical appearance, his beliefs, etiquettes and actions, in fact, will be of an ignorant person. Death of ignorance means death of disbelief.

The Holy Quran says about the death of disbelievers as follows:

### (1) First verse

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ  
وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ

**“Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, these it is on whom is the curse of Allah and the angels and men all.”<sup>2</sup>**

### (2) Second verse

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمْ مِلْءٌ

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<sup>1</sup> Wasaaelush Shia, vol. 27, pg. 22

<sup>2</sup> Surah Baqarah (2), verse 161



الرُّضْ ذَهَبًا وَلَوْ افْتَدَىٰ بِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ وَمَا لَهُمْ  
مِّن تَأْوِيلِينَ

“Surely, those who disbelieve and die while they are unbelievers, the earth full of gold shall not be accepted from one of them, though he should offer to ransom himself with it, these it is who shall have a painful chastisement, and they shall have no helpers.”<sup>1</sup>

### (3) Third verse

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ مَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ  
فَلَن يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ

“Surely those who disbelieve and turn away from Allah's way, then they die while they are unbelievers, Allah will by no means forgive them.”<sup>2</sup>

In the light of the abovementioned verses, curse of Allah, angels and men is upon those who die as disbelievers (death of ignorance is death of disbelief).

Even gold, equivalent to the weight of the earth, cannot save them from chastisement. They will not have any supporter or helper and Allah will never forgive them.

Since the consequences of not recognising the Imam (a.s.) of the time are the cause of a painful chastisement, perhaps due to this, people are trying to declare such reliable traditions as doubtful and

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Aal-e-Imran (3), verse 91

<sup>2</sup> Surah Mohammad (47), verse 34

weak so as not to face these consequences.

These people probably are either unaware or deliberately ignoring the fact that the authenticity of these traditions has been acknowledged by the scholars of both Shia and Ahle Sunnah. If these traditions were not authentic, then there was no need for their explanation and interpretation.

We further adorn our discussion with the following tradition of Ameerul Momineen (a.s.):

إِمَّا الْأَئِمَّةُ قَوَّامُ اللَّهِ عَلَى خَلْقِهِ وَعَرَفَاؤُهُ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُ  
الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ عَرَفَهُمْ وَعَرَفُوهُ وَلَا يَدْخُلُ النَّارَ إِلَّا مَنْ أَنْكَرَهُمْ وَ  
أَنْكَرُوهُ

*“Certainly, the Imams (a.s.) are the guardians of Allah upon His creatures and His authorities upon His servants. None will enter the Paradise except the one who recognises them and they know him. None will enter the Hell except the one who denies them and they deny him.”<sup>1</sup>*

This tradition, in a way, is interpreting the tradition of “One who dies without recognising the Imam (a.s.) of his time, dies the death of ignorance.”

In this tradition, Hazrat Ali (a.s.) has referred Imam (a.s.) as “Qawwaam” which means a guardian who is appointed by someone responsible to take care of the affairs of someone. From this, it is clear that there must be an Imam (a.s.) in every era, appointed by

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<sup>1</sup> Nahjul Balagha, sermon 152

Allah, who is responsible for all the affairs of the people. In absence of such a person, there will be chaos in the entire system.

Additionally, Imam Ali (a.s.) has also referred Imam (a.s.) as “Urafaa”. It is the plural of “Areef” and defined in the lexicons as follows:

- Areef – Aalim bil Shai - Qayyim bil Marqoom
- Areef – Man Ya’refo Ashaabahu
- Areef fil Madaaris – Wa Laa Yukallefo Muraaqabatil Aulaad
- Areef – Knower of all things. Responsible for affairs of the nation.
- Areef – One who knows his people.
- Areef fil Madaaris – A student who is a monitor in his class.

In this case, the meaning of Imam (a.s.) would be as follows:

- One who has knowledge of all things.
- One who is responsible for the affairs of the nation and the servants of Allah.
- One who recognises his followers.
- One who is the guardian of the affairs of the servants of Allah.

It is necessary to have an Imam (a.s.) with these attributes in every era and also, to enter paradise, it is necessary to recognise him.

**The outcome of the tradition “One who does not recognise the Imam (a.s.) of his time, dies the death of ignorance”**

1. Belief in Imamat is necessary and essential.

2. A system devoid of Imam is not the right system.
3. Existence of an Imam in every era is a must.
4. Since an Imam is required in every era, existence of multiple Imams is necessary.
5. Denying the recognition of Imam is the cause of death of ignorance.
6. An Imam is completely aware of all the affairs.
7. Imam is the guardian upon the servants of Allah from His side.
8. An Imam can be introduced through miracles or by a preceding Imam.
9. Imam is a part of "Usool-e-Deen" otherwise death without recognition of Imam would not have been the death of ignorance.
10. The purpose of the recognition of Imam is absolute obedience in all the affairs of religion.
11. In the light of this tradition, only the Isna-Ashari (believers of twelve Imams (a.s.)) are safe from the death of ignorance.
12. Bani Umayyah, Bani Abbas and all other caliphs and rulers are not the subject of this tradition because their characters are not pure from ignorant customs rather completely tainted. For this reason, leave aside the affairs of the people, they are ignorant of the basic teachings of Islam. Moreover, their actions are completely contrary to it.
13. All the rulers and caliphs during the time of Imams (a.s.) did not possess their recognition, rather they were their enemies and oppressed them. Thus, their death is the death

of ignorance.

14. None other than the Shia Isna Asharis believe in the chain of Imamah. Therefore, in order to protect themselves from the death of ignorance, they either deny the authenticity of this tradition or narrate other traditions against it or interpret these traditions arbitrarily. They are not mindful of the fact that their arbitrary interpretations can neither save them from the death of ignorance nor their ancestors. The scholars and traditionalists have acknowledged the authenticity of these traditions in their reliable books.

We sincerely plead Allah to grant us the complete recognition of the Imam (a.s.) of our time Hazrat Hujjat ibn al-Hasan al-Askari (a.s.), give us the opportunity of his obedience, may this recognition increase day by day and keep us steadfast on this recognition till the last moments of our life. Resurrect us on the Day of Judgement in a way that we recognise all the Imams (a.s.) and they recognise us too. With their intercession, all the stages of our reckoning be made easier rather, due to their generosity and benevolence, make us enter Paradise without any reckoning and bless us to serve them in Paradise.

Ameen, Ya Rabbal Aalameen



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