

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ يَا وَلِيَّ الْعَصْرِ (عج) أَذْرِكُنَا

Awaiting

Virtue ♦ Responsibility ♦ Examination

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(1)

Virtues of awaiting

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The Imamate and Wilayat of Ahle Bait (a.s.) is the foundational pillar of the holy religion of Islam, on which the glorious structure of Islam is built. It is the cornerstone and fundamental essence of all beliefs (Aqaaed), rulings (Ahkaam), and morals (Akhlaaq) without which everything is incomplete and flawed. This is not our personal opinion, nor is it based on a fanatical devotion to Ahle Bait (a.s.).

Hazrat Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Reza (a.s.) has stated this fact in his famous tradition known as “Hadees-e-Silsilatuz Zahab” (the tradition of golden chain). Allah, the Almighty says in Hadees-e-Qudsi:

كَلِمَةٌ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ حِصْنِي وَمَنْ دَخَلَ حِصْنِي أَمِنَ مِنْ عَذَابِي

“The sentence that ‘There is no god except Allah’ is My fortress, and one who enters My fort is saved from My punishment.”

On hearing this tradition, people assumed that the belief in Tauheed is sufficient for safety from the chastisement of Allah, and the belief in the Imamate of Ahle Bait (a.s.) is not necessary. When such thoughts began to arise in people’s minds, Imam (a.s.) clarified the matter saying:

لَكِنْ بِشُرُوطِهَا وَأَنَا مِنْ شُرُوطِهَا

“But with certain conditions, and I am one of those conditions.”

That is, belief in Tauheed will be a means of salvation from divine chastisement only when it is accompanied with the belief in the Imamate of Ahle Bait (a.s.). Those who are familiar with theology know well that

the belief in Tauheed is not pure and perfect in any school of thought except that of Ahle Bait (a.s.).

It is obvious that the tenets of Islam are incomplete without Ahle Bait (a.s.). Had it been so, the Hadees of Saqalain would have no significance at all, in which Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) explicitly mentioned:

“As long as you hold on to both of them, you will never, ever go astray.”

It is universally acknowledged that the deviation of belief inevitably leads to the deviation of action. Indeed, the Imamatus and Wilayat of Ahle Bait (a.s.) are the very foundation and cornerstone of the sacred religion of Islam. This aspect is so vital that without its propagation, the Prophethood of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) would remain incomplete.

The perfection of religion, the completion of blessings, and the divine pleasure is all due to the Holy Quran and Ahle Bait (a.s.). In the light of Hadees of Saqalain, the Holy Quran and Ahle Bait (a.s.) will not only remain until the Day of Judgment, but they will always remain together. They will never, even for a moment, be separated from each other.

Moreover, the sayings of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the traditions of Ahle Bait (a.s.) testify to the fact that the earth will never be devoid of the *“Hujjat of Allah”* (the Proof of God) for even a moment. Ahle Bait (a.s.) are the soul and essence of this universe. If the soul departs from the body, the body becomes lifeless and collapses, its heartbeats stop, blood circulation halts, the pulse stops, vision fades, the person becomes speechless, and all vital functions come to an end. It means that the vitality of the body is solely due to the presence of the soul.

Whether visible or not, the very existence and functionality of the body are the most compelling evidence of the presence of soul. Similarly, the existence of this universe, the stability of the heavens, the calmness of the earth, the radiance of the sun, the glow of the moon, the flowing of rivers, the gentle motion of the winds, the melody of the trees, the

chirping of birds, the beauty of flowers, the rhythm of rainfall, the murmuring of streams, the growing of vegetation, the sweetness of fruits, all owe their existence to the Hujjat of Allah. The very existence of the universe is the clearest evidence of the presence of the Hujjat of Allah.

It is not necessary for the proof of Allah to always remain visible for this continued existence. Just as the soul sustains the body while remaining hidden within it, the Hujjat of Allah preserves the life of this universe while concealed from sight.

In short, based on the verses of Holy Quran, the sayings of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), and the narrations of Ahle Bait (a.s.), the presence of a Hujjat of Allah on the earth is essential and obligatory in every era. This Hujjat serves as the intermediary of divine grace between Allah and His creation.

Through them, the mercy and blessings of Allah reach His creatures, and the deeds of the creatures are presented in the divine court. Just as the grace of Allah does reach the people directly, similarly, no deed is accepted in the presence of Allah without the mediation of His Hujjat.

At present, the proof of Allah, the door to proximity of Allah, the Wali of Allah, the Caliph of Allah, the Imam, and the Guide is none other than the blessed personality of Hazrat Hujjat ibn al-Hasan al-Askari (a.t.f.s.). He is alive and present on this earth. Through his existence, the mercy and blessings of Allah, the Almighty, reach the entire universe.

بِوُجُودِهِ تَبَتَّتِ الْأَرْضُ وَالسَّمَاءُ وَبِإِيْمَانِهِ رُزِقَ الْوَرَى

“By his existence, the earth and the heavens were established and by his blessings, creation is sustained.”

Based on numerous verses of the Holy Quran and the reliable narrations of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and Ahle Bait (a.s.), it is the promise of Allah that one day, His divinely revealed religion will govern this world. This

government will be a universal government, a just government, and the final government. No power on the earth, no matter how many forces unite, can make the slightest change in this divine promise.

Thus, the future of the world is bright, not dark. It is a future of justice and equity, not oppression and tyranny. It is the Islam of Ghadir, not disbelief, polytheism, or hypocrisy. This universal government will be established under the leadership of Hazrat Hujjat ibn al-Hasan al-Askari (a.t.f.s.). He is alive and presently living on this very earth. We are awaiting his manifest reappearance. We are certain about his eventual reappearance and there is absolutely no doubt, hesitation or denial in this belief.

Despite the dire conditions of the world today, we remain undeterred and hopeful, with unwavering faith that one day the government of Ghadiri Islam will be established. Until the day of his reappearance before one and all, we await it every morning and evening. This awaiting is among the greatest and most virtuous acts of worship. Numerous traditions have highlighted the immense merit of this awaiting (Intezaar). Below, we present some of the narrations related to this discussion:

For an infallible Imam to pray for someone, to beseech Allah, the Almighty, for blessings and peace upon them, and to express the desire for their inclusion among their followers, is a testament to the exalted rank and lofty status of such individuals. Hazrat Imam Zainul Aabideen (a.s.) offered a supplication in this manner for those who await the reappearance:

اللَّهُمَّ وَصَلِّ عَلَى أَوْلِيَائِهِمُ الْمُعْتَرِفِينَ بِمَقَامِهِمْ، الْمُتَّبِعِينَ مَنْهَجَهُمْ،
الْمُقْتَفِينَ آثَارَهُمْ، الْمُسْتَمْسِكِينَ بِعُرْوَتِهِمْ، الْمُتَمَسِّكِينَ بِوَلَايَتِهِمْ،
الْمُؤْتَمِّينَ بِإِمَامَتِهِمْ، الْمُسَلِّمِينَ لِأَمْرِهِمْ، الْمُجْتَهِدِينَ فِي طَاعَتِهِمْ،
الْمُنْتَظِرِينَ أَيَّامَهُمْ، الْمَادِّينَ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْيُنُهُمْ، الصَّلَوَاتِ الْمُبَارَكَاتِ

الرَّائِيَاتِ النَّامِيَاتِ الْعَادِيَاتِ الرَّائِحَاتِ وَ سَلِّمْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَ عَلَى
 أَرْوَاحِهِمْ، وَ اجْمَعْ عَلَى التَّقْوَى أَمْرَهُمْ، وَ أَصْلِحْ لَهُمْ شُؤْنَهُمْ، وَ تَب
 عَلَيْهِمْ، إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ، وَ خَيْرُ الْغَافِرِينَ، وَ اجْعَلْنَا مَعَهُمْ فِي
 دَارِ السَّلَامِ بِرَحْمَتِكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ

After mentioning the presence of an Imam and the Proof of Allah in every era and describing their attributes, Imam Zainul Aabideen (a.s.) supplicated for their followers and those who await his reappearance, in the following manner:

“O Allah! Send Your blessings upon their friends who acknowledge their rank and status, who tread their footsteps, who adhere to their teachings, who hold fast to their guidance, who remain steadfast in their Wilayah, who follow their Imam, who submit to their commands, who strive in their obedience, who await their government, who direct their eyes towards them. Bestow upon them the blessings, pure and continuous, and peace upon their souls. Unite their affairs on piety, reform their condition for them, accept their repentance, for You are the acceptor of repentance, the merciful, the best forgiver of sins. O the most merciful of the merciful ones! Through Your mercy, grant us a place with them in Paradise.”¹

These supplications pertain to the adherents and followers of the Imam of every era. They undoubtedly include those who believe in the Imam and Wilayah of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) in the present time and are awaiting his reappearance. If this was the only supplication for those who await the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), it would suffice to highlight their virtue and greatness. However, considering the

¹ Sahifa-e-Sajjaadiyah, Dua No. 47, Dua on the day of Arafah

significance of awaiting, Ahle Bait (a.s.) have narrated numerous traditions on the merits of this act. Reflect on these traditions and realize the immense virtue one possesses while awaiting the reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.). A few of them are as follows:

(1) Wali of Allah

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

طُوبَى لَشِيْعَةٍ قَائِمِنَا الْمُنْتَظِرِينَ لظُهُورِهِ فِي غَيْبَتِهِ وَ الْمُطِيعِينَ لَهُ فِي ظُهُورِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ لَا خَوْفَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

“Fortunate are the Shias of our Qaem, who await his reappearance during his occultation, and obey him at the time of his reappearance. They are the true friends of Allah for whom there shall be neither fear nor grief.”¹

Thus, today, every person who is awaiting the reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) is indeed, a friend of Allah.

(2) The most superior

Those who await the reappearance are the best people of all eras. In a detailed narration, Imam Zainul Aabideen (a.s.) said to Abu Khalid Kabuli:

يَا أَبَا خَالِدٍ إِنَّ أَهْلَ زَمَانِ غَيْبَتِهِ الْقَائِلِينَ بِإِمَامَتِهِ وَ الْمُنْتَظِرِينَ لظُهُورِهِ أَفْضَلُ مِنْ أَهْلِ كُلِّ زَمَانٍ لِأَنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى أَعْطَاهُمْ مِنَ الْعُقُولِ وَ الْأَفْهَامِ وَ الْمَعْرِفَةِ مَا صَارَتْ بِهِ الْغَيْبَةُ عِنْدَهُمْ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْمَشَاهِدَةِ وَ جَعَلَهُمْ فِي ذَلِكَ الزَّمَانِ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ بَيْنَ يَدَيِ

¹ Kamaaluddin, vol. 2, pg. 357, chp. 33, h. 54; Mikyaalul Makaarim, vol. 2, pg. 129, h. 1217

رَسُولِ اللَّهِ (ص) بِالسَّيْفِ أَوْلِيَّكَ الْمُخْلِصُونَ حَقًّا وَشَيْعَتُنَا صِدْقًا وَ
الدُّعَاةُ إِلَى دِينِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ سِرًّا أَوْ جَهْرًا

“O Abu Khalid! Those who live during the era of his occultation, believe in his Imamate, and await his reappearance are superior to the people of every other era. (Their superiority is not without reason, as Imam (a.s.) has explained the reason for their superiority in this way). Allah has granted them such intellect, understanding, and recognition, by virtue of which, for them, the occultation is equivalent to witnessing the Imam. Allah has equated them with those who fought with their swords alongside the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). These people are truly sincere, they are our true Shias, who openly and secretly invite people to the religion of Allah.”¹

The reasons for their superiority are as follows:

- (1) They believe in his Imamate.
- (2) They await his reappearance.
- (3) Despite the occultation, they believe that Imam (a.s.) is present and witnessing all their actions. They feel the presence of Imam (a.s.) among them, as mentioned in Dua-e-Nudbah:

بِنَفْسِي أَنْتَ مِنْ مُغَيَّبٍ لَمْ يُخَلِّ مِنَّا بِنَفْسِي أَنْتَ مِنْ تَارِحٍ مَّا نَزَحَ عَنَّا

“May my soul be sacrificed for you! Although you are hidden from us, you have never forsaken us. May my soul be sacrificed for you! Although you are away, you have never been away from us.”

- (4) They are striving in the way of Allah, meaning they are not awaiting,

¹ Kamaaluddin, vol. 1, pg. 319, chp. 31, h. 2; Mikyaalul Makaarim, vol. 2, pg. 129, h. 1219

sitting idle, but are constantly active like a warrior in the cause of Allah.

- (5) They invite people to the religion of Allah in every way, whether the circumstances are favourable or unfavourable. They are never neglectful of calling to the way of Allah and never fall short of it.
- (6) They are truly sincere.
- (7) They are the true Shias.

(3) Rank of Ahle Bait (a.s.) in paradise

Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) says:

أَلَا خِذْ بِأَمْرِ نَامِعَنَا عِدَا فِي حَظِيرَةِ الْقُدُسِ وَالْمُنْتَظِرِ لِأَمْرِنَا كَأَلْمُتَشَحِّطِ
بِدَمِهِ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

*"Whoever holds on to our Imamat will be with us in Paradise. And whoever awaits for us is as if he is drenched in his blood in the way of Allah."*¹

(4) Reward of martyrdom with Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)

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

مَنْ مَاتَ مِنْكُمْ وَهُوَ مُنْتَظِرٌ لِهَذَا الْأَمْرِ كَمَنْ هُوَ مَعَ الْقَائِمِ فِي
فُسْطَاطِهِ قَالَ ثُمَّ مَكَتَ هُنَيْئَةً ثُمَّ قَالَ لَا بَلْ كَمَنْ قَارَعَ مَعَهُ بِسَيْفِهِ
ثُمَّ قَالَ لَا وَاللَّهِ إِلَّا كَمَنْ اسْتَشْهَدَ مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ (ص)

"Whoever dies from among you while awaiting for this matter (the reappearance) is like the one who is with the Qaem in his camp. Then Imam (a.s.) remained silent for a while, and then said, no, rather he is like the one who fights alongside him with

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 52, pg. 123, h. 7; Mikyaalul Makaanim, vol. 2, pg. 131, h. 1225

his sword. Then he (a.s.) said, no, by Allah, he is like the one who was martyred alongside the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.).”¹

In this narration, Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) described the different levels of those awaiting for Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.):

Level one – He is present with Hazrat Qaem (a.t.f.s.) in his camp.

Level two – He fights alongside Hazrat Qaem (a.t.f.s.) with his sword.

Level three – He is martyred in the presence of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

It is obvious that martyrdom in the way of Allah is a great honour and success, let alone attaining martyrdom in the presence of Holy (s.a.w.a.). One who dies on his bed while awaiting the reappearance, is being granted the status of martyrdom in the presence of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). This shows how great and virtuous it is to await the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). Those who are engaged in this great act of worship are indeed virtuous.

(5) Guarantee of paradise

Ameerul Momineen Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) narrated from Holy Prophet Mohammad (s.a.w.a.):

“Allah will admit unknown individuals into Paradise. These ones are those believers who, during times of tribulations and trials, being away from the people, remain steadfast on the Imamate of the occult Imam. They acknowledge his leadership, remain attached to him, await his reappearance, and remain firm in their belief without any doubt. They are patient and submissive, even though they are unaware of his residence and

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 52, pg. 126, h. 18; Mikyaalul Makaanim, vol. 2, pg. 131, h. 1226

are deprived of personal knowledge of him.

The proof of this is as follows: When Allah hides the sun from the people's sight while He has made the sun a means of calculating the time of prayers. Under such circumstances, it is allowed to delay the prime time of prayers and await the time of noon. Similarly, one who awaits the reappearance of Imam, is steadfast on his Imamat, for him the time of fulfilling his obligations is extended, he will discharge his duties after fulfilling all conditions and does not fall short of it. The occultation of Imam does not harm him.”¹

(6) Like the martyrs of Badr and Ohud

Hazrat Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) said to Ammaar Saabaati:

“O Ammar, whoever among you departs from this world with the belief in Imamat, is more virtuous near Allah than many others. He is like the martyrs of Badr and Ohud. Glad tidings to you.”²

(7) Under the flag of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)

Hasan ibn Abi Hamza narrated from his father Abu Hamza that he once asked Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.):

“O Master, I have grown old, my bones have weakened, death is approaching, and I fear that I may die without witnessing your government. Imam (a.s.) replied: O Abu Hamza, anyone who believes in us, affirms our narrations, and waits for us is like the one who fights under the banner of the Qaem. Rather, by Allah, he is like the one who fights under the banner of

¹ Mikyaalul Makaarim, vol. 2, pg. 132, h. 1229

² Al-Kaafi, vol. 1, pg. 334, h. 2; Mikyaalul Makaarim, vol. 2, pg. 133, h. 1233

Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.).”¹

There are many narrations on this subject. From these narrations, it becomes clear that awaiting the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) holds a very high rank. Awaiting is not being lazy and inactive rather, it is a state of alertness, preparedness, seriousness, and restlessness.

(8) To be resurrected with Ahle Bait (a.s.)

Let us ponder on this tradition, how virtuous is awaiting the universal government of Ahle Bait (a.s.). If, at this moment, we begin to feel the same state as of the elderly man in the below incident, we too can attain this great status. The incident is as follows:

Sa’dah narrates:

“I had the honor of being in the presence of Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) when an elderly man, bent over and leaning on a staff, entered in his holy presence. He greeted the Imam, and the Imam responded. The elderly man then asked, ‘O son of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.), please extend your blessed hand so I can kiss it.’ Imam (a.s.) extended his hand, and the man kissed it and began to cry. Imam (a.s.) asked him the reason for his tears. The elderly man replied:

May I be sacrificed upon you! I have been waiting for your Qaem for a hundred years. Maybe this month, maybe this year. Now I have grown old, my bones have become weak, and wrinkles have surfaced on my face, death is drawing near, but I am unable to see what I desire concerning you. Instead, I see you being killed, dislocated, while your enemies are living in comfort. How could I not wail after seeing all this? Upon

¹ Tafseer al-Burhaan, vol. 4, pg. 296, h. 9; Mikyaalul Makaanim, vol. 2, pg. 133, h. 1236

hearing this, Imam (a.s.)'s eyes filled with tears, and he (a.s.) said:

O Shaikh! If Allah grants you life until you witness the time of our Qaem, you will be raised to the highest level. But if you pass away before then, you will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment alongside the noble family of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.), for we are the noble family of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.). The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) has said: 'I am leaving behind two precious things among you, one is the Book of Allah and other is my family. Hold on to both of them, and you will never go astray.'

The elderly man said, 'After hearing this tradition, I am no longer concerned about anything.' Imam (a.s.) said:

*O Shaikh, our Qaem will be born from the lineage of Hasan al-Askari, from the progeny of Ali, from Muhammad, from Ali, from my son Musa, and from Musa to me. All twelve of us are infallible and pure."*¹

Let us reflect on just one aspect of this tradition:

Whoever is awaiting the reappearance of Hazrat Qaem (a.t.f.s.) from the progeny of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), will undoubtedly attain one of two great blessings:

- (1) If the reappearance of Hazrat Qaem (a.t.f.s.) occurs during his lifetime, he will attain the highest rank in that era. Even the lowest position in the service of Imam (a.s.) is greater than the highest position in this world, let alone the highest rank.
- (2) If his life ends before the reappearance of Hazrat Qaem (a.t.f.s.), he

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 36, pg. 408, h. 17; Mikyaalul Makaarim, vol. 2, pg. 134, h. 1238

will be resurrected along with the noble family of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) i.e. Ahle Bait (a.s.). Being in the company of Ahle Bait (a.s.) means salvation from all the hardships of the Day of Judgment.

Similarly, another incident of an elderly man occurred in the presence of Imam Mohammad Baqir (a.s.), concerning which Imam (a.s.) said:

“Whoever wishes to see the inhabitants of paradise, should look at this person.”¹

There are numerous narrations regarding the merits of awaiting the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). From these narrations, it becomes abundantly clear that in this era, awaiting his reappearance is a noble act of worship, and the cause of attaining the highest ranks. This is a form of worship that can be practised any time, for there is no need for a particular time, place, occasion, or circumstance. It is the state of the heart, that can prevail at all moments, and it is an inner restlessness and anxiety.

Some narrations state that:

“Await the reappearance every morning and evening.”

Those who do not await the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) at this moment, and do not feel the longing for him, are deprived of many great blessings and rewards. Writing an appeal (Areeza) to him for our needs is one thing, but rising above all our needs and awaiting his reappearance is something entirely different. The former action revolves around self-interest while the latter action is solely to seek the pleasure and satisfaction of Allah and Ahle Bait (a.s.). The sincere servants of Allah are always focused on seeking the pleasure and satisfaction of Allah and Ahle Bait (a.s.), and this is the reason for their elevated status.

¹ Mikyaalul Makaarim, vol. 2, pg. 135, h. 1239

(2)

Responsibilities in the era of occultation

Responsibilities in the era of occultation

In the previous section, we mentioned some virtues of awaiting the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), all these virtues are so great that there is no limit to their significance. It is an established principle that higher the rank, higher the responsibilities. These two are directly proportionate to each other. At present, our responsibilities are numerous. Books have been written specifically on this subject. Here, we will only mention a few of these responsibilities. First and foremost, we plead to Allah, beseeching Him through the intercession of Mohammad (s.a.w.a.) and his immaculate progeny (a.s.), to grant us the ability to fulfil these responsibilities by the blessing of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.). For every good deed, divine grace and assistance is essential.

(1) Recognition of Imam (a.t.f.s.)

Just as the worship of Allah necessitates His recognition, the extent of one's recognition increases the reward of worship. Without recognition, worship is akin to a body without a soul. Similarly, awaiting the illuminated reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) necessitates his recognition. The greater the recognition, the greater the reward for awaiting. The levels of "awaiting" mentioned in narrations are directly linked to the recognition of the Imam (a.s.) of the time, Hazrat Hujjat ibn al-Hasan al-Askari (a.t.f.s.).

The recognition of Imam (a.s.) is not only a crucial responsibility in the era of occultation but also a means of salvation from the death of ignorance. It not only saves one from such a death but also grants him a

life of faith and a meaningful existence in this world. Anyone, in the present time, who is deprived of this recognition, is, in reality, living a life of ignorance.

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

وَمَنْ مَاتَ وَهُوَ عَارِفٌ لِإِمَامِهِ لَمْ يَضُرَّهُ تَقَدُّمُ هَذَا الْأَمْرِ أَوْ تَأَخُّرُ وَمَنْ
مَاتَ وَهُوَ عَارِفٌ لِإِمَامِهِ كَانَ كَمَنْ هُوَ مَعَ الْقَائِمِ فِي فُسْطَاطِهِ

“Whoever departs this world with the recognition of his Imam will not be harmed with the delay or advancing of reappearance. And one who departs this world with the recognition of his Imam, it is as if he is with the Imam in his camp.”¹

We all wish a good end for ourselves, and that we attain the highest rank in paradise. The most crucial factor for this is to depart the world in the state of faith, as without it, neither salvation from Hell, nor entry into paradise is possible. To achieve this, recognition of the Imam of the time is essential. All scholars and narrators of traditions unanimously accept this tradition of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), who said:

مَنْ مَاتَ وَلَمْ يَعْرِفْ إِمَامَ زَمَانِهِ مَاتَ مِيتَةَ جَاهِلِيَّةٍ

“One who dies without the recognition of the Imam of his time, dies the death of ignorance i.e. disbelief.”

Regarding the disbelievers, Holy Quran states:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ
وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ . خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ

¹ Al-Kaafi, vol. 1, pg. 343

يُنظَرُونَ

“Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, these it is on whom is the curse of Allah and the angels and the men all. Abiding in it; their chastisement shall not be lightened, nor shall they be given respite.”¹

In another verse of the Holy Quran, it is mentioned:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمْ مِثْلُ
الْأَرْضِ ذَهَبًا وَلَوْ افْتَدَى بِهِ. أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ
نَاصِرِينَ

“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.”²

It is evident from the traditions and the verses of Holy Quran that dying in a state of disbelief (kufr) leads to the curse of Allah, His angels, and people, and is a cause of eternal and painful chastisement. This sin is so grave that even offering gold equal to the weight of the entire world cannot save one from this torment. Perhaps for this very reason, Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) emphasized reciting this supplication during the time of occultation:

اللَّهُمَّ عَرِّفْنِي نَفْسِكَ فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ لَمْ تُعَرِّفْنِي نَفْسِكَ لَمْ أَعْرِفْ نَبِيَّكَ

¹ Surah Baqarah (2), verses 161-162

² Surah Aal-e-Imran (3), verse 91

اللَّهُمَّ عَرِّفْنِي رَسُولَكَ فَإِنَّكَ إِن لَّمْ تُعَرِّفْنِي رَسُولَكَ لَمْ أَعْرِفْ حُجَّتَكَ
اللَّهُمَّ عَرِّفْنِي حُجَّتَكَ فَإِنَّكَ إِن لَّمْ تُعَرِّفْنِي حُجَّتَكَ ضَلَلْتُ عَنْ دِينِي

“O Allah! Grant me Your recognition, for if You do not grant me Your recognition, I will not be able to recognise Your Prophet. O Allah! Grant me the recognition of Your Messenger, for if You do not grant me the recognition of Your Messenger, I will not be able to recognize Your Hujjat. O Allah! Grant me the recognition of Your Hujjat, for if You do not grant me the recognition of Your Hujjat, I will deviate from my religion.”¹

It should be noted that the supplications narrated by Imams (a.s.) are traditions. Each sentence of an authentic supplication is a tradition. Therefore, in this tradition, Imam (a.s.) mentions three types of recognition: Recognition of Allah, Recognition of the Messenger, and Recognition of the Proof (Hujjat) of Allah. These three forms of recognition are interconnected, and the absence of them results in misguidance and deviation. The outcome of misguidance and deviation is eternal punishment.

One of the essential responsibilities during the period of occultation is recognition of Imam (a.s.) of the time, Hazrat Hujjat ibn al-Hasan al-Askari (a.t.f.s.). This recognition can be classified into two categories:

- (1) Recognition of his name, lineage and family.
- (2) Recognition of his lofty status and virtues.

Below, we will discuss both aspects of this recognition:

Recognition of his name, lineage and family

The name of Imam (a.s.) is the same as that of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and his epithet (Kunyah) is also the same as that of Holy Prophet

¹ Kamaaluddin, vol. 2, pg. 343; Al-Ghaibah by No'maani, pg. 170

(s.a.w.a.). His father is Hazrat Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.), and his mother is Janab Narjis Khatun (s.a.). He belongs to the noble family of Bani Hashim, the most revered lineage in Arabia.

Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) was born on the 15th of Shabaan, 255 A.H., in the city of Samarra, Iraq. He is the twelfth and last Imam in the series of Imamah of Ahle Bait (a.s.). Obedience to him is obedience to Allah and His Messenger, and disobedience to him equates to disobedience to Allah and His Messenger. His friends are Allah's friends, and his enemies are Allah's enemies.

He (a.s.) is alive and present among the people but is in occultation by the will of Allah. It means that he (a.s.) is living among the people in a way that he (a.s.) recognises the people but people cannot recognise him.

Recognition of his lofty status and virtues

(1) Hazrat Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) said to his companion Muawiyah ibn Wahab:

“The most superior and the most obligatory of all obligatory duties is the recognition of Allah... Thereafter, the recognition of His Messenger (s.a.w.a.)... Thereafter, the recognition of Imam, his qualities, attributes, and names. This recognition is essential and necessary in every circumstance.

The minimum recognition of the Imam is to believe that he is akin to Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) in all aspects except Prophethood. He is the inheritor of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), and obedience to him is obedience to Allah and His Messenger (s.a.w.a.). One must submit fully to his authority and refer all matters to him. His words are to be followed.

And know that after Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), the chain of Imamah begins with Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.), followed by Hasan

(a.s.), then Husain (a.s.), then Ali ibn Husain (a.s.), then Mohammad ibn Ali (a.s.), then Jafar ibn Mohammad (a.s.), then Musa ibn Jafar (a.s.), then Ali ibn Musa (a.s.), then Mohammad ibn Ali (a.s.), then Ali ibn Mohammad (a.s.), then Hasan ibn Ali (a.s.), and finally his son al-Hujjat (a.t.f.s.).”

Then Imam (a.s.) said: O Muawiyah! I have mentioned the base, now act upon it.”¹

(2) Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.), at this moment, is the Hujjat of Allah in the entire universe. He is the door to (proximity to) Allah (*Baabullah*). All deeds are presented before Allah through him.

(3) He is the medium of divine grace. All divine blessings like life, sustenance, bounties, water, fruits... every grain of the earth, every drop of rain... are being bestowed upon the universe through him.

(4) Supplications are answered, sins are forgiven, and sustenance is expanded through his presence. This is highlighted in '*Dua-e-Iftetaah*', which is recited during the nights of the holy month of Ramazaan. This esteemed supplication, transmitted by Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.), consists of two parts. It begins with praise and glorification of Allah and then salutations upon Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and his holy progeny (a.s.), concluding with a detailed mention of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) wherein it is mentioned that his holy being is a source of endless grace and blessings. One who recognizes Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) with his attributes will earnestly pray for the hastening of his reappearance. In fact, this will be his foremost prayer amongst all his supplications.

Let us pay attention to some excerpts from *Dua-e-Iftetaah*:

“O Allah! We beseech You for a government that accords due respect to Islam and its adherents and humiliates hypocrisy

¹ Tafseer al-Burhaan, vol. 2, pg. 34, h. 3; Mikyaalul Makaarim, vol. 2, pg. 99, h. 1166

and its followers.

In this government, include us among those who invite others towards Your obedience and lead them towards Your path. O Allah! Grant us honor in this world and the hereafter through it.

O Allah! Grant us the ability to fulfil the rights of the recognition that You have granted us and guide us to attain whatever we fall short of.”

Let us reflect upon the following statements of this supplication:

“O Allah! Through him, bring our scattered affairs to order, resolve the difference among us, turn our small numbers into abundance, transform our life of humiliation into a life of dignity, make our families self-sufficient, pay off the debts of the indebted ones among us, relieve us from our poverty, fulfil our needs, ease all our hardships, grant us success, liberate our captives, fulfil our demands, fulfil our promises, accept our prayers, fulfil our desires, fulfil our worldly and spiritual needs, grant us more than we ask for, O the one who is the best of those who grant and is generous, heal our ailing hearts, remove the grief and agony from our hearts, guide us to the truth amidst contradicting paths, You guide to the right path whoever you please, grant us victory over Your enemies and ours. Aameen, O Lord of the worlds.”

If we possess such recognition of Imam Al-Asr (a.t.f.s) and acknowledge these attributes and virtues, how can worldly ups and downs ever dishearten us? Many of our difficulties stem from neglecting to turn to this divinely appointed Imam for our needs and failing to perceive his presence among us!

(2) Following the Imam (a.t.f.s.)

An Imam is one who is followed, whose footsteps are to tread upon. For example, the Imam of a congregational prayer is one whom people follow in bowing, prostration, standing, and sitting.

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

طُوبَى لِمَنْ أَدْرَكَ قَائِمَ أَهْلِ بَيْتِي وَهُوَ مُقْتَدٍ بِهِ قَبْلَ قِيَامِهِ يَأْتُمُّ بِهِ وَ
بِأُمَّةِ الْهُدَى مِنْ قَبْلِهِ وَيَبْرَأَ إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مِنْ عَدُوِّهِمْ أَوْلِيَّكَ
رُفَقَائِي وَأَكْرَمُ أُمَّتِي عَلَيَّ

“Blessed is the one who will live during the time of Qaem of my Ahle Bait (a.s.), follow him before his reappearance (during the period of occultation), believe in his Imamat and the Imamat of the preceding Imams, and disassociate himself from his enemies in the presence of Allah, the Almighty. These are my companions and the honourable members of my Ummah.”¹

Obeying a father in his presence is one thing, but acting upon his instructions, treading the path he has laid, and considering his wishes at every step, in his absence, is a completely different thing. Similarly, following Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) during the era of occultation elevates a person to the rank of the companions of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the esteemed members of his Ummah.

Hazrat Imam Musa ibn Jafar (a.s.) once said to Yunus ibn Abdul Rahmaan:

طُوبَى لِشَيْعَتِنَا الْمُتَمَسِّكِينَ بِحَبْلِنَا فِي غَيْبَةِ قَائِمِنَا الْقَائِدِينَ عَلَيَّ
مُؤَالَاتِنَا وَالْبِرَاءَةَ مِنْ أَعْدَائِنَا أَوْلِيَّكَ مِنَّا وَنَحْنُ مِنْهُمْ قَدْ رَضُوا بِنَا

¹ Kamaaluddin, vol. 1, pg. 287

أُمَّتَهُ وَرَضِينَا بِهِمْ شِيعَةً فَطُوبَى لَهُمْ ثُمَّ طُوبَى لَهُمْ وَهُمْ وَاللَّهِ مَعَنَا فِي
دَرَجَاتِنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

“Fortunate are our Shias who, during the occultation of our Qaem, remain attached to our chain of Imam, stand firm on our Wilayat, and disassociate themselves from our enemies. These people are from us, and we are from them. They are pleased with us as their Imams, and we are pleased with them as our Shias. Indeed, they are truly fortunate, they are truly fortunate. And by Allah! These people will be with us at our rank on the Day of Judgment.”¹

To be attached to Ahle Bait (a.s.) means to follow them, to tread their path.

Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) said:

أَسْعَدُ النَّاسِ مَنْ عَرَفَ فَضْلَنَا وَتَقَرَّبَ إِلَى اللَّهِ بِنَا وَأَخْلَصَ حُبَّنَا وَ
عَمِلَ بِمَا إِلَيْهِ نَدَبْنَا وَانْتَهَى عَمَّا عَنْهُ نَهَيْْنَا فَذَلِكَ مِنَّا وَهُوَ فِي دَارِ
الْبُقَامَةِ مَعَنَا

“The most fortunate among the people is the one who recognizes our virtues, seeks proximity to Allah through us, loves us sincerely, acts upon what we have called towards, and refrains from what we have forbidden. Such a person is from us, and he will be with us on the Day of Judgment.”²

When Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) reappears, he will implement all Islamic teachings in practice. Therefore, now, our responsibility is to follow Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.), meaning to act upon the Islamic teachings.

¹ Kamaaluddin, vol. 2, pg. 361

² Ghurarul Hikam, pg. 115

(3) Piety and abstinence

During the era of occultation, one of the important responsibilities of those awaiting the reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) is to practice piety (Taqwaa). Piety has been mentioned at various places in the Holy Quran. For instance:

“This Quran is a guidance for those who are pious.”

“Fasting has been prescribed upon you so that you may become pious.”

“This paradise is prepared for those who are pious.”

The Holy Quran states:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ

“Surely the most honourable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty).”¹

It is obvious that the criterion to attain proximity to Allah and proximity to Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is the same. Thus, one who wishes to attain nearness to Imam al-Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) during the period of occultation and after his reappearance, must practice piety.

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

مَنْ سَرَّهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْقَائِمِ فَلْيَنْتَظِرْ وَ لِيَعْمَلْ بِالْوَرَعِ وَ
فَحَاسِبِ الْأَخْلَاقِ وَهُوَ مُنْتَظَرٌ فَإِنْ مَاتَ وَقَامَ الْقَائِمُ بَعْدَهُ كَانَ لَهُ مِنَ
الْأَجْرِ مِثْلُ أَجْرِ مَنْ أَدْرَكَهُ فِجْدُوا وَ انْتَظِرُوا هَنِيئًا لَكُمْ أَيُّهَا الْعِصَابَةُ
الْبَرْحُومَةُ

“One who aspires to be among the companions of Qaem (a.s.),

¹ Surah Hujuraat (49), verse 13

should await (his reappearance), practice piety, and best of the morals. Such a person is the one who truly awaits the reappearance. If one dies in this state before the reappearance of Qaem (a.s.), he will receive the reward of those who witness his time and serve alongside him. Strive, await! Congratulations to you, O those who are embraced by Divine mercy.”¹

Imam Mahdi (a.s.) sent a letter to Shaikh Mufeed (a.r.) containing a message for all Shias:

فَلْيَعْمَلْ كُلُّ امْرِئٍ مِنْكُمْ بِمَا يَقْرُبُ بِهِ مِنْ مَحَبَّتِنَا وَيَتَجَنَّبُ مَا يُدْنِيهِ
 مِنْ كَرَاهَتِنَا وَسَخَطِنَا فَإِنَّ أَمْرَنَا بَعْتَةٌ فَجَاءَةٌ حِينَ لَا تَنْفَعُهُ تَوْبَةٌ وَلَا
 يُنْجِيهِ مِنْ عِقَابِنَا نَدْمٌ عَلَى حَوْبَةٍ

“Each one of you must perform such actions that bring you closer to our love and refrain from anything that leads to our displeasure and wrath. Our reappearance will occur suddenly, and at that time, neither repentance will benefit him, nor the regret for his wrongdoing will protect him for our punishment.”²

Every injustice that occurs in the world causes pain and grief to Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.). The least that is expected of us, who await his luminous reappearance, is that we refrain from any actions that cause him distress. Instead, every day, our effort should be to perform good deeds that pleases him.

An important question is: In a world engulfed with sins, where the internet has laid a web of immorality at every step and made sinning not

¹ Al-Ghaibah by No’maani, pg. 207

² Al-Ehtejaaj, vol. 2, pg. 323

only easy but also a symbol of “modernity”. Those who abstain from sins are considered backward, while immodesty and being wealthy have become symbols of progress. Modesty and veil of women are labelled as backward and uncivilized. In such an environment, how can we, especially the younger generation, stay protected from such vices?

In such a challenging environment, the simplest yet most profound solution lies in this awareness, *“Our Imam is watching us, and our every action is presented before him.”* Whenever faced with temptation or the danger of sin, we must immediately call out to our Imam with the plea, *“Yaa Mahdi, Adrikni”*. With this, he (a.s.) will provide all the means to protect us from sins.

Thus, in this era of occultation, piety and abstinence are among our foremost responsibilities, and these topics warrant further discussion.

(4) Loving Imam (a.t.f.s.) intensely

The Holy Quran has declared the reward for Prophethood of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) to be the love and affection for his Ahle Bait (a.s.). Holy Quran says:

قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ

“Say, I do not ask of you any reward for it but love for my near relatives.”¹

In addition to this, Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) has said:

لَا يُؤْمِنُ عَبْدٌ حَتَّىٰ أَكُونَ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ نَفْسِهِ وَ أَهْلِي أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ
أَهْلِهِ وَعِئْرَتِي أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ عِئْرَتِهِ وَذَاتِي أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ ذَاتِهِ

“A servant does not truly believe until I am more beloved to

¹ Surah Shura (42), verse 23

him than his own self, and my family is more beloved to him than his own family, and my lineage is more beloved to him than his own lineage, and my being is more beloved to him than his own being.”¹

At present, no one in the entire universe resembles the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) more closely in any form and demeanour, than Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.). Therefore, loving Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) is both a reward for Prophethood of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) (Ajr-e-Risaalat) and a requirement of faith.

A question arises: How can we illuminate our hearts with the love of Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.)? How can we fill our hearts with the love of this great Imam (a.s.)?

Allah, the Almighty, said to Hazrat Musa (a.s.) and Hazrat Dawood (a.s.):

“Make Me beloved among My creation.” They asked, “O Lord! How can we make You beloved among Your creation?” Allah replied: “Remind them of My bounties. When you mention My bounties to them, love for Me will grow in their hearts.”²

One way to feel the love of Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) is to recognize and feel his grace, kindness, and care in every step of our lives. Some of his bounties have already been mentioned earlier in this section with reference to Dua-e-Iftetaah.

The effects of loving Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) are astounding. If one realizes even a fraction of the magnificent outcomes of loving Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.), he would not speak of or think of anyone else other than him.

Now reflect on this tradition of Me’raj. For the sake of brevity, we will

¹ Mizaanul Hikmah, vol. 1, pg. 518, h. 677

² Mikyaalul Makaarim, vol. 2, pg. 124, h. 1203-1204

suffice with the translation of an extract as follows:

“Allah, the Almighty asked me during the night of Me’raj: ‘Whom have you appointed as your successor in your Ummah?’. I replied: ‘Allah knows best, my brother!’. He said: ‘O Mohammad! Is it Ali ibn Abi Talib?’ I said: ‘Yes’.

He continued: ‘O Mohammad! I gazed upon the earth and chose you. Therefore, your name is mentioned alongside My Name. I am Mahmood, and you are Mohammad. Then I looked upon the earth again and chose Ali ibn Abi Talib. I appointed him as your successor. You are the leader of the Prophets, and Ali is the leader of the successors. I derived his name from My Name. I am Aa’la and he is Ali.

O Mohammad! I created Ali, Fatema, Hasan, Husain, and the Imams from one light. Then I presented your Wilayat before the angels. Whoever accepted it was declared a believer, and whoever rejected it was declared a disbeliever.

O Mohammad! If any of My servant worships Me to the extent that he is torn apart and meets Me in this state but denies your Wilayat, I will cast them into hellfire.

O Mohammad! Would you like to see those people?’ I said: ‘Certainly, O Lord!’ He said: ‘Stand and move ahead.’

I moved forward and saw Ali ibn Abi Talib, Hasan ibn Ali, Husain ibn Ali, Ali ibn Husain, Mohammad ibn Ali, Jafar ibn Mohammad, Musa ibn Jafar, Ali ibn Musa, Mohammad ibn Ali, Ali ibn Mohammad, Hasan ibn Ali, and the Hujjatul Qaem was shining among them like a radiant star.’

I asked: ‘O Lord! Who are these holy beings?’ He replied: ‘These are the Imams, and this Qaem will declare My lawful (halaal) as lawful and My unlawful (haraam) as unlawful. Through him,

I will avenge My enemies.

O Mohammad! Love him, for I love him, and whoever loves him, I keep him as My beloved.”¹

Reflect upon the last statement where Allah is saying, “Whoever loves him, I keep him as My beloved” to Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), who is the most beloved to Allah. Despite the unparalleled status of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) near to Allah, if you wish that Allah should keep you more beloved, then you should love Hazrat Qaem (a.t.f.s.). After this, is there any reason left to not love Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.)? The more we love Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.), the more beloved and favoured we will be in the sight of Allah. Could there be a loftier status than this?

While it is our responsibility to deeply love Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.), it is equally our responsibility to instil his love in the hearts of others and to turn their attention toward him.

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

رَحِمَ اللهُ عَبْدًا اجْتَرَّ مَوَدَّةَ النَّاسِ إِلَيْنَا فَحَدَّثَهُمْ بِمَا يَعْرِفُونَ وَتَرَكَ مَا
يُنْكِرُونَ

“May Allah have mercy on the servant who pulls the love of the people towards us, speaks to them about what they can understand, and refrains from speaking of what they would reject.”²

In this tradition, Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) has mentioned three important points:

(1) Mercy of Allah will be upon the one who directs the attention of the

¹ Mikyaalul Makaarim, vol. 2, pg. 125, h. 1206

² Amaali Shaikh Saduq (a.r.), chp. 21, h. 7; Mikyaalul Makaarim, vol. 2, pg. 127, h. 1213

people towards Ahle Bait (a.s.). After this, Imam (a.s.) explained the manner of calling people towards Ahle Bait (a.s.).

- (2) Presents the virtues and merits of Ahle Bait (a.s.) in a way that aligns with the capacity of the people.
- (3) Refrains from mentioning things that people may find difficult to accept or understand.

At times, out of enthusiasm, we say things that, instead of bringing about peace and reform, it creates discord and strife, thus pushing people away rather than drawing them closer.

If we attempt to explain the numerous benefits we derive from the blessed existence of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) and how much he cares for us, people will inevitably feel a sense of love for Imam (a.s.) in their hearts.

(5) Praying for Imam (a.t.f.s.)

One of our important responsibilities during the period of occultation is to pray for the reappearance of Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.).

Question: At this moment, everything that we are receiving is due to the holy existence of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.). It is through him that the bounties are descending, and calamities are being averted. So why should we pray for him? What effect will our prayers have?

Answer: When a child goes abroad, the mother continuously prays for his health, safety, and long life. This does not mean that the child is sick or in trouble, but rather, her prayer reflects her love for him. Prayer is a sign of love, not of illness or trouble. The more we love Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.), the more we will pray for him.

It is important to understand that prayer is not just utterance of words, but it is a manifestation of the condition of heart, it is about love and devotion. The more deeply a prayer comes from the heart, it will be quickly accepted in the presence of Allah.

Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) has himself emphasized to pray for his early

reappearance as follows:

وَ أَكْثِرُوا الدُّعَاءَ بِتَعْجِيلِ الْفَرَجِ فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ فَرَجُكُمْ

“Pray abundantly for the hastening of the reappearance, for indeed, in it, is your salvation.”¹

In a narration, it is mentioned that Allah had decreed a period of four hundred years of punishment for Bani Israel, but they fervently beseeched Allah, and as a result, Allah reduced it by one hundred and seventy years. Then, Imam (a.s.) said:

“The same applies to you. If you act (in this manner of prayer and repentance), Allah would grant us relief. However, if you do not, the matter will reach its conclusion in its destined time.”²

If we are not content with the current state of the world and encounter new problems every day, dealing with various types of hardships, witnessing oppression and injustice everywhere, then the first thing we should do after every obligatory Namaaz is to pray for Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.).

Imam Mohammad Baqir (a.s.) said to Janab Zurarah (r.a.):

“Shall I not tell you of something in which Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) made no exception? Zurarah replied: ‘Yes, please inform me’. He (a.s.) said:

الدُّعَاءُ يُرَدُّ الْقَضَاءَ وَقَدْ أُبْرِمَ إِبْرَامًا

“The prayer can change the destiny of that which was decreed

¹ Al-Ehtejaaj, vol. 2, pg. 284

² Tafseer e Ayyaashi, vol. 2, pg. 315, h. 49

by Allah.”¹

For example, if the time of someone’s death has been appointed, prayer can delay it. Prayer can prevent calamities from descending. Events that were to happen years later can occur immediately. Certainly, our sincere prayers can bring the time of reappearance of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) closer.

Supplication and steadfastness in faith

Remaining steadfast on the path of the true religion until the end of our lives, especially in the presence of our open and staunch enemy, Shaitan, is not an easy task. Particularly during this period of occultation, as mentioned in the narrations, remaining firm on faith is harder than holding a burning ember in one’s hands. On the other hand, being resolute in religion is essential for salvation from divine punishment.

Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) said to Ahmad ibn Ishaq Qummi:



وَاللّٰهُ لَيَغِيْبَنَّ غَيْبَةً لَا يَنْجُو فِيْهَا مِنْ الْهَلَكَةِ اِلَّا مَنْ تَبَّتْهُ اللّٰهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ
عَلَى الْقَوْلِ بِاِمَامَتِهِ وَوَقَّفَهُ فِيْهَا لِلدُّعَاءِ بِتَعْجِيْلِ فَرَجِهِ...

*“By Allah, he will certainly go into occultation, and during that time, no one will be saved from destruction except those whom Allah, the Almighty, keeps firm in their belief in his Imamate and who will be blessed with the opportunity to pray for the hastening of his reappearance...”*²

This is the statement of an infallible, an assurance from an infallible Imam. Anyone who wishes to remain firm in the true religion during this period of occultation should pray more and more for the hastening of the reappearance of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.).

¹ Mizaanul Hikmah, vol. 4, pg. 1648, h. 5545

² Ilzaamun Naasib, vol. 1, pg. 202



Our esteemed scholars have elaborated on many more responsibilities during this time of occultation. Responsibility is not about limitations and restrictions; rather, it is the path to progress and success. Anyone who wishes to be honoured in the presence of Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) should strive to fulfil their responsibilities in the best possible way.

(3)

Examinations in the era of occultation

Examinations in the era of occultation

Examination and trial are the Sunnah of Allah, the Almighty. Holy Quran contains numerous verses that mention about trials and examinations. A few of them are as follows:

(a) Examination is the purpose of creation

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ
الْغَفُورُ ﴿٢﴾

“Who created death and life that He may try you, which of you is best in deeds; and He is the Mighty, the Wise.”¹

(b) Identification of those who strive in the way of Allah

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُتْرَكُوا وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ... ﴿١٦﴾

“What! do you think that you will be left alone while Allah has not yet known those of you who have struggled hard...”²

(c) Who is patient

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ حَتَّىٰ نَعْلَمَ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ
أَخْبَارَكُمْ ﴿٣١﴾

¹ Surah Mulk (67), verse 2

² Surah Tauba (9), verse 16

“And most certainly We will try you until We have known those among you who exert themselves hard, and the patient, and made your case manifest.”¹

Allah, the Almighty does not examine people because He is unaware of something. No! He is fully aware of everything. He examines people so that their hidden abilities may be revealed and that they become worthy of reward or punishment depending on their success or failure in these examinations.

In the traditions of Ahle Bait (a.s.), there is frequent mention of trials and examinations. Ameerul Momineen Hazrat Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) says:

لَتَبْلُغَنَّ بَلْبَلَةً، وَ لَتَعْرَبَنَّ عَرَبَلَةً حَتَّى يَعُودَ أَسْفَلُكُمْ أَعْلَاكُمْ وَ
أَعْلَاكُمْ أَسْفَلَكُمْ، وَ لَيَسْبِقَنَّ سَبَّاقُونَ كَانُوا قَصْرُوا، وَ لَيَقْضِرَنَّ
سَبَّاقُونَ كَانُوا سَبُّقُوا

“You will be subjected to a severe trial, and you will be thoroughly sifted until what is at the bottom comes up, and what is at the top falls to the bottom. Those who were left behind will come forward, and those who have moved ahead will fall behind.”²

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

إِنَّ أَهْلَ الْحَقِّ لَمْ يَزَالُوا مُنْذُ كَانُوا فِي شِدَّةٍ أَمَا إِنَّ ذَلِكَ إِلَى مُدَّةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ وَ
عَافِيَةٍ طَوِيلَةٍ

“Indeed, the people of truth have been subjected to hardships and difficulties from the very first day, but these hardships are

¹ Surah Mohammad (47), verse 31

² Meezaanul Hikmah, vol. 2, pg. 568, h. 1896

short-lived, while the period of ease and comfort is long-lasting.”¹

Trials in the era of occultation

In the era of occultation, while awaiting the reappearance of Imam (a.s.) holds immense virtues, it is also a period of severe trials. Below are a few traditions to reflect upon:

(1) Mohammad bin Mansur narrates from his father:

We were talking to each other in the service of Hazrat Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.). Imam (a.s.) turned to us and said, “What are you talking about?”

أَيْهَاتِ أَيْهَاتٍ لَا وَاللَّهِ لَا يَكُونُ مَا تَمْتَدُّونَ إِلَيْهِ أَعْيُنَكُمْ حَتَّى تُغْرَبُوا وَلَا
وَاللَّهِ لَا يَكُونُ مَا تَمْتَدُّونَ إِلَيْهِ أَعْيُنَكُمْ حَتَّى تُمَيِّزُوا، لَا وَاللَّهِ لَا يَكُونُ مَا
تَمْتَدُّونَ إِلَيْهِ أَعْيُنَكُمْ إِلَّا بَعْدَ إِيَّاسٍ لَا وَاللَّهِ لَا يَكُونُ مَا تَمْتَدُّونَ إِلَيْهِ
أَعْيُنَكُمْ حَتَّى يَشْفَى مَنْ شَقِيَ وَيَسْعَدَ مَنْ سَعَدَ

“Alas, alas! By Allah! the one you are awaiting for will not come until you are thoroughly sifted. By Allah! the one you are awaiting for will not come until you are distinguished. By Allah! the one you are awaiting for will not come until you have reached a point of despair. By Allah! the one you are awaiting for will not appear until the wretchedness of the wretched ones and the happiness of the blessed ones become clear.”²

In this tradition, Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) repeatedly swears by Allah, the Almighty to emphasize the point that in the era of occultation, we all will face the most severe trials.

¹ Meezaanul Hikmah, vol. 2, pg. 568, h. 1901

² Muntakhabul Asar, pg. 388, h. 1

(2) Janab Jabir Jo'fi asked Imam Mohammad Baqir (a.s.), "When will you appear?" He (a.s.) said:

هَيْهَاتَ هَيْهَاتَ لَا يَكُونُ فَرَجَنَا حَتَّى تُغْرَبَلُوا ثُمَّ تُغْرَبَلُوا ثُمَّ تُغْرَبَلُوا
يَقُولَهَا ثَلَاثًا حَتَّى يُذْهَبَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى الْكِدْرَ وَيُبْقَى الصَّفْوُ

*"Alas, alas! Our reappearance will not occur until you are thoroughly sifted, then you are thoroughly sifted, then you are thoroughly sifted. Imam repeated this statement thrice (and then said), until Allah, the Almighty removes all the impurities and only the pure and clean remains."*¹

(3) Al-Rabi ibn Mohammad al-Muslimi narrates that Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) said to me:

وَاللَّهِ لَتُكْسَرَنَّ كَسْرَ الزُّجَاجِ وَإِنَّ الزُّجَاجَ يُعَادُ فَيَعُودُ كَمَا كَانَ وَاللَّهِ
لَتُكْسَرَنَّ كَسْرَ الْفَخَّارِ وَإِنَّ الْفَخَّارَ لَا يَعُودُ كَمَا كَانَ وَاللَّهِ لَتُبَيِّزَنَّ وَاللَّهِ
لَتُبَحِّصَنَّ وَاللَّهِ لَتُغْرَبَلَنَّ كَمَا يُغْرَبَلُ الزُّوَانُ مِنَ الْقَبْحِ

*"By Allah! You will be broken like glass breaks, but after the glass is broken, it can be returned to its original form. By Allah! You will be broken like earthen pots which cannot be returned to its original form once broken. By Allah! You will be tested. By Allah! You will be purified. By Allah! You will be sifted just as the chaff is sifted from the wheat."*²

From these traditions, it is quite clear that during the era of occultation, the believers will be examined, and severely examined and these will be specifically to test the belief in Imamat.

(4) Ahmad ibn Ishaq al-Qummi asked Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.), "O Son

¹ Muntakhabul Asar, pg. 289, h. 5

² Muntakhabul Asar, pg. 289, h. 6

of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), will his occultation be prolonged?" Imam (a.s.) said:

اى وَرَبِّي حَتَّى يَرْجِعَ عَنْ هَذَا الْأَمْرِ أَكْثَرُ الْقَائِلِينَ بِهِ وَلَا يَبْقَى إِلَّا مَنْ
أَخَذَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَهْدَهُ لَوْلَا يَتَنَا وَكَتَبَ فِي قَلْبِهِ الْإِيمَانَ وَأَيَّدَهُ بِرُوحِ
مِنْهُ يَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ إِسْحَاقَ هَذَا أَمْرٌ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ وَسِرٌّ مِنْ سِرِّ اللَّهِ وَغَيْبٌ مِنْ
غَيْبِ اللَّهِ فَخُذْ مَا آتَيْتَكَ وَاكْتُمْهُ وَكُنْ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ تَكُنْ مَعَنَا غَدًا فِي
عَلِّيِّينَ

*"Yes, by Allah! The occultation will be prolonged to the extent that the majority who believed in it, will deviate. Only those will remain firm in this belief whom Allah has taken a covenant for our mastership (Wilayat), faith would have been embedded in their hearts and supported with the Roohul Imaan. O Ahmad ibn Ishaq, this is a matter from Allah, a secret from the secrets of Allah, and an unseen from the unseen ones of Allah. So, take what I have given you, conceal it, and be among the grateful ones, and tomorrow you will be with us in the highest ranks (Illiyeen)."*¹

(5) Hazrat Imam Mohammad Baqir (a.s.) says:

*"Your words do not appeal to the hearts of the people. Say a few things, and if they accept them, then say more, for there will be a trial in which those with sharp insight will fall, including those having critical eyes. Only us and our Shias will remain."*²

During this era of occultation, there will be a trial of the belief in

¹ Kamaaluddin, vol. 2, pg. 285, h. 1

² Al-Ghaibah by No'maani, vol. 1, pg. 208, h. 3

Imamat, and it will be a severe trial. Remaining steadfast in this belief is not easy. It is possible that someone may not completely deviate from the belief in Imamat but may still have doubts regarding the infallibility of Imams, their knowledge of the unseen, or their divine (Nooraani) creation. They may also doubt the birth of Imam (a.s.), the benefits of occultation, and other related matters.

To remain steadfast on the belief in Imamat

- (1) Praying excessively for Imam (a.s.).
- (2) Support of Allah, the Almighty.
- (3) Establishment of faith in the heart.
- (4) Being supported by the Roohul Imaan.

It is necessary to continuously pray to Allah every moment in this era of occultation. **“Dua-e-Ghareeq”**, which was taught by Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.), should be recited regularly and persistently in this period:

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

“Dua-e-Faraj” should be regularly recited in the Qunoot of every obligatory Namaaz:

اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لَوْلِيِّكَ الْحُجَّةِ بْنِ الْحَسَنِ صَلَواتِكَ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى آبَائِهِ فِي هَذِهِ
السَّاعَةِ. وَفِي كُلِّ سَاعَةٍ وَلِيًّا وَحَافِظًا وَقَائِدًا وَنَاصِرًا وَدَلِيلًا وَعَيْنًا
حَتَّى تُسْكِنَهُ أَرْضَكَ طَوْعًا وَتُمَتِّعَهُ فِيهَا طَوِيلًا

O Allah! I beseech You through the greatness of Mohammad (s.a.w.a.) and his holy progeny (a.s.), send blessings and peace upon them according to Your Majesty and Knowledge, and keep us steadfast in the religion of truth, the Wilayat and Imamat of Ahle Bait (a.s.) until the final moments of our lives.

Aameen, Yaa Rabbal Aalameen.