

**Belief
in
Imamate:

The
Ultimate
Bounty**

Name of the Book :

Belief in Imamate: The Ultimate Bounty

Compiled & Published by :

**Association of Imam Mahdi (a.s.), P.O. Box 19822,
Mumbai – 400 050.**

Month & Year of Publishing :

August 2008

Contents

Social Conditions before Reappearance.....	5
Severe Discord:.....	8
Dislike for One Another.....	9
Unlawful Earnings.....	12
The Condition of Religion.....	15
The Holy Quran.....	16
Piety.....	16
Protection of Religion in the Era of Occultation	18
Importance of Religion.....	19
Sins & Removal of Bounties.....	21
Occultation: An Examination.....	22
Recognition of Imam – Guarantee of Security in Religion.....	24
The Supplication of the Drowning One (Dua-e-Ghareeq).....	27
The Supplication for Reappearance (Dua-e-Zuhoor)..	30
Importance of Steadfastness.....	32

Proximity with Imam-e-Asr (a.s.) – Obstacles and Hindrances	36
1. Lack of Recognition of Imam Mahdi (a.s.).....	37
2.	38
First.....	39
Second	39
Third.....	40
Pursuit of Excessive Wealth.....	44
Seeking Excessive Profit.....	47
Our Sins.....	50
A Woman in Hijab.....	53
Service Till Death Separates Us	54

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ يَا وَلِيَّ الْعَصْرِ (عج) أَذْرِكُنَا

Social Conditions before Reappearance

Usually, man recognizes the value of bounties after their confiscation. The significance of health is realized during ailment. The importance of youth is understood in old age. The value of elders is comprehended after they depart from this world. Indeed, we are saved from regret only if there is timely realization of the worth of bounties.

The Almighty Allah has gifted mankind the greatest of bounties in the form of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.). The words of Zia rat-e-Jaameah elucidate this reality.

خَلَقَكُمْ اللَّهُ أَنْوَارًا فَجَعَلَكُمْ بَعْرَشِيهِ مُخْدِقِينَ حَتَّى مَنَّ عَلَيْنَا
بِكُمْ فَجَعَلَكُمْ فِي بُيُوتٍ أَدْنَى اللَّهِ أَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ

Allah has created you as (divine) lights (O Ahle Bait) and stationed you on His Throne so much so that Allah obliged us through you. Thereafter, He placed you in houses which Allah

has permitted to be elevated and that His Name be mentioned in it.

Instead of appreciating these invaluable pure lights, the ignorant persecuted them in different ways. They killed them, poisoned them and rendered them homeless. Due to the continued ingratitude on part of the people, Allah the High removed the last of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) and the final sun of the chain of guidance from the gaze of the populace. He (a.s.) was kept behind the veil of occultation. The people were now deprived of the apparent presence of the immense bounty of guidance. Imam's (a.s.) occultation was like the orphaning of a child; a kid who lost his loving father. Some people felt in this manner while others took it as a sign of freedom and independence. Shaitan seized this opportunity to misguide the people. The accursed one had dedared at the very onset,

قَالَ فِيمَا أَعْوَيْتَنِي لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ثُمَّ
لَأَنْبِتَهُمْ مِّنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ
شَمَائِلِهِمْ وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ.

He said: 'As You have deviated me, I will certainly lie in wait for them in Thy straight path.

Then I will certainly come to them from before them and from behind them, and from their right-hand side and from their left-hand side; and Thou shall not find most of them thankful.’¹

There are numerous such verses in the Holy Quran that caution us that Shaitan is the single biggest opponent of guidance. He will try deviate people from every possible angle. Most of the people would be unable to protect themselves from his machinations.

Religion, in itself, is the most valuable asset. True belief is more important than life itself. Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) narrates:

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، دِينُكُمْ دِينُكُمْ تَمَسَّكُوا بِهِ وَلَا يُدْرِيَنَّكُمْ وَلَا
يَرُدُّوَنَّكُمْ أَحَدٌ عَنْهُ لِأَنَّ السَّيِّئَةَ فِيهِ خَيْرٌ مِنَ الْحَسَنَةِ فِي غَيْرِهِ
لِأَنَّ السَّيِّئَةَ فِيهِ تُغْفَرُ وَالْحَسَنَةُ فِي غَيْرِهِ لَا تُقْبَلُ

O People! Be mindful of your religion; be alert towards your religion. Be attached to the faith. See that nothing should take you away from religion nor should anything separate you from your religion. For, evil is better while being

¹ Surah A’raaf (7): Verses 16-17

religious than good performed without religion. For, sins will be forgiven with religion while good actions will not be accepted without religion.

Staying firm on religion during this period of occultation is not easy. People have regarded the occultation of Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) as liberation. Each person considers himself as sovereign and the results are as follows:

Severe Discord:

People have a lot of differences and doubts among themselves. Imam Muhammad Baqer (a.s.) informed:

*People will face severe discord; there will be tremendous divergence in religion and conditions will be very difficult.*¹

It will be awfully difficult to remain steadfast on true beliefs as there will be doubts galore vis-à-vis religion and its teachings. Things will reach a stage that people will start doubting Hazrat Hujja t (a.t.f.s.) himself.

¹ Ghaibat-e-Nu’mani, p. 355

Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) narrates:

By Allah! Your Imam (a.s.) will be away from you for a long period, in which, you will be subjected to intense examination. It will be said about him that he (a.t.f.s.) expired or never existed or is living in a far off corner.¹

But the eyes of the believers will be tear-filled for him (a.t.f.s.).

Dislike for One Another

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) mentions:

People will be close to each other physically but their hearts will be distant.

Religion will be like a flavour on the tongue of a person.

Today, we witness the fact that people are close to each other socially and are friendly in company. However, they back-bite each other like sworn enemies. The loser in such conflicts and frictions is the respect of our society. Individual respect survives but societal reverence is lost. A major reason being that people

¹ Kamaaluddin, p. 45

appear close to one another apparently, but dislike each other in degrees.

In a tradition from Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) prophesied:

Mosques will be crowded, but hearts will be devoid of belief.

If we read such traditions carefully, we will feel the presence of Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) These traditions make us conscious that the knowledge of Ahlul Bait (a.s.) is not worldly, but truly divine. Past, present or future, all tenses are the same in their understanding. Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) informs that the mosques will be crowded with folks, but deserted in terms of guidance. They will expel the one who will try to avoid them. They will attract the one far away from them.

The Almighty Allah says:

لَا بَعَثَنَّا عَلَيَّ أَوْلِيَّكَ فَتَنَّةً أَتْرُكَ الْحَلِيمَ فِيهَا حَيْرَانٌ

I will definitely involve them in such trials that even the patient one will become perplexed.

Please pay attention to the oath of God! Our actions become the cause of Allah's wrath. Mosques are an

example of exemplary architecture. A large amount of money is spent on their decorations. These are constructed like palaces and tinted with gold, silver and precious stones. People desire to make them as beautiful as possible.

But unfortunately, there is no feeling of the presence of Allah in the hearts. Strictness for congregation exists but a far cry from the real teachings.

Allah the Almighty has made prayers obligatory for His remembrance. أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي **“Establish prayer for My Remembrance.”** Prayers are a conversation between the worshipper and the Worshipped One. So, the mosques remain filled with worshippers and the society devoid of guides.

Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) has mentioned in another tradition:

When the nation of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) begins to neglect prayers and starts following its desires, prayers will not be established in mosques due to disputes. Mosques will function as nerve-centres for rebellious. Then, people

will look like humans but their hearts will be like devils.¹

Unlawful Earnings

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) has narrated the prevalent situations of our times as such:

A time will come when faith of religious people will not be safe unless they take refuge from one mountain to another or from one tree to another. Like a fox, which searches a safe haven for its children (the believer will try to hide his faith, while the people will make him deviate from it. The safeguarding of religion will be a very difficult affair). When the situation takes such a turn, sustenance will be acquired only through Allah's displeasure. Man will be destroyed through his wife and children. If he has neither wife nor children, he will be ruined through his parents. And if he has no parents, his destruction will be because of his relatives or neighbours.

¹ Yaumul Khalaas, p. 491; Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 52, p. 259

People will mock at him for earning less due to which he will be forced to earn his living where he will be annihilated.

And why will all this happen?

All this will occur because people will neglect prayers, and follow their desires.

At that time, the elite of the society will perform Hajj for leisure; the middle class of the society will perform it for trade and the poor will do it for ostentation.¹

Let us pay attention to each and every word of this tradition. The basis of deviation is the following of selfish desires and acts of pretension. Lawful sustenance becomes insufficient for wanton desires. Parity with relatives and neighbours becomes impossible with normal incomes. Demands by wife, children, parents or at times even relatives, increase by the day. Life tends to be incomplete if we do not have something in our houses. It is a large void. Everyday pressures and taunts push a man towards unlawful income. Once he acquires a taste for the unlawful, he keeps sinking deeper into

¹ Ilzamun Nasib, p. 195

the cesspool. A time comes when sins and unlawful income become a cause for his destruction.

There are many today who perform pilgrimage to gain the prefix of 'Haji'. He wants people to address him 'Haji Saheb' instead of his name. Many are those seen more in the markets of Makkah and Madinah than in the hallowed precincts of Safaa and Marwah. When they return to their hotels or houses, the talk about Allah, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.), Islam, faith, repentance, piety and abstinence, etc. is minimal. Most of the discussions centre on the prices of goods in the market. In this situation, where earlier people returned with faith and sacrifice from these hallowed places, now they return with a heart empty of faith but full of love for the world.

It will be very difficult to protect one's religion. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) draws our attention towards this problem in these words:

A time will come for my nation when staying firm on religion will be like carrying fire in their hands.¹

When it is difficult for us to bear even a minor spark, how is it possible to bear carrying a ball of fire!! It means

¹ Ghaibat-e-No'mani, p. 173

that staying firm on religion, practicing it and refraining from deviating will be extremely difficult. This will indeed be trial by fire.

But it is also a reality that fire on one's hand for the pleasure of Allah results in the white hand *بيضاء* like that of Prophet Moosa (a.s.).

The Condition of Religion

The reason for all this is because religion is confined to mere daims. Hearts are filled with love for the material world. Since heart is the epicentre of the entire body, people do not practice religion. Hypocrisy and pretentious piety is the norm of the day. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) narrates:

A day will come when Quran will only be in its writings and Islam only in its name. People will speak about religion but will be far away from religion themselves.¹

We find such persons today who describe religion, as if they are the most pious among people. They even appear extremely holy and abstentious. But, their acts betray their real self.

¹ Muntakhabul Athar, p. 468

The Holy Quran

The condition of the Holy Quran will be such that emphasis will be laid on its calligraphy and binding. There will be gatherings for its recitation in different ways. Verses will be memorized. But its teachings will not be practiced. People will prove themselves to be an example of this tradition.

Quran itself curses some of those who recite it.

Today, the walls of houses are decorated with verses from the Holy Quran. Different and expensive banners or posters are made and hung on the walls to beautify them. But alas! The verse that is written and hung on the wall is not practiced at all; rather, it is brazenly disobeyed.

Piety

Piety will decrease. Greed will increase by the hour. Believers will keep silent as nobody will listen to them. Liars will lie and none will object. None will oppose a rebel against religion. On the contrary, he will be praised.

People of the world will change so much that idols would be installed again in the houses. Believers will be

tested severely. People will have lots of doubts in their hearts and regard themselves liberated of religious restraints.

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) prophesies:

Pious persons will be humiliated and even the well wishers of the pious will be subjected to dishonour. Knowledge will bid farewell and ignorance will prevail.

In these conditions in which we will be spending our lives, protecting our religion will be an enormously onerous task. Nevertheless, we have to bear in mind that without observing religious obligations, salvation is impossible.

In this period of occultation, is there a way for the protection of our religion???

Protection of Religion in the Era of Occultation

In the previous discussion, we talked about the current religious environment. People making fun of sacred laws and opposing religion in the guise of being devout, abound. Protectors of religion have turned into its enemies and are making every effort to destroy it. Relatives of pious believers are taunting them for being “too religious”. Acting upon religious edicts & practicing religion is becoming arduous by the day – both in and outside the house. The new generation – especially the pious and sincere youth – is keen on following religion. But the environment at home acts as a major obstacle and prevents him from being devout.

On the other hand, it is quite evident that success and good fortune in this world and the hereafter lies in being religious and obeying Allah the High. Peace of mind and serenity of the heart are found only in religion. Remaining steadfast in times of difficulties, unperturbed in the face of calamities and to maintain composure in times of oppression and tyranny – all of it is only possible if a person has religious conviction. At the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that remaining steadfast

on religion is easier said than done. Thus, the question: 'What is the way of remaining firm on religion in these turbulent times? Which is the path that will save us from the deviation of Shaitan? What is the way of safeguarding ourselves from the blemish of sins and disobedience?'

In these testing times, if Allah the Almighty has made it obligatory for us to follow religion, then surely, He has also made arrangements for its protection. If the avenues of disobedience are many, the medium of religion's protection is even stronger. Our responsibility is to search for this "strong and secure fort". Besides searching for this unconquerable fort, our next responsibility is to enter and seek sanctuary in it.

Let us search for this impregnable fort in the enlightened traditions of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) and take guidance for the protection of our religion in these gloomy and difficult times.

Importance of Religion

We have mentioned the importance of religion in our earlier discussion. Let us illuminate this discussion with a tradition from Imam Moosa al-Kazim (a.s.) concerning the importance of protecting one's religion in the era of occultation. He (a.s.) says,

فَاللَّهُ اللَّهُ فِي أَدْيَانِكُمْ لَا يُزِيلُكُمْ عَنْهَا أَحَدٌ

Be afraid of Allah! Be afraid of Allah concerning your religion. Let none take you away from it.¹

The traditions of the infallible Imams (a.s.) convey the actuality of things. If they (a.s.) draw our attention to some reality, it is bound to occur. This tradition of Imam Kazim (a.s.) cautions us that in the era of occultation, various efforts shall be made to haul the people away from religion. Many will forsake religion after being cheated & betrayed by religious people. Or at least, they will fall in some doubt concerning religion and their beliefs will become shaky. Traditions have strictly prohibited acquiring religion from just everyone and anyone. We have been ordered to check whether the person is himself religious (i.e. be wary from whom you are acquiring your religion). Verify to what extent he submits to the Book of Allah and the traditions of Ahlul Bait (a.s.). How much he narrates from them (a.s.) or is indulging in whimsical interpretation of religion. Only if he narrates from the Holy Quran and the traditions of Ahlul Bait (a.s.), should we accept what he says. If he mentions things from his own side, we must verify it in the light of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the

¹ Al-Kaafi, vol. 1, p. 336, H. 2

Ahlul Bait (a.s.). If they are in accordance with their traditions, we should accept his views, not otherwise.

Sins & Removal of Bounties

Religion is the greatest bounty bestowed by Allah the High on mankind. The religion given to us by Ahlul Bait (a.s.) overshadows all other worldly bounties. But Allah has a principle. He does not seize or confiscate a bounty unless the people devalue it and change it due to their sins. Thus the main cause of the removal of bounties is our sins. Imam Baqir (a.s.) says,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَضَىٰ قَضَاءً حَتْمًا لَا يُعْمَرُ عَلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ بِنِعْمَةٍ فَيَسْلُبُهَا
إِيَّاهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ يُحْدِثَ الْعَبْدُ مَا يَسْتَوْجِبُ بِذَلِكَ الدَّنْبَ سَلْبَ
تِلْكَ النِّعْمَةِ وَ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ
يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ

It is a definite decree of Allah that He will not seize a bounty till a person commits a sin that becomes the cause of the removal of that bounty. And this is the saying of Allah,

Allah does not change the condition of a nation till they change it for themselves.

If in today's world, we find that we are losing the bounty of religion, or that the role of religion is decreasing in our lives, it goes without saying that the cause is our sins. As misdeeds and transgressions increase, the intensity of religion in one's life decreases. Finally, a time comes when our entire existence is engulfed by sins but we do not realize it. Religion no longer remains a part of our lives. Our sins cause the descent of Allah's wrath. Imam Baqir (a.s.) says,

إِذَا غَضِبَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَلَىٰ خَلْقِهِ نَحَانَا عَنْ جَوَارِهِمْ

When Allah is angry with His creatures, He removes us (Ahlul Bait (a.s.)) from their vicinity.¹

Hence, one of the causes of occultation of Hazrat Hujjat Ibn Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) is Allah's wrath upon us, which is because of our sins. If we desire the return of Allah's bounties, we must renounce Allah's disobedience and seek repentance for our past acts of defiance.

Occultation: An Examination

Due to our negligent and defiant behaviour, Allah has kept our Imam (a.s.) away from us and afflicted us with

¹ Al-Kaafi, vol. 1, p. 343, H. 31

severe hardships & difficulties. Occultation is neither freedom nor enjoyment. Rather, it is an era of difficulties and examination.

Imam Moosa al-Kazim (a.s.) says,

إِنَّهُ لَا بُدَّ لِصَاحِبِ هَذَا الْأَمْرِ مِنْ غَيْبَةٍ يَرْجِعُ عَنْ هَذَا الْأَمْرِ
مَنْ كَانَ يَقُولُ بِهِ إِنَّهَا هِيَ حِمَّةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ إِمْتَحَنَ بِهَا
خَلْقَهُ

Occultation is inevitable for the Master of this Affair. Most people who believe in him will turn away from this affair. Occultation is an examination from Allah – Mighty and Majestic be He – through which Allah will test His creatures.

There is no doubt that the occultation of Imam (a.s.) is a severe test. It remains to be seen who is successful in this trial and who loses his religion.

Then, what should we do in order to keep our religion safe and achieve success in these chaotic times?

Recognition of Imam – Guarantee of Security in Religion

Allah the Almighty has bestowed His best and most complete salutations upon the immaculate Ahlul Bait (a.s.) and has granted them the highest status on the Day of Judgment. May Allah also grant us the privilege of sending our sincere salutations to these revered personalities (a.s.)! The holy Ahlul Bait (a.s.) have guided us at every step of our lives. They have taught us the means of protecting the religion during occultation even before its commencement. Imam Sadiq (a.s.) says,

There is occultation for this youth (Imam Asr (a.s.)) before his reappearance. Allah will examine the Shias in that period when the followers of falsehood shall be engulfed in doubts & uncertainties.

Zurarah Ibn A'yon, who was present there, asked Imam (a.s.), 'If I reach that period, what is my responsibility?' Imam (a.s.) replied,

'Recite the following supplication:

اللَّهُمَّ عَرِّفْنِي نَفْسَكَ فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ لَمْ تُعَرِّفْنِي نَفْسَكَ لَمْ
أَعْرِفْ نَبِيَّكَ

اللَّهُمَّ عَرِّفْنِي نَبِيَّكَ فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ لَمْ تُعَرِّفْنِي نَبِيَّكَ لَمْ أَعْرِفْ
حُجَّتَكَ

اللَّهُمَّ عَرِّفْنِي حُجَّتَكَ فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ لَمْ تُعَرِّفْنِي حُجَّتَكَ ضَلَلْتُ
عَنْ دِينِي

O Allah! Grant me Your recognition! If You don't grant me Your recognition, I will not be able to recognise Your Apostle.

O Allah! Grant me the recognition of Your Apostle! If You don't grant me the recognition of Your Apostle, I will not be able to recognise Your Proof.

O Allah! You grant me the recognition of Your Proof! For surely, if You don't grant me the

recognition of Your Proof, I will be deviated from my religion.¹

When we ponder upon this supplication, it becomes clear that in this era of occultation, Allah's help and support is necessary for the protection of religion. Without divine help (توفيق), it is impossible to protect our religion. If anyone is under the impression that through his piety, worship & self-restraint, he will be able to protect his religion, then he is highly mistaken. Divine help is very essential for the safety of religion. In order to receive Allah's help, we must beseech Him from the depth of our hearts.

Another point that emerges from this tradition is that along with Allah's recognition, the recognition of His Messenger and His Proof too are necessary for the security of our religion. It is to be noted that just any recognition is not enough. Only divinely-gifted 'recognition' can save us from deviation during occultation. For, Allah the High has appointed the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) as the centre of His knowledge and made them the doors through which He should be approached. Thus, only that 'recognition' of Allah is correct and acceptable which is acquired from the Ahlul

¹ Al-Kaafi, vol. 1, p. 337

Bait (a.s.). Hence, it is necessary that in order to acquire pure and correct divine recognition, we must recite those supplications that are taught to us by the Ahlul Bait (a.s.). The book "Sahif-e- Sajjadiyah" is a treasure-house of supplications and we must try to recite its invocations regularly.

The Supplication of the Drowning One (Dua-e-Ghareeq)

Abdullah Ibn Sinan narrates a tradition from Imam Sadiq (a.s.),

Soon you shall be engulfed in doubts & worries. At that time, neither will any standard (rallying point) be distinguishable nor any guiding Imam be found.

Today, we are encircled by doubts and confusions. Our Imam too is not physically present among us to solve our problems by which our hearts could be filled with certitude and we would remain firm on religion.

We have already mentioned earlier that in the era of occultation, many people will be deviated from the belief in Imamate. Diversion from the belief in Imamate not **just leads to** deviation. Rather, it is deviation perse. Today, even though we may not have entirely wandered

from the path of Imamate, yet none can deny that our faith in these tumultuous times is not as strong and intense as it was earlier. Previously, we were ready to sacrifice everything for Allah, His religion and our Imam but today that fervour is missing. We give preference to our personal problems and worries than to our Imam and our religion.

Thereafter, Imam Sadiq (a.s.) continued the above tradition,

Then in those times, none shall remain safe except the one who recites 'Dua-e-Ghareeq.

Abdullah Ibn Sinan asked 'Master! What is 'Dua-e-Ghareeq'? Imam (a.s.) replied

يَا اللَّهُ يَا رَحْمَنُ يَا رَحِيمُ يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِي عَلَى
رِسْمِكَ

O Allah! O Beneficent! O Merciful! O the One who changes the condition of the heart! Keep my heart steadfast on Your religion.

Abdullah Ibn Sinan recited this supplication before Imam (a.s.) in this manner,

يَا اللَّهُ يَا رَحْمَنُ يَا رَحِيمُ يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ وَ الْأَبْصَارِ ثَبِّتْ

قَلْبِي عَلَى دِينِكَ

O Allah! O Beneficent! O Merciful! O the One who changes the condition of the heart and the eyes! Keep my heart steadfast on Your religion.

Abdullah Ibn Sinan added the words *و الْأَبْصَارِ* to the supplication taught by Imam (a.s.) to which the latter objected immediately,

*'Surely Allah is the changer of the heart and the eyes مقلب القلوب و الابصار But you only say as I have stated.'*¹

This tradition makes it amply clear that we should not add even a single word from our side in any supplication taught to us by our Imams (a.s.). More importantly, this supplication reveals that remaining steadfast in the era of occultation is impossible without beseeching for divine help. Imam (a.s.) has referred to this supplication as 'Dua-e-Ghareeq' (the Supplication of the drowning one). Imagine a person drowning with no help in sight. At that time, he will pray from the depth of his heart with complete sincerity and in all earnestness. His

¹ Kamaluddin, vol. 2, p. 351

anxiety and apprehension will be unimaginable. His call for help will not be merely verbal. Rather, it will emanate from the bottom of his heart.

In these turbulent times, doubts & dilemmas rise like tidal waves and drown most people. If we desire to remain safe in this vortex of uncertainties, we must regularly recite this supplication from the depth of our hearts.

The Supplication for Reappearance (Dua-e-Zuhoor)

One more authentic and definite way for the protection of our religion and salvation in this world and the hereafter is to pray for the early reappearance of our master Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.). But this supplication must be accompanied with the belief in his (a.s.) Imamate. Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) said to Janabe Ahmed Ibn Is'haaq,

His (Imam Mahdi's (a.s.)) example in this nation is like that of H. Khizr (a.s.) & H. Zulqarnain (a.s.). By Allah! Occultation is obligatory for him. Only that person will remain safe from destruction,

(a) Whom Allah will keep firm on his (a.s.) Imamate and

(b) *Whom Allah gives the opportunity to pray for his (a.s.) early reappearance.*

The next day, Ahmed Ibn Is'haaq returned to Imam Askari (a.s.) and asked, 'What is the tradition of H. Khizr & H. Zulqamain that will be found in Imam Mahdi (a.s.)?' Imam (a.s.) retorted, '*Their prolonged occultation.*' Ahmed Ibn Is'haaq enquired, 'O Son of Allah's Messenger (s.a.w.a.)! Will Imam Mahdi (a.s.) too have a lengthy occultation?' Imam (a.s.) responded,

By Allah, yes. It will be so lengthy that many individuals who believed in his (a.s.) Imamate shall revert from their faith. Only that person will remain steadfast on religion on whose heart belief has been stamped and who receives help from Allah.¹

The above tradition makes it amply clear that the period of occultation is of severe examination. So, to be successful in this era and for the protection of our faith & religion, it is

(a) Obligatory to remain steadfast on the Imamate of Imam-e-Asr (a.s.)

(b) Necessary to pray for his (a.s.) reappearance

¹ Kamaluddin, chap. 38, H. 1

(c) Essential to seek divine help and support for the above.

May Allah, for the sake of Mohammed & Aale Mohammed (s.a.w.a.) keep us steadfast on the belief of Imamate during occultation and give us the grace to pray for him regularly. Aameen!

Importance of Steadfastness

In occultation, it is extremely difficult to remain steadfast and firm on religion. But one who succeeds on remaining firm on religion will have an elevated position in the eyes of Allah and His Messenger (s.a.w.a.). Please read this tradition carefully and let's pray to Allah that we be counted among the ones addressed:

Once, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) invoked in a gathering of his (s.a.w.a.) companions, '*O Allah! Make me meet my brothers!*' The companions asked, 'Are we not your brothers?' The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) replied,

No. You are my companions. My brothers are the people who will live in the last era. They will believe in me merely by reading about me (and without having seen me). Allah has informed me about their names and the names of their forefathers while they have still not come in this

world and are in the loins of their forefathers. Remaining steadfast on religion for them will be more difficult than removing thorns from a thorny bush in the blackness of the night. It will be more testing than carrying fire on the palm of the hand. Allah will protect them from the sinister corruptions of the time.¹

The status of those who remain steadfast on the belief of Imamate during the era of occultation is superior to those who lived during the times of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). They are stationed on the loftier position of Prophet's (s.a.w.a.) brotherhood. In another tradition, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) says,

Certainly, Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) is the Imam of my nation. He is my successor after me in my nation. In his (a.s.) progeny is the Qaem, the Awaited One, through whom Allah will fill the earth with justice and equity just as it will be filled with injustice and oppression. I swear by the One who sent me as a giver of glad tidings! Certainly, the ones who remain steadfast on the

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 54 p. 123, H. 8

belief of his Imamate during occultation are more precious and valuable than elixir.¹

Imam Zainul Aabedeen (a.s.) informs,

The status of the one who remains firm in the belief of our Imamate and Mastership in occultation is a thousand times superior to the martyrs of Badr and Ohod in the eyes of Allah.²

Firstly, martyrdom itself is a great honour bestowed upon a select few by Allah the High. This is the ultimate privilege for an individual.

Secondly, the martyrs of Badr & Ohod are those great martyrs who had the honour of being killed in the presence of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and thus enjoy a higher status than other martyrs.

Thirdly, the one who remains steadfast on Imamate and Mastership in the era of occultation is a thousand grades higher than the martyrs of Badr & Ohad!! Amazing!!

O Allah! For the sake of Janab-e-Fatimah Zahra (s.a.), bestow us all and our progeny with the massive bounty and fortune of the belief in Imamate and Mastership of

¹ Kamaluddin, vol. 1, p. 287, H. 7

² Kamaluddin, vol. 1, p. 323, H. 7

the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) and to remain firm and steadfast on it. Aameen!

Proximity with Imam-e-Asr (a.s.) – Obstacles and Hindrances

Every person who acknowledges the Imamate and Mastership of Imam Mahdi (a.s.), has firm belief in his occultation and is sincerely awaiting the brilliance of his reappearance, desires from the bottom of his heart, even if it be only once, an opportunity to meet Imam (a.s.) – in person. If that is not possible, the least he yearns for is a glance at the brilliant countenance of Imam (a.s.) through a dream.

Traditions inform us that Imam (a.s.) is more compassionate than a father and more benevolent than a mother. He (a.s.) loves his followers intensely and prays for them, remembers them in his midnight prayers and is never negligent of their affairs.

Despite this, what could be the reason that only a few fortunate individuals have had the opportunity of meeting him? While the true reason for this separation will be known only after the reappearance of the Imam (a.s.), there is no denying that in this era, the distance from our Imam (a.s.) on account of his occultation is a calamity for us. Please pay attention to these sentences

of Dua-e-Nudbah wherein a true lover of the Imam (a.s.) calls out to him

بِنَفْسِي أَنْتَ مِنْ مُعَيَّبٍ لَمْ يَجُلْ مِنَّا - بِنَفْسِي أَنْتَ مِنْ نَازِحٍ مَا
نَزَحَ عَنَّا

May my life be sacrificed for you, who is occult but not absent from amongst us. May my life be sacrificed for you, who has departed but not far from us.

These are the sentences of a person who loves and recognizes Imam (a.s.). He keeps the remembrance of the Imam (a.s.) afresh in his heart at all times. He considers himself in the service of Imam (a.s.) with the conviction that he is under the watchful eyes of Imam (a.s.) at all times. Consequently, he conducts himself with propriety and protects himself from sin. But why is it that this awareness is not found in every one? Why are we bereft of this feeling? We indicate a few pointers below:

1. Lack of Recognition of Imam Mahdi (a.s.)

Often, we are negligent of the fact that all our deeds are placed at regularity before the Imam of the Time (a.s.).

He (a.s.) is aware of every aspect of our lives. Harsh though it may sound, we consider the presence of Imam (a.s.) like that of a scholar who leads the prayers. While we are in front of him, he can see us, but when we are away from him, our activities are hidden from him. But this is not true for the Imam of the Time (a.s.) because he (a.s.) is that exceptional individual from whom the knowledge of whatever is happening in this world is not hidden.

Imam Baqir (a.s.) explains,

Allah is greater than that He makes the obedience of an individual (the Imam) obligatory upon the people and then keeps the knowledge of the heavens and earth hidden from him? Nay, it is not so. There is no knowledge hidden from him.¹

2.

We refer to the communication to Shaykh Mufeed by Imam-e-Asr (a.s.) and find some points relevant to our discussion:

¹ Usul-e-Kaafi, vol. 1, p. 262, H. 6

First

I am a witness to your supplications before Allah which Allah has granted you on account of our Mastership.

This sentence informs us that the act of supplicating before Allah is liked immensely by Imam (a.s.) and one who does so will enjoy the special attention of Imam (a.s.). Therefore we should not be negligent towards this aspect. Secondly, the fortune of reciting supplications is granted on account of one's acknowledgement of the Mastership of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.).

Second

The hypocrites who target the believers will never succeed in their objective. This is because we are praying for the protection of the believers – such a prayer which cannot be prevented by any creation in the skies and the earth from reaching the door of Allah. The hearts of our friends must be comforted by this and they must have conviction in our protection even if difficulties engulf them...till such time that they abstain from sins and prohibited acts.

Some observations from the sentence of the Imam (a.s.):

1. The hypocrites will always be a source of trouble for the believers; they will continue to attack and plot against the believers.
2. The prayers of the Imam (a.s.) protects the believers at every stage.
3. The measure of belief is that the believers have conviction in the protection of the Imam (a.s.) and on account of this, they should remain content even in the face of extreme calamities.
4. All the above benefits is conditional on the fact that we abstain from sins and protect ourselves from prohibited acts. If we crave to achieve the protection of Imam Mahdi (a.s.), it is necessary for us to distance ourselves from sins. If (God forbid!) for any reason, we feel that we are away from the bounties conferred by Imam Mahdi (a.s.), then our sins are to blame for our condition. We should seek forgiveness for our sins and make a firm resolve never to turn towards them again.

Third

O my sincere friend and the warrior in our battle against the oppressors, I promise you that Allah will assist you with the help offered to our pious friends in the past..... (It is my

promise) that those amongst the brothers who observe piety of Allah for the sake of His religion and those who fulfil the rights of the deserving from their wealth will always be protected from the dark corruptions.

And the persons who are stingy with the worldly bounties granted by Allah (wealth) with those about whom it is commanded to behave well, they will bear a heavy loss in this world and the hereafter.

Our Shias, may Allah grant them the grace for our obedience, if their hearts were united in their covenant with us, our meeting with them would not have been delayed. They would have achieved the good fortune of meeting us much earlier and that too, with recognition and sincerity.

Then what has kept us away from them is the news (of their deeds) which reaches us, is disliked by us and what we do not expect from them.

Allah is the Best Helper. He is Sufficient and the best to rely upon.

(1st Shawwal, 412 Hijri)¹

From the above statement of Imam Mahdi (a.s.), the following three points require attention:

1. Imam-e-Asr (a.s.) has promised his sincere followers and friends with a complete protection from conflicts and tribulations. The promise of the Imam (a.s.) is never false. He (a.s.) does not break his covenant. Whatever he has promised will definitely be fulfilled. However this promise is conditional.
2. The conditions for the promise to be fulfilled in our favour are:
 - a. To observe piety and abstinence. Piety is defined in traditions as – “When a command is established and a call given, shirking is not allowed. At the same time, if there be a prohibition then one should not be seen there.” This implies that one should not leave obligatory acts. Rather, one should avoid prohibited acts and observe the rules of Islam completely.
 - b. Whatever wealth has been granted to us by Allah, it is given in custody – it is the trust of Allah with us. We are not the owners of that wealth. This feeling

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 53, p. 176, H. 8

facilitates the spending of wealth in the way of Allah.

- c. Fulfilling the rights of the needy – An individual should himself endeavour to fulfil the rights of those who are deprived rather than wait for them to place their needs before him.
4. If a person does not spend the trust of Allah (his wealth) in the path outlined by Allah, he will face a heavy loss in this world and the hereafter.
5. Imam (a.s.) has compared the wealth of this world to a loan granted to us. This trust is transient – it could be taken back from us at any time. Therefore if Allah has granted wealth to any person, he should not consider that his wealth will remain with him forever. If spent unlawfully, Allah may take it back from him and question him severely for it.
6. If a person fulfils the above conditions, Imam (a.s.) will protect him and save him from the darkness of corruption. Therefore, in the last era, if we wish to remain secure from discord, we must obey the above commandments.

Those aspects which have distanced us from our master, Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.) are:

- Our internal differences
- Those of our deeds which Imam (a.s.) dislikes

- Those of our deeds which Imam (a.s.) does not expect from us

If we genuinely feel the pangs of separation from our Master and our hearts are pained by his absence; if we have a heartfelt desire to meet him, it is necessary that we take steps to resolve differences amongst ourselves. We must desist from those actions that displease our Imam (a.s.) and turn towards those acts which will be the cause of his pleasure. It is a fact that Imam (a.s.) is displeased with sins and our indination towards prohibited acts, while piety and obedience of Allah and His Messenger (s.a.w.a.) makes him (a.s.) happy.

Therefore, we ourselves are to blame for the distance between us and our Imam (a.s.).

Pursuit of Excessive Wealth

Another factor that causes a barrier in the path of achieving proximity between us and our Imam is our blind pursuit of wealth.

Ali Ibn Mahziyar was amongst those fortunate individuals who have had the opportunity to meet Imam Mahdi (a.s.). He completed the rituals of Hajj and stayed back in Mecca for a week. He also performed Umrah-e-Mufradah. He had only one thought in his mind – to

meet Imam-e-Asr (a.s.). During this period, he met a person who asked him what his desire was. He replied that he wanted to meet the Hidden Imam (a.s.). The person replied, "Imam (a.s.) is not hidden from you." Rather it is your sins that have created a veil between you and your Imam (a.s.) (Our sins are a cause of separation between us and Imam (a.s.)). When Ali Ibn Mahziyaar, with the guidance of this person, did finally present himself before Imam Mahdi (a.s.), Imam (a.s.) said,

O Abul Hasan! I was awaiting you every morning and night. Why did you take so long in meeting us?

Ali Ibn Mahziyaar replied, "O my Master! There was none to guide me towards you."

The Imam (a.s.) drew a line on the ground with his blessed finger and said,

No, it is not so.

كَثَرْتُمْ الْأَمْوَالَ

وَتَجَادَرْتُمْ عَلَي ضِعْفَاءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

قَطَعْتُمْ الرَّحِمَ الَّتِي دِيْنَكُمْ

You strived for excessive wealth.

You subdued the weak believers.

You broke off with your relatives, which was your religion.

Is there any excuse after this?

Hearing this, Ali Ibn Mahziyaar began crying and seeking forgiveness from Imam (a.s.).¹

From the above incident, we realise that:

Imam Mahdi (a.s.) is aware of every aspect of our lives.

The reasons for separation from our Imam (a.s.) and our inability to meet him are:

1. The pursuit of excessive wealth. People are caught up in the race to increase wealth, expand business and progress in worldly activities. This pursuit of wealth has made them negligent and forgetful of Imam (a.s.).
2. Their oppressive behaviour and tyrannical conduct with the weak. They consider them inferior and

¹ Tabseratul Wali, Sayyed Hashim Bahraani, incident 46, p. 146

distance themselves from them. This is the reason why Imam (a.s.) has distanced himself from them.

3. They do not maintain cordial relations with family members.

These three aspects cause distress to the Imam and are a barrier in the path of achieving closeness to Imam (a.s.).

Seeking Excessive Profit

A person longed to meet Imam Mahdi (a.s.). With this objective, for a long time he adopted the path of severe austerity and pursued spiritual seeking. He spent countless nights in deep worship and supplications. He struggled to this end but to no effect.

Then he was informed: "If you wish to meet Imam-e-Asr (a.s.), you must travel to such and such city." Difficult as it sounded at first, but for that sacred purpose, he undertook the demanding journey.

After several days, he arrived in that city and started his worship. He had only one prayer - to meet Imam Mahdi (a.s.). Finally, a person told him: "Right now, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) is in the bazaar, in a shop belonging to a locksmith; so, be quick; go now and seek his audience."

He stood up and rushed to the old man's shop where he saw the Holy Imam (a.s.) sitting. (The following story unfolded there.)

At this moment he saw a bent, fragile, old woman with a walking stick who showed us a lock with her shaking hand and said: "Will you, for God's sake, buy this lock from me for three rupees? I need three rupees."

The old locksmith took a look at the lock and found it intact, and then said: "My sister! This lock does not have a key - if you pay me two rupees, I will make a key to this lock and then its value will be ten rupees and not three."

The old woman answered: "No, I do not need that, I only need the money. If you buy this lock from me for three rupees, I will pray for you."

The old man replied: "My sister! You are a Muslim, and I too am the same. So why should I buy a Muslim's property for a low price and deny someone's right? The value of this lock is already eight rupees. If you wish to sell it, I will purchase it from you for seven rupees and make a profit of one rupee. It is not correct, at this price, that I should make a higher profit than that. Since I am a businessman, I will purchase it from you for seven rupees, add my profit of one rupee and sell it for eight rupees."

The old woman could not believe what the man said. She was upset and complained that nobody had been willing to pay her that price. She said she begged them to buy it for three rupees but no one agreed and here there is someone who is prepared to pay seven rupees. The shopkeeper paid seven rupees to the old woman and purchased it from her, though he could have got that lock for three rupees.

When the woman turned back to leave, the Imam (a.s.) said,

My dear friend! You have witnessed this. Be like him and then I will come to meet you. It does not require continuous striving. Be a true honest Muslim so that I can interact with you. Of the people of all these cities, I have chosen this man, since he is religious and has the true recognition of Allah. He was examined and was successful. The people in the bazaar found this woman to be needy and tried to take advantage of it. Nobody was willing to pay even three rupees for it. This old man, however, bought it for its real price, its real worth, i.e.

seven rupees. Thus, every week I come to pay him a visit.¹

Imam Mahdi (a.s.) seeks such pious individuals and searches for true and honest Muslims. If we wholeheartedly submit ourselves to Islam, then Imam (a.s.) may meet us. However, it is not necessary that we recognize Imam (a.s.) and that He (a.s.) introduces himself. To meet Imam (a.s.) in person is in itself a great fortune; to meet him (a.s.) with recognition is even greater.

Our Sins

It has been emphasized repeatedly that probably the biggest impediment in our quest to meet our beloved Imam (a.s.) is our sins. Imam Zaynul Abedeen (a.s.), through his celebrated invocation—Dua-e-Abu Hamza-e-Somali, enumerates the factors that cause separation from Allah:

O Lord! Whenever I thought I was prepared and ready and rose to pray before your hands, and confided to You, You cast sleep on me when I

¹ Sarmayae Sukhan, vol. 1, pp. 611-613, narrated from Kimya-e-Mohabbat, pp. 42-43

prayed, and You prevented me from confiding to You when I confided.

Why is it that whenever I felt content about the goodness of my core, and my companionships have neared that of the repentant, a sin would occur and cause my feet to stumble, and deprive me from Your service.

O my Master! Maybe You have expelled me from Your door, and retired me from Your service,

Or maybe You observed my disregard of Your right on me and thus distanced me,

Or maybe You saw me headed away from (Your path) and thus You withdrew me,

Or maybe You found me to be in the position of the liars so You rejected me,

Or maybe You saw that I was not grateful of Your rewards so You deprived me,

Or maybe You observed my absence from the assembly of the scholars and thus put me down,

Or maybe You found me to be one of the unheeding so You despaired me from Your mercy,

Or maybe You found me frequenting the assembly of the unfaithful, so between me and them You deserted me,

Or maybe You did not like to listen to my prayers so You distanced me,

Or maybe You equated me with my crime and sin,

Or maybe You punished me for my lack of shyness from You.

Please read the above sentences again and ponder over them. If divine grace has been seized from us, it is only due to our sins. None else is responsible for it. As per the traditions, the Imam (a.s.) is the sole door through which one can reach Allah. Therefore, the consequence of being distanced from His presence is separation from the service of Imam (a.s.). If we wish to present ourselves before Imam (a.s.) and have the fortune of meeting and serving him, it is incumbent upon us that we repent sincerely and seek forgiveness honestly for

our sins. We must pledge to live our lives with complete submission to Allah and Islam. Imam (a.s.) grants an audience only to individuals who submit themselves completely to religion.

A Woman in Hijab

The father of the Marja' of the time, Hazrat Ayatullah Sayyed Ali Seestani – the late Hazrat Ayatollah Sayyed Baqir Seestani – initiated the recitation of Ziyarate' Ashura with the intention of meeting Imam Mahdi (a.s.). He intended to recite the blessed Ziyarat for 40 Thursday nights in 40 mosques. In one of these nights, while he was busy in reciting the Ziyarat in a mosque, his attention was drawn to a light in a house near the mosque. His vision was affixed to this light. The entire house was illuminated by its brilliance. He went ahead and on reaching the house, found it to be fairly ordinary. After seeking permission, he entered the house to find that Imam-e-Asr (a.s.) was present there. He presented himself before the Imam (a.s.) and even as he conveyed his salutation, his eyes were flowing with tears.

A body, covered with a white sheet, was on the floor of the house. Imam (a.s.) replied to the salutation and said,

Why are you seeking me in this manner? And undertaking such difficulties upon yourself?

Why don't you become like her (saying this, the Imam (a.s.) pointed to the body on the floor) so that I may come to visit you?

This incident occurred during the time of Reza Khan in Iran when no woman was permitted to observe Purdah. Fearing that she would be exposed to na-mehram men, this woman did not step out of her house for seven years.¹

If we sincerely seek proximity to the Imam (a.s.) and desire to meet him, it is necessary that we observe the laws of Islam to the fullest, even if it means bearing difficulties.

Ziyarate-e-Ashura is also an important means to achieve the closeness of Imam Mahdi (a.s.). In the present era of occultation, we should not be negligent this important act.

Service Till Death Separates Us

Hazrat Dawood (a.s.) was passing through a valley when he noticed an ant which was painstakingly picking up grains of dust of the hill from one part and moving it to the other side. Hazrat Dawood (a.s.) requested Allah the Almighty to enlighten him with the objective of this

¹ Suluk-e-Muntazeraan, pp. 328-329

strange act by the ant. By the permission of Allah, the ant started communicating with Hazrat Dawood. "I have intense affection for someone. I would like to meet him. However he has laid down this condition that in order to do so, I should move the sand of this hill from this side to the other part," she explained.

Hazrat Dawood (a.s.) replied,

You are so tiny and possess insignificant strength. How will you be able to move this entire hill from one side to another? Will you be able to complete this task in your lifetime?

The ant replied, 'No. I am aware of it that I cannot achieve this task. But it is my desire that I should depart from this world while I am engaged in service for his love.'

Hazrat Dawood (a.s.) wept profusely on hearing this.¹

Fortunate are those who are granted the opportunity to serve Imam Mahdi (a.s.) in this difficult period of occultation. One of the ways by which Imam (a.s.) is served is through service to his (a.s.) followers and lovers by educating them in principles of religion and imparting religious knowledge to them. May Allah grant

¹ Kimiyae Mohabbat, p. 62

such individuals the grace to continue with their efforts till the last day of their lives! May Allah not cause their separation from their service even for a second!.

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَجِّلْ فَرَجَهُمْ

وَاجْعَلْنَا مِنْ أَعْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْصَارِهِمْ

وَلَا تَجْعَلْنَا مِنْ أَعْدَائِهِمْ

بِحَقِّ مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ الطَّاهِرِينَ

O Allah! Send salutations upon Muhammad and the progeny of Muhammad. Hasten their salvation (through the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s.)) and appoint us amongst his companions and helpers. And do not make us amongst his enemies; for the sake of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and the immaculate family of Muhammad (a.s.).