

And Remember The Favour Of Allah Upon You..

From every aspect, the above mentioned portion of the verse of the Holy Quran' carries an invaluable message from Allah, the Almighty. In every letter of this concise statement, runs the blood of an eternal life. The beauty of it ignites thinking. And when the mind says 'Labbaik' (I am here my Lord) to the thought, it opens up windows of delightful perspectives which are spread far and wide and are keen to express itself. The call of Labbaik freshens up the soul and relays the news of an everlasting existence. It is a source and as well as an axis. In its ambit lies the radiance of the sun, the moon and the contracting splendor of the galaxies. This freshness makes an individual worthy of being called a human being. It also adorns him with honour, provides him with grace for praising the Creator. Neither is this grace in anybody's control nor can consciousness pen down the essence of its fragrance. It is an inspiration which can be inked only through in-depth knowledge and deeds.

The Lord says, **“And remember the favours of Allah upon you”**.

(Surah Baqarah (2): 231)

Look at this happiness in the light of intellect and wisdom, which gushes out in an individual when he earns a blessing. The only difference is that – happiness is directly correlated to the worth or value of the blessing. Regardless of the nature or importance of the blessing, the one who is blessed has only one word to say to the One who has granted him that blessing, and that is 'Shukr' (Thankfulness).

The one who receives the blessing, expresses his gratitude through thanksgiving. In other words, to let the feeling sink in, an individual thanks the Bestower. Remembering a blessing is the rightful response from the one who has been granted a blessing.

There is no person or a nation which can count the blessings of Allah. Nor can the world of science invent a machine which can claim to enumerate these bounties. When the Holy Quran challenged the disbelievers to bring forth a verse let alone a chapter, it's not that man — who keeps boasting about his scientific progress – did not make an attempt. But, when they failed, the Holy Quran ratified its stance by saying that even if all the jinn and men got together they would not be able to bring the like of even a single verse of the Holy Quran. It is the remembrance of the Beneficent and a concise discussion about the blessings, which can, on one hand, be interpreted but certainly cannot be analyzed. A poet once said, "Leaves of trees are green in the eyes of the alert" The Holy Quran indicates towards this, "recognize Allah, the Bestower of favours upon you, who says, **'And not a leaf falls off its branch but He knows it.'**"

[Surah An'aam (6): 59]

The mind takes a pause here and asks: Is Allah pointing towards a specific blessing which needs to be remembered?

Ne'mat (Bounty)

A person's life is divided in two halves - short and long - the length of which cannot be determined and the knowledge of which is only with Allah. The first phase is before death and the other is after death.

In short, the first period is the stage of freewill and compulsion which begins in the cradle and ends in the grave.

Example of compulsion:

A person can stand on one foot but if he tries to raise both feet then he will come crashing down. Or, for instance, one can see through the eyes but if he's blind then the whole world is nothing but darkness for him.

Free-will

This is an aspect of life which makes human a human. We are awake, cautious, mindful and thoughtful. So, when we get obliged, we go into prostration, thanking Allah for making us able-bodied. The field of deeds is the training ground for an individual's character. Character building, beautifies itself in the field of deeds and earns itself an identity. If this character is shaped in the template of good deeds, virtues and goodness, then its status becomes such that – the blessing which Allah has provided through his Friend - Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) - is the trusty of this blessing. Hence, he (peace be upon him and his progeny) announced: **'Surely I am a faithful apostle to you. Therefore guard against (the punishment of) Allah and obey me.'**

[Shoara (26): 107-108]

This bounty is so invaluable that the mind cannot comprehend it. But it is the path of edification and Shariat which must be treaded on – as has been commanded and ordained. The light of edification and Shariat reaches up to the Arsh. If it recognises the soul of edification (Tehzeeb) and Shariat, then it should not only establish prayers and fasts but is helped and sheltered by it.

Thus, Allah, the Almighty says: **"And seek assistance through patience and prayer, and most surely it is a hard thing except for the humble ones."**

[Surah Baqarah (2): 45]

Allah is The Greatest! How exceptional and important is this blessing which has been granted by the Creator to help his servants. And then He orders to seek help from it. These are bounties which open up the windows to heavens from where the cool breeze from the tree of Tuba nurtured the soul.

The Protector

The protector of this lofty bounty, the trustee, in charge, one who keeps the enemies away, upholds its purity, splendour and charm unharmed, the one who protects it from any alterations can only be someone appointed by Allah. He is the master of the time. He is the Key to the Unknown. He recognizes his enemies too well and thus He has arranged things in such a way that the chain of Infallibles (peace be upon them) remains intact and the dust of politics doesn't settle on it nor dull its freshness and life.

Conclusion

Thus, the Greatest Messenger (peace be upon him and his progeny), while bidding adieu willed to Ameerul Momineen Ali (peace be upon him): When the nation turns its back on religion then you, O Ali, protect, the religion (through good morals and Shariat). When Imam Ali (peace be

upon him) attained martyrdom in Namaz, he (peace be upon him) said: By Lord of Kaba, I have succeeded.

Imam Husain (peace be upon him) while narrating his will to Imam Zain al-Aabideen (peace be upon him) and confirmed it with Janabe Zainab (peace be upon her) by saying, "O sister, remember me in your night prayers."

Syed al-Sajjaad (peace be upon him) is that Imam whose prostration raised such a call in the heavens that the Angels must have said Zain al-Aabideen (peace be upon him) is an exemplar of servitude.

In this manner, the chain of the infallibles reached the 11th Imam (peace be upon him), who kept establishing this bounty - that of fasting and praying - in its full glory. When it was the turn of the 12th Imam (peace be upon him), he was shielded from the machinations and deception of the enemies and first, granted minor occultation. Then then as per Divine Will, he was granted a major occultation.

Imam (peace be upon him) protected this bounty, firstly by personally keeping in touch with the first special representative and through him with the masses. The series of letters (Taugee'aat) continued. He then communicated with the people through different sources.

Imam's presence in itself can be compared with this blessing - which is the soul of Shariat

- meaning he is the guardian of best of blessings like prayers and fasting. The august blessing – Al Qaem (may Allah hasten his reappearance) — the name that sees us place our hand on the head out of respect, besides other important things, calls out I am the forgotten bounty among the Shias.

Complaint

This statement also carries grief. It reflects acute sorrow and heartache, which only his follower can understand. It is incumbent upon us to deliberate the blessing of our Imam (peace be upon him) upon us. Our Master (peace be upon him) is the greatest bounty of Allah upon us. He (peace be upon him) is a divine treasure and blessing. He (peace be upon him) is connected to the Arsh and earth every moment. He (peace be upon him) is the most dependable among those who can be relied upon. The Messenger (peace be upon him and his progeny) ascended the heavens and descended with blessings as a mercy and graced everyone with his affection and forgiveness. In this last era, and till the time of reappearance, Imam-e-Zamaana (may Allah hasten his reappearance) will be the trustee of bounties brought by the truthful Messenger (peace be upon him and his progeny).

Clamour and Commotion

There is clamour all around and the eyildoers are in a majority. There is a flood of evil from all directions. The waves of this flood are busy dislodging the foundations of mountains. On the other hand, the Holy Quran declares the Will of Allah. Nothing can withstand Allah's Will. His Decree is for the inheritor and the Imam of this earth who has been apparently and erroneously considered weak. **"And We desired to bestow a favour upon those who were deemed weak in the land, and to make them the Imams, and to make them the heirs."**

[Surah Qasas (28): 5]

Regret

It is indeed sad that a nation and a community which has such a divine treasure and blessing, is deprived of his guardianship and protection. His is teary eyed and complaining that he is the 'forgotten bounty' among the Shias.

When he is so kind to us even when we are negligent of him, then it would be impossible to enumerate the unimaginable bounties that he would shower upon us if we were truly attentive towards him.

Overview

One needs to be little attentive, aware and a mutual correlation between knowledge and actions is required. A small amount of light acquired through knowledge and wisdom will allow a follower of Imam (peace be upon him) to visualise better. The same Imam (peace be upon him) can see the burning door of Janabe Zahra (peace be upon her), Ameerul Momineen Ali (peace be upon him) being dragged with a rope around his neck, rights of Imam Hasan (peace be upon him) being usurped, the tragedy of Karbala and the patience, prayers, glorification of Allah on the lips of those who faced hardships after Karbala. There is a brief sequence whose sad scenes have enveloped the skyline of Kazimain, Khurasan and Saamarra. The one who will take revenge is not helpless. Rather, he is waiting for Divine Permission else he would have already finished off the oppressors. He is the son of the Lion of Allah. He is the possessor of Zulfiqar. He is the manifestation of Allah's Power. Now, through this complaint, look at the tears in the piercing eyes of Imam-e-Zamaana (may Allah hasten his reappearance). Which follower will not cry incessantly after hearing this sentence?

Goal

"I am the forgotten bounty among the Shias." This sentence uttered by Imam-e-Zamana (may Allah hasten his reappearance) is not unexpected or out of place. Neither is it a complaint. There is nothing other than this. The one who hears this is at best moved for a few moments and then becomes negligent again.

It is not like that. Imam (peace be upon him) is the representative of Allah, the Almighty on this earth and he is directly in contact with Allah. This statement is an assertion and just a reminder, a wake-up call for the inattentive ones. It is a path which stretches a long way and its final stop is reappearance. The ones who have gone ahead on this path have left footprints behind which are devoid of any pitfalls. This is the very path which the provider of bounties has prepared for his special servants. This sentence of Imam-e-Zamana (may Allah hasten his reappearance) encourages pondering and offers an outlook – to join the caravan moving along this path. The consequences will not be good if one gets deviated. It is the hospitality of our Benevolent Master (peace be upon him) who is gathering his followers individually and inviting them to tread this path. He is not negligent of us even for a moment.

Plea

O my Master! O my leader! O the one who keeps an eye on the guards, we the helpless ones request you, "O our Master, we are the weak and lowly ones. Your envoys are Janabe Jibraeel and the other angels. You rank is affiliated to Allah. O Master if your kind support wouldn't have

been with us we wouldn't have survived in any corner of this corrupt world. Please provide us with the resources to tread the path that leads to you. Give us the courage and resolve.

A Hidden Caller Calls

Break free from the desire of being famous. Stay attached with the Religious Authority of the time. He is our representative. Attend gatherings of scholars who practice what they preach and remember the favours of Allah (upon you).

Remember?

“Salutations be upon you O My Master! A sincere salutation to you concerning Mastership. I bear witness that you are the Imam, the guided one (Mahdi), in word and deed.”

[Isteghaasa ba Hazrat Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance), Mafaatih al-Jinaan, p. 216]

Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (May Allah Hasten his Reappearance) And The Night Of Decree

Lailat al-Qadr (The Night of Decree) is regarded as the most important and sacred night in the Islamic calendar. Among all the 350 nights and days of the year, this night holds the highest position. Holy Quran has declared it better than a thousand nights i.e. worship in this night is better than that of a little over 83 years. It means worship during the nights and days of a little over 83 years devoid of this night cannot be compared to worship in this night. It is the most important night for Muslims - be it the 19th, 21st, or 23rd night according to Shias, or 27th night of Maah-e-Ramazan according to Ahle Tasannun. Regardless of the disagreement on the date, the significance of this night is accepted by all. On this night, special arrangements for worship are made in mosques and other places of Worship. People generally spend the entire night in worship.

This night is important because destiny is written in this night. Life and death, sustenance, children, marriage, dignity, honor, disgrace, rains, famine, flood, war, unrest and all that would occur in this world is decreed in this night." * (According to Shia beliefs, the evils that would occur would be a result of evil human actions and not forced by Allah but since human actions are in the Pre-Knowledge of Allah, He would decree those).

The Holy Quran has explained this reality in the following words:

"The angels and Jibraeel descend in it by the permission of their Lord for every affair".

[Surah Qadr (97): 3]

The word **"for every affair"** is explained in the 2nd and 3rd verse of Surah Dukhaan (44) thus:

"Surely We revealed it on a blessed night, surely We are ever warning. Therein every wise affair is made distinct."

The Night of Decree arrives every year. One might presume that the Holy Quran was revealed over the blessed life of Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) and the revelation having concluded during his lifetime, there remains no possibility of ongoing revelation of the Quran. This is flawed thinking. Consequently, people with such thinking might only observe this night as formality. However, this is not true. We must never entertain such thoughts as the Night of Decree bears two very important merits:

The first one is related to the revelation of Quran, which contains everything - wet or dry. Secondly, Holy Quran has all the information of changes about everything since the day of creation. The progress of time depends on years, months and days. These changes with time and their indications are understood only by those entrenched in knowledge. Therefore all changes that would occur during the year are scribed in a scroll brought down from the heaven to the earth by an angel. The Archangel, who is also known as Spirit (Ruh), descends at a point and fulfills his responsibilities. We will provide additional explanation about this event.

The Night of Decree arrives every year. Muslims, who make arrangements for this every year, also narrate its reality. Revelation of the Holy Quran is mentioned as an event of the past since the word is used in its past tense:

"Surely We revealed it on the grand night."

In the blessed Surah Dukhaan too, past tense is used:

"Surely We revealed it on a blessed night."

However, the coming down of angels and affixing of destiny is mentioned in the present tense.

"The angels and Jibrael descend in it by the permission of their Lord for every affair."

In Surah Dukhaan as well, the distribution of affairs and destiny is mentioned in its present tense.

"Therein every wise affair is made distinct."

Scholars know that present tense is used to explain an event of continuity and sequence. Since revelation of Quran was a past event and a completed affair at a specific time, and is not ongoing, past tense was used for its revelation. But the descent of the angels and the distribution of affairs and destiny is a continuous affair and hence present tense is used.

"The angels and Jibrael descend... and... Therein every wise affair is made and prove that this affair ongoing.

Another important aspect is that this Night of Decree is not only an existing and continuous affair but also a great bounty from Allah. It is narrated from Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny):

"The Almighty Allah has bestowed the great bounty – the Night of Decree - only to my nation, while He has not granted this privilege to other nations."

[Tafseer-e-Namuna, vol. 27, p. 190]

A Night in the Blessed Month

To add to its importance is that it is one of the nights in the holy month of Ramazan and not in the remaining 11 months. Allah revealed in the 185th verse of Surah Baqarah:

"The month of Ramazan is that in which the Quran was revealed."

It is mentioned in Surah Qadr: **"Surely We revealed it on the grand night."**

In Surah Dukhaan it is said: **"Surely We revealed it on a blessed night."**

This confirms that the Night of Decree is a part of the blessed month.

Significance of this Night

Almighty Allah placed infinite reward for worship in the holy month of Ramazan. Even the breath of a fasting person is glorification, while his sleep is considered worship. On the other hand, forgiveness of our sins, relief from severities of the judgment day, passing over the bridge of Seraat and entry in Paradise, all of these would be an outcome of otherwise many good actions. Therefore, Allah's mercy and grace demanded that Lailat al-Qadr was kept hidden within a few nights so that on this pretext we perform few more good actions and increase our reward.

Therefore, it was mentioned that it is among the odd nights of the last ten days of the holy month of Ramazan. Sometimes it was mentioned as one of the nights from 19th, 21st or 23rd

of the holy month. Imam Jafar Sadiq (peace be upon him) has mentioned about the three nights in the following manner:

"Affairs are decided in the 19th night. On 21st night a ruling is made and on the 23rd a final verdict is passed for execution." [Al-Kaafi, vol. 4, p. 159, H. 9]

Ahle Tasannun consider 27th night as Lailat al-Qadr. We are heedless of the great bounties of these nights and hence do not utilize our time even during these three nights completely for worship. We must ponder that these nights are the best means of our forgiveness. Especially, the grief about the martyrdom of Ameerul Momineen (peace be upon him) is an important means for us to acquire proximity of Allah. We must consider these nights as transient and by the intercession of Aale Muhammad (peace be upon them), attempt to acquire Allah's forgiveness and pave the way to Paradise. Otherwise, it is found in traditions that if a person is not forgiven in the holy month of Ramazan, then he is never forgiven except that he is blessed with the performance of Hajj and he seeks forgiveness in the land of Arafaat.

Upon whom do the Angels descend? Who is the recipient of divine affairs?

According to Quranic verses, when it is mentioned that in the Night of Decree, Angels and Spirit descend and all affairs of the year are decided a question arises:

Upon whom do the angels descend? And to whom are the affairs of the year and in other words, Allah's plan for human beings handed over? Who is the epicenter of the descent of angels and Allah's mercy?

Whenever we communicate any message, we ensure to keep the recipient of the message in our mind. This is an intellectually acceptable practice. But is it also acceptable that messages keep accumulating while the sender has no clue about the receiver? The messenger stands in the middle of the road and searches for the receiver of the message?

What is the divine practice here? Has Allah sent angels without the information of a recipient and are the Angels, clueless about where to go after they descend, especially in a situation when the best of the angels, The Spirit, is descending in Lailat al-Qadr? According to traditions this angel descends from the heavens and visits earth only once a year with all the important affairs.

The method of Allah (Glorified be He) is that whenever He sent down an angel with revelation, message, book, scroll... on the earth, He also informed the angel about whom to meet and hand over the trust. Therefore, He appointed Hazrat Ibrahim (peace be upon him) for the scrolls, Hazrat Moosa (peace be upon him) for Torah, Hazrat Isa (peace be upon him) for the Bible, and Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) for Holy Quran. Archangel Jibraeel and all other angels were well aware about the opportunity they received in meeting these lofty personalities.

The ultimate verdict of wisdom states that if **"affairs"** are revealed in the Night of Decree, then there is a **"Master of the Affairs"** and **"one vested with authority who can enquire about all the affairs."** The existence of Allah's proof is mandatory when angels and Spirit descend to meet him.

The tradition of Imam Husain (peace be upon him) explains this reality: "In relation with the destiny and distribution of affairs, the decision of Allah (Glorified be He) descends in your holy presence and begins from your blessed house."

[Mafaatih al-Jinaan, Ziyaarat Mutlaqa of Imam Husain (peace be upon him), First Ziyaarat]

Thus it is Ahle Bait (peace be upon them) in whose presence all the affairs are presented. The regular occurrence of the Night of Decree every year is the proof that there exists a **"Master of the Affairs"** who is the proof of Allah and **"Wali al-Amr."**

Hazrat Imam Muhammad Baqir (peace be upon him) said: "O Shias! Establish proof and argument by Surah Qadr. Surely you will succeed. By Allah! After the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his progeny), who is the leader of your religion, this Surah is Allah's proof and argument for you. O Shias! Use Surah Haa Meem Dukhaan as your argument. Allah (Glorified be He) says: Surely We revealed it on a blessed night surely We are ever warning. Therein every wise affair is made distinct. After the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his progeny), this is specific for his vicegerents. O People! Allah (Glorified be He) reveals in the Holy Quran: And there is not a nation but a warner has gone among them' (warner refers to the divine proof).

People asked, "O son of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his progeny), isn't Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) the warner for this nation?"

Imam (peace be upon him) replied, "Certainly, but is he present at this time?"

They said: "No."

Then Imam (peace be upon him) asked: "So does not this nation need any warner like Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny)?"

They replied: "Yes of course."

Then Imam (peace be upon him) responded: "Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) appointed a warner for this nation before leaving this world."

They inquired: "Is Holy Quran not sufficient in this matter?"

Imam (peace be upon him) retorted: "Indeed but only when the interpreter and the teacher of the Holy Quran is present."

They further asked: "Did Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) not provide the complete exegesis of the entire Quran?"

Imam (peace be upon him) countered: "He did but only to one person and also introduced him to his nation and he was Ali Ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon them)."

They probed further: "Is this some special affair which common people cannot receive?"

Imam (peace be upon him) replied: "Yes! Allah has decided that till His religion does not dominate (over all other religions) and the time of its explicit manifestation does not arrive, He must be worshipped silently. Just like Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) and Janabe Khadija (peace be upon her) did not disclose this matter till the time they were not instructed to do so."

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They asked: "Is it necessary that the master of the religion and the master of the affairs keep this matter concealed?" ::

Imam (peace be upon him) answered: "Ali Ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon them) alongside Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) did not announce this matter till Allah did not command them for it."

They agreed: "Yes, this is true."

Imam (peace be upon him) elucidated: "Our affairs are similar to this. Till the time the book reaches its appointed time." (Surah Baqarah (2): 235)

[Ta'weel al-Aayaat, vol. 2, p. 824-825 narrating from Al-Kaafi, vol. 239, p. 6; Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 25, p.8, Tradition 68]

Therefore, for the revelation of the affair, the existence of the 'Master of the Affairs' is absolutely essential. Thus, The Night of Decree is only for those who believe in the existence of Hujjat Ibn Hasan al-Askari (peace be upon them). It is for those who spend every moment awaiting his reappearance, sobbing and praying to Allah (Glorified be He) to hasten his reappearance, especially in this night, they plead Him for a blessed opportunity to spend this night in his holy presence.

Among the affairs that Allah (Glorified be He) is going to decree in Lailat al-Qadr, we pray that first and foremost, He ordains the reappearance of our Imam, our master, our leader, the master of our bounties, the medium of Allah's blessings – Hazrat Hujjat Ibn Hasan al-Askari (peace be upon them) and include us among his sincere servants.

Aameen! O Lord of the Worlds!

Exegesis Of Dua Ahad

(Continued from previous issue)

O! Allah, I beseech You in Your Noble Name, in the Light of Your Luminous Face and Your Eternal Kingdom. O Ever-living! O Self-Subsistent! I beseech You in the name of Your Name with which the heavens and the earth have lit up and in Your Name with which the past and the coming generations have become upright! O He Who has been always alive before the existence of all living things! O He Who shall be alive after the extinction of all living things! O He Who has been always alive even when there was nothing else alive! O He Who revives the dead ones and causes the living ones to die! O Ever-living! There is no god save You.

In the aforementioned verses of this supplication, we beseech Allah, Glorified be He, through His Name, Luminous Face, His Kingdom and His Specific Names. We shall mention some important terms here:

The literal meaning of the word "Wajh" is face i.e. something which helps draw our attention towards a particular thing. 'Wajh and "Jaah also mean value and position. This word has also been used at numerous places in the Holy Quran. We can refer to 'Wajhullah (Allah's Face), 'Wajho Rabbik (Face of your Lord), 'Wajho Rabbehim' (Face of their Lord), etc.

What does the term "Allah's Face" imply? Firstly, it is important to clarify that Allah and His Face are completely different. Imam Muhammad Baqir (peace be upon him) specifies:

"Surely Allah, Mighty and Majestic be He, is far greater than being described through a face."

(Al-Tauheed by Shaikh Saduq (may Allah be pleased with him), p. 149, chapter 12, H. 1]

Transcendence within the belief of Divine Monotheism (Tauheed) is an extremely important pillar according to the true religion and teachings of Ahle Bait (peace be upon them). It means to purify and sanctify Allah from all kinds of comparisons and resemblances. Allah is holier than and free from everything which is found in human beings. Then what does 'Face' in this statement refer to? Let us see what "Face" means in the light of traditions of Aale Muhammad (peace be upon them).

Face (Wajh) refers to Religion

In the above tradition, at the outset, Imam Muhammad Baqir (peace be upon him) has sanctified Allah from the apparent connotation of the word 'Face'. He then explains: "Rather it means that everything shall be destroyed except His religion and 'Face' (Wajh) is that through which He can be reached."

[Ibid]

Face (Wajh) means the path of truth

Haarith Ibn Mughairah al-Nasri, an extremely reliable companion of Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) and a traditionalist (Muhaddith), narrates that I inquired from Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) about the verse:

"Everything shall be destroyed except His Face

[Surah Qasas (28): 88]

In his reply, the Imam (peace be upon him) said:

"Everything shall be destroyed except the one who took the path of truth."

(Al-Tauheed by Shaikh Saduq (may Allah be pleased with him), p. 149, chapter 12, H. 2]

What is the path of truth? Obedience to and following the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) is the true face of God. Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) has explained the aforementioned verse as follows:

"Whoever comes to Allah with whatever he was ordered concerning the obedience of Muhammad and the Imams after him (peace be upon them), then (surely) he is the face which shall not be destroyed and then he recited 'and whoever obeys the Messenger then indeed he has obeyed Allah!'"

[Surah Nisaa (4): 80]

[Ibid, H. 3]

Face (Wajh) refers to Ahle Bait (peace be upon them)

Imam Baqir (peace be upon him) elucidated: "We are the Face of Allah. We keep frequenting the earth among you all. Whoever has recognized us has done so (his reward is fixed) but whoever is ignorant of us then indeed certainty (death) is in front of him."

[Ibid, p. 150, H. 6] If we summarise these three interpretations then we can conclude that Ahle Bait (peace be upon them) are the Face of Allah while the religion of Allah as also the path of truth also refers only to them.

Khaisama narrates that I inquired from Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) about this verse **"Everything shall be destroyed except His Face."**

Imam (peace be upon him) replied: "His religion. The Messenger of Allah and Ameerul Momineen (peace be upon them) are the religion of Allah and His Face."

[Ibid, p. 151, H. 7]

Imploring by the means of His Noble Face in this statement of Dua Ahad refers to the sacred personalities of Muhammad and Aale Muhammad (peace be upon them). They are the luminous face of Allah and it is through their mediation that prayers are accepted.

Another term is "Mulkek al-Qadeer" (or Qadeem as per some narrations) which means "the everlasting or all-powerful kingdom". Allah has complete dominance over His entire kingdom. He grants it to and takes it away from whomsoever He wishes.

"Say: O Allah, Master of the Kingdom! You grant the kingdom to whomsoever You please and take away the kingdom from whomsoever You please, and You exalt whom you please and abase whom You please, in Your Hand is the good; surely You have power over all things."

[Surah Aale Imraan (3): 26]

Although Allah bestowed human beings with power and freewill but He still has more authority over them as compared to themselves. He can withdraw from them whenever He wishes. No one should assume these things to be his own, rather they are all bestowed. Servitude also demands that we consider ourselves totally helpless in front of Him.

O Ever-living! O Self-Subsistent! I beseech You in the name of Your Name with which the heavens and the earth have lit up

Allah is the Ever-living Being but it should be borne in mind that that His life cannot be compared to our lives. Rather He is the creator and owner of our lives. We have been cautioned against drawing any mental, intellectual and perceptive image about Him. His Names are equally transcendental and praiseworthy just as His Essence. In other words, when we discuss about Allah's life then we are only permitted to say that "there is no death for Him". "(He is) Living (such that) there is no (concept of) death for Him."

[Al-Tauheed of Shaikh Saduq (may Allah be pleased with him), p. 138-140, 146]

There is nothing like death for Him, unlike other living beings for whom there is life and death. Rather He is the creator of their life and death.

O Self-Subsistent means that He controls the entire universe and brings about peaks and troughs in their lives. All of us are completely under His control and power. He is the Authority, Master, Protector, Reformer and Controller over the entire creation and there are no exceptions to this. None can escape His Kingdom and Dominion. Everyone is humble and meek before Him.

After this, we beseech Allah through that Name which is the cause of the illumination of heavens and the earth. The word 'Ism'in Arabic means name or sign. It is derived from the root 'wow-seen-meem (wa-sa-ma)' which means sign. Hence, whenever we recite Bismillah (in the Name of Allah) it actually translates as 'I indicate for myself that I am a creation of Allah and He is my creator:

Imam Reza (peace be upon him) states: "Bismillah (In the Name of Allah) means that I specify for myself with one of the signs (Simat) of Allah, Mighty and Majestic be He, and that is servitude."

The narrator asked: What is the meaning of Simat? Imam (peace be upon him) replied: "Sign."

[Ma'aani al-Akhbaar, p. 3, H. 1]

It is imperative to mention few important points here. Firstly, All Divine Names and Attributes are not a part of Allah's Essence. Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) explains: "Name is different from the Entity. All (divine) Names are different from Allah."

[Al-Kaafi, vol. 1, p. 87, H. 2]

Secondly, Allah's Names are of two kinds - Literal (Lafzi) and Universal (Kauni). Literal (Lafzi) are those Names which are words formed based on combining of alphabets such as "Allah", "Rahmaan", "Raheem", etc. Universal (Kauni) refer to the entire creation of Allah which indicate towards Him (being their creator). All divine Names, Prophet Muhammad and his progeny (peace be upon them) are the Greatest of the Greatest of the Greatest Names of Allah (Isme A'zame A'zame A'zam). It is through their divine light that this universe is illuminated. Such statements are found in supplications: "The earth was illuminated through your light."

[Al-Balad al-Ameen, p. 302]

How many Names of Allah are Lafzi? According to traditions, 4,000 Names of Allah are Lafzi.

A question arises here that if Allah is unfathomable through thoughts and imaginations, then what is the purpose of these Names? The reply is that it is He who has selected these Names for Himself. We have to call unto Him through these Names only. Neither do we have any right to coin a name for Him, nor has He permitted us for it. All His Names and Attributes are Tauqeefi i.e. no one has the right to say anything other than what He has ordered. In other words, we have been forbidden to call Him by any other name than what He has commanded.

Allah implements every command under the light of a specific Name. For details, one can refer to Dua Simaat which is to be recited on Fridays at the time of Asr.

And in Your Name with which the past and the coming generations have become upright!

This statement implies that means of success and good fortune in this world and the hereafter are provided for them. *O He Who has been always alive before the existence of all living things! O He Who shall be alive after the extinction of all living things! O He Who has been always alive even when there was nothing else alive! O He Who revives the dead ones and causes the living ones to die! O Ever-living! There is no god save You.*

We have already discussed about life and death above. Allah is the one who grants life and causes to die. He can cause anyone to die whenever He wishes and can grant life to whosoever He wishes. If He wants, He can cause His divine proof to remain alive amidst burning flames of fire. If He pleases, He can call His divine proof up to the fourth sky and keep him alive. If He wishes, He can keep His divine proof alive in the depth of a well. If He desires, He can cause His divine proof to remain alive even inside the belly of a fish. If He wants, He can keep His divine proof alive by concealing him from the people and granting him a prolonged occultation. Indeed, Allah the Almighty grants life.

It is a pity though, that so-called Muslims neither doubt over Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) being unharmed in the raging flames of fire nor about Prophet Isa (peace be upon him) being alive on the fourth sky. There are no reservations for anyone over the safety and well-being of Prophet Yusuf (peace be upon him) in the depth of a well and neither does anyone challenge the account of Prophet Yunus (peace be upon him) in the belly of a fish. Ironically, if there is any objection, then it is only over the last divine proof of Allah, who will fill the earth with justice and equity, the twelfth successor of Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) viz. His Eminence Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance), whose occultation and reappearance are proven from the Holy Quran and traditions. .

We want the readers to pay attention towards an important point here. Any objection over the long life of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) is like actually casting a doubt over Allah's divine power.

We pray to Allah, the Most High, that O Allah! We implore You for the sake of the holy existence of your last divine proof, Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance), keep us steadfast on his Imamate during such turbulent times and protect us from doubts and objections raised by the enemies of Islam. Aameen!

(To be continued later... Insha Allah).

A Complete Submission

The manner and style of the verses of the Holy Quran is of such sublimely miraculous nature that each attempt to express their transcendental beauty causes human intellect to wander endlessly in the depths of their meanings and concepts. If man was to completely utilize whatever intellect Allah has granted, this would be a great achievement in itself. Often words fail to describe the true depth of meanings which are conveyed by the Divine verses but at the same time, hearts resonate with their understanding and acceptance. As an example, let us look at one of the most frequently recited verses of the Holy Quran:

"Indeed, Allah and His angels send greetings on the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny), then O those who profess belief, you too send salutations unto him and submit a complete submission.

[Surah Ahzaab (33): 56]

The last portion of this verse stands as an exegesis of the entire verse and acts as a filter which erases all the dust and haze accumulated upon our intellect and causes it to enter into the light of clarity and illumination. When we ponder over the last portion of this verse and attempt to analyze its profundity from the depths of our souls only then can we put forth our humble efforts to tread the path of great personalities who are the very embodiment of this verse. If we were to look at these great personalities from the aspect of their faithfulness in their absolute submission to the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) we can analyze how they have fulfilled its right. Had people really acted upon this complete submission to the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) then perhaps we would have avoided the great calamities which have befallen us, destroyed cities and villages and their inhabitants in their strides.

The word "Tasleem" has been derived from the word "Salaamatun" or "Salaamun" which means to be submissive or to yield.

[Al-Munjid, p. 487]

The word Sa-la-ma has been used in the Holy Quran 4 times in the meaning of submission and obedience. Surah Nisa (4): 91 and 190 and Surah Nahl (16): 87 and 128. We shall mention one of these verses as an example:

"On that day they shall offer their submission to Allah."

[Surah Nahl (16): 87]

Submission can be analyzed in two ways here:

- a. Apparent submission
- b. Submission from the heart

Apparent submission means that a person submits on a topic superficially while he doesn't actually accept it from his heart. Rather, he would oppose this topic at the first available opportunity. This has been mentioned in the Holy Quran as such:

"The Bedouins proclaim that they have accepted faith, then you inform them that you all haven't actually believed rather you all should say that you have professed to the acceptance of Islam and belief hasn't yet entered into your hearts".

[Surah Hujuraat (49): 14]

The relation between Islam and Imaan (belief)

The aforementioned verse points towards a very clear distinction between those people who claim to have accepted Islam but haven't progressed through the various levels of belief. Islam can be accepted in the meaning of submission only when those who claim to accept it, understand its actual meaning and concept which, at its very core, is accepting the guidance and mastership of Ahle Bait (peace be upon them). Without this belief, their acceptance of Islam would be hollow and nothing more than an apparent shape and structure of Islam, devoid of its soul. Hence through the apparent acceptance of Islam a person can profess to be a Muslim but cannot be called a Mo'min (believer).

Now we shall mention a tradition from Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) on the topic of Islam and belief, in which he (peace be upon him) says:

"Islam refers to those apparent things which are generally accepted by the people viz. the belief in Divine Monotheism, Prophethood of Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny), reciting the daily prayers, giving Zakat, performing Hajj and fasting in the month of Ramazan, are all referred to as Islam. But belief is accepting the guidance and mastership of the Ahle Bait (peace be upon them) along with the aforementioned actions. If a person fulfills all of the former but does not accept the mastership of the Ahle Bait (peace be upon them) then even though he may be considered to be a Muslim he would be deviated (he wouldn't be a believer)."

[Tafseer al-Burhan, vol. 4, p. 212, H. 5; Al-Kaafi, vol. 2, p. 24, H. 4]

Apparent submission can be a cause of punishment for a person. As an example, Allah the Almighty says in the Holy Quran that whosoever turns away from Allah and His orders i.e. he acts upon jealousy, greed, narcissism, etc. then Allah shall cause punishment to descend upon him. Apparently a person is aware of these orders and understands and accepts them but these do not actually enter into the depths of his heart.

"And although their hearts were certain about those miracles, still they did not accept them due to arrogance and rebellion. Then (O Prophet) see the fate of those who spread corruption."

[Surah Naml (27): 14]

This is the miraculous nature of the words of God which has so eloquently expressed this psychological aspect. Even though their hearts were absolutely certain about it, they still did not accept it out of rebellion and arrogance.

Firaun was well aware that Prophet Moosa (peace be upon him) was speaking the truth and his intellect too had accepted the veracity of the words of Prophet Moosa (peace be upon him) but it was his arrogance, love of position and power and his desire for kingship and rulership which stopped his heart from accepting Prophet Moosa (peace be upon him).

Muawiyah Ibn Abi Sufyan knew Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon them) much better than others but he did not submit to him and destroyed his hereafter by bearing hatred and enmity towards him.

Submitting from the heart

This is the true submission which guarantees Paradise. When the light of submission illuminates in the heart of a person then there are no boundaries which limit its expanse. This is real submission which a person accepts from his heart. Faith and action are the fruits of true submission. We shall further discuss this form of submission.

It would not be inappropriate to say that when apparent submission transforms into true submission, a person ascends a heavenly position wherein sometimes he resembles Salman al-Muhammadi (may Allah have mercy on him), Hurr Ibn Yazid al-Riyahi and at times Zohair Ibn Qain al-Bajali, Haroon alMakki, Fuzail Ibn Yasaar, Kulaib al-Tasleem, etc. But at the same time, if this submission would remain restricted to a person's thoughts and not translate into actions, then he would tread the footsteps of Hassaan Ibn Saabit, Ali Ibn Hamzah al-Bataaeni and Shalmaghani (may Allah curse them).

When a person enters into the realms of submission, he himself understands that no doubts can be raised against the Imam appointed by Allah. If an apple was to be split into two parts and kept before Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) and he were to adjudicate that one portion of the apple is Halaal while the other portion is Haraam then there is no room for someone who possesses true submission to question any part of this judgment.

Let us observe aspects of this true submission through traditions of the Infallible Imams (peace be upon him).

"A complete submission means submit to Him with Mastership and whatever has reached us from Him." [Tafseer al-Qummi, vol. 2. p. 196; Tafseer al-Burhaan, vol. 4, p. 488]

Abu Baseer asked Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) about Surah Ahzaab verse 56, to which Imam (peace be upon him) replied:

"To send salutations upon them and to submit completely before them!"

[Al-Mahaasin, vol. 1, p. 271]

Abu Hashim narrates that I was with Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) in the Holy Mosque of Mecca. The governor of the city went up to the pulpit and delivered the Friday sermon in which he said:

"Surely Allah and His angels send salutations unto the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny). O you who believe! You too send salutations upon him and submit a complete submission."

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) addressed me: "O Abu Hashim! What do these people know about the exegesis of this verse?" Then he (peace be upon him) explained:

"Submit a complete submission to the mastership of Ali (peace be upon him)."

"And on that day, they shall stand submissively before Allah."

[Surah Nahl (16): 87]

"Surely Allah and His angels send salutations unto the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny). O you who believe! You too send salutations upon him and submit a complete submission."

[Surah Ahzaab (33): 56]

"The Bedouins claim that they have brought faith, O Prophet! Inform them that they haven't brought faith rather they should say that we have accepted Islam, while faith has not yet entered into their hearts."

[Surah Hujuraat (49): 14]

"And they rejected the miracles despite having certitude about them due to their prejudice and pride. Then see how the end of was of the corrupted."

[Surah Naml (27): 14]

"(Prophet Moosa (peace be upon him)) said: Surely you know that none have revealed these miracles except the Lord of the heavens and the earth as proofs and surely I think you O Firaun that you are destroyed."

[Surah Bani Israel (17): 102]

"And they have hearts but they do not understand through them."

[Surah A'raaf (7): 179]

"Have they not travelled in the land so that they may have hearts through which they may understand?"

[Surah Hajj (22): 46]

Now let us glance through some historical incidents to understand the effects and blessings of this true submission. If we were to look at the beginnings of Islam then among the foremost ones the name of Hassaan Ibn Saabit stands out. He had the good fortune to meet the five great infallible ones viz. Holy Prophet, Ameerul Momineen, Janabe Zahra, Imam Hasan and Imam Husain (peace be upon them). He was a companion of Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) and was present at the time of Ghadeer in 10 A.H. He pledged allegiance to Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon them) and even composed poems glorifying the appointment of Ameerul Momineen (peace be upon him). But unfortunately this was only an apparent submission, not true submission. Due to this, during the reign of Usmaan when he was asked whether Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) was right or Usmaan? He replied, "I don't know". When someone asked Ameerul Momineen (peace be upon him) about Hassaan Ibn Saabit after his death, whether he died as a Shia of Ameerul Momineen (peace be upon him). Imam (peace be upon him) responded: "One who dies without recognizing the Imam of his time has died the death of disbelief and hypocrisy." i.e. Hassaan died a death of disbelief and hypocrisy – which implies that not having true submission towards the Imam appointed by Allah would lead a person to unending tribulations of Hell fire.

Karbala stands as the fundamental source of our beliefs and our existence. Can anyone claim that the killers of Imam Husain (peace be upon him) did not recognize him? They too were on the position of only apparently submission (of Tauheed and Prophethood) but were devoid of

true submission due to which they became deserving of the fire of Hell. History is replete with such individuals.

Hasan Ibn Ali al-Washsha says that one day, my master Imam Reza (peace be upon him) called me to Marw and addressed me as such:

“O Hasan, today Ali Ibn Hamzah al Bataaeni has died and has entered into his grave at this hour. Then the two angels of the grave entered and asked him, 'Who is your Lord?' He replied 'Allah!' Then they asked him, 'who is your Prophet?' He replied, 'Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny)! Then they asked, 'who is your Master?' He replied, 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon them)! They went on, 'After him?' He replied, 'Hasan (peace be upon him)! They continued, 'And after him?' He replied, 'Husain (peace be upon him)! “Then who?, they asked. He said, 'Ali Ibn Husain (peace be upon them)! They asked 'and who after him?' He responded, 'Muhammad Ibn Ali (peace be upon them)! They asked further, and who after him?' He replied, 'Jafar Ibn Muhammad (peace be upon them)! They asked, after him?' He replied, 'Musa Ibn Jafar (peace be upon them)! When they asked, and who after him?', he stuttered. They rebuked him and asked him again, 'who after him?' He was still silent. They asked him sternly, 'Did Musa Ibn Jafar (peace be upon them) not inform you of this affair i.e. Imam of Imam Ali Ibn Musa al-Reza (peace be upon them)?' Then the two angels struck him with a rod made of fire and they filled his grave with fire till the Day of Judgment.”

I left the presence of my master, recorded that day and in just a few days I received a .. letter from the people of Kufa informing about the death of Bataaeni on the very same day which Imam (peace be upon him) had mentioned and that he had been put into the grave at that very time.

[Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 49, p. 58]

It should be borne in mind that Ali Ibn Hamza al-Bataaeni was not an ordinary person. He was from among the closest companions of Imam Musa Ibn Jafar al-Kazim (peace be upon them) and was considered to be among his reliable and trustworthy confidants. But later turned a Waaqifiand denied the Imam of Imam Reza (peace be upon him). This was because he had submission to the Imam of his time was only apparent and not from his heart.

There are other examples such as Muhammad Ibn Ali al-Shalmaghaani alAzadari during the minor occultation who was from the companions of Imam Hasan alAskari (peace be upon him) and wrote many books. During the time of the third special deputy Husain Ibn Rauh Nawbakhti, Shalmaghaani falsely claimed to be a special representative of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) and went astray. Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) sent a letter in which he has cursed him.

[Mahdi Mau'ood (translation of Behaar al-Anwaar, v.51), p. 685]]

After all what caused Shalmaghaani to deviate? Did he not possess apparent submission? Definitely he did, but because he did not truly submit from his heart, he rejected the mastership of Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him). In order to further understand this true submission from the heart, let us have a look at lives of the true companions of the Ahle Bait (peace be upon them).

In the beginning of Islam, we find Hazrat Salman al-Muhammadi among the first of such true believers. His level of submission was such that he would literally walk in the footsteps of Holy Prophet (peace be upon him 1 Those who believe in the Imamate of only 7 Imams i.e. up to Imam Kazim (peace be upon him) are known as Waqefi and his progeny). He was at the position of absolute acceptance and belief for every word and every action of Ahle Bait (peace be upon them). This is probably the reason why Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said that Salman is from us, Ahle Bait (peace be upon them).

The great position and excellence of the martyrs of Karbala is solely due to their absolute submission. When confronted by death, they said: O grandson of the Prophet of Allah! Even if we were to be killed seventy times and brought back to life we will not give up our allegiance to you.

During the times of other Imams (peace be upon him) as well, we find such outstanding personalities like the companion of Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) - Haroon al-Makki. His submission towards the Imam (peace be upon him) was to such an extent that one day when Imam (peace be upon him) ordered him to enter into a burning furnace, with no questions asked, Haroon just leapt into it. After some time, he was seen sitting in the fire and glorifying Allah!

[Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 47, p. 105]

Mukhtar Ibn Zaid al-Shahham narrates from Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) that I met Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) and I spoke to him about one of our companions whose name was Kulaib. Whatever we mention in front of him (from your narrations) he immediately says "I submit and accept". So we have named him as "Kulaib al-Tasleem" (Kulaib, the submissive, one). Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) said:

"May Allah have mercy upon him!" Then he asked: "Do you know what submission is?" We were silent. Then Imam (peace be upon him) informed: "To be humble before Allah"

Then Imam (peace be upon him) recited the below verse from the Holy Quran: **"Those who bring faith and do good actions and are humble before their Lord."**

[Surah Hud (11): 23] [Al-Kaafi, vol. 1, p. 391]

Our salvation is solely dependent on true submission to Ahle Bait (peace be upon them). It is a caravan which is moving towards its destination with a burning lamp guiding towards the Mastership of Ahle Bait (peace be upon them) – a burning lamp which illuminates the hearts with the light of Wilayat. This caravan makes the path of truth easy for those who seek it. It is that voice which awakens a person's intellect and drives him towards action and understanding. If few actions from our side result in the Imam (peace be upon him) turning towards us then this would be a cause of salvation from all calamities which surround us in this world.

Here, few actions from our side, is about being mindful that we should be attentive towards the Imam of our time. We should strive day and night to fulfill his rights upon us. We should focus our world-weary eyes towards those places which increase our proximity towards the Imam of our time. Our destination is the camp of the Holy Imam (peace be upon him) and this is the essence of absolute submission to Allah and His representative on this earth.

SHABAAN 1439 A.H.

Absolute submission to the words and actions of Ahle Bait (peace be upon them) makes one eligible for Mercy and Forgiveness from Allah and is the sole path of salvation. Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) in one of his letters has referred to this very discussion by stating: "Then obey Allah and be submissive towards us..."

(Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 53, p. 179].

And in another letter, "O Mehzam... and only those who submit shall acquire salvation."

(Al-Kaafi, vol. 1, p. 368]

Kashf Al-Astaar An Wajh Al-Ghaeb An Al-Absaar Unveiling The Hidden Face

Saamarrah is a city with pleasant climate in southern Iraq, at the banks of river Tigris - where a township settled in 3rd century A.H. Since this city was near the banks of river Tigris, it was the capital during the Abbasid regime. Now this land has become sacred for the believers due to the holy shrines of Imam Hadi and Imam Hasan Askari (peace be upon them), although both were forcibly brought to the city. The holy house of Imam Hasan Askari (peace be upon him) was present here which was also the house of the birth of Hazrat Walie-Asr (may Allah hasten his reappearance) and celestial hoories descended therein at the break of dawn. Janabe Hakimah Khatoon was witness to the divine spectacle and splendour. Neither is any tongue capable of narrating the excellences of that dawn or the house or the city where Imam-e-Zamaana (may Allah hasten his reappearance) was born nor can any pen document it. Hence, this place is visited and frequented by thousands of believers from across the world.

From the 3rd century onwards, this city was always looked upon from two perspectives: Firstly, its natural habitat, the flamboyant lives of Caliphs that was full of vain pleasures, owing to the pleasant climate offered by the banks of river Tigris. Secondly, the existence of virtuous personalities from the immaculate progeny of Prophets and Imams (peace be upon them) that always attracted people's attention towards this city. Believers, on one hand, whose eyes were waiting for Allah's Promised One (may Allah hasten his reappearance) and the impious people, on the other hand, intending to extinguish Allah's effulgence. However, Allah has promised to protect this eternal radiance and will surely fulfill His promise even if the kings, who are followers of darkness, are averse to it.

With the passage of time till 13th century · A.H. a brilliant and wise scholar, late Ayatullah Mirza Hasan Shirazi migrated from Najaf to Saamarrah in 1290 A.H. He revived the materialistic face of this city and made it a center that urged people for the anticipation of their Imam (may Allah hasten his reappearance). Owing to his historical migration, several positive outcomes such as Islamic gatherings and preaching, overall progress of the city, services therein and frequenting of this city for Ziyaarat increased manifold. This progression continued for several decades. Moreover, the impact of this migration is evident in the city today as well.

The famous traditionalist, late Mirza Husain Noori Tabresi, the beloved and trustworthy of Mirza Buzurg Shirazi, was also present during the migration. Mirza Husain Noori remained with Mirza Shirazi until Mirza Shirazi passed away in 1312 A.H. Subsequently Mirza Noori returned to Najaf in 1314 A.H. Few book of Late Muhaddis Noori (may Allah sanctify his grave) especially "Mustadrak alWasaael" were written in Saamarra. Three volumes of Mustadarak were completed in 1305 A.H. 1310 A.H. and 1313 A.H. while he was in Saamarrah and then immediately he started writing "Khaatemah Mustadrak alWasaael" and completed it in 1318 A.H. while he was in Najaf. Mustadrak was published in 10 volumes post completion."

*(Refer Biography of Marhoom Muhaddis Noori by Abdul Husain Taaleei and Muhammad Safaakhwaah, pp. 48-54).

Ayatullah Mirza Muhammad Hasan Shirazi possessed apparently special characteristics which were practically imbibed by his students. Consequently, such characteristics are remembered as “Maktab-eSaamarra”. Ustad Faqih Syed Muslehuiddin Mahdawi narrates about the characteristics of Ayatullah Mirza Muhammad Hasan Shirazi in the following words:

- Attention to self-motivation, self development and center of ethics and morals based on Shariat
- Devotion to practical aspects of religion and humble presence in public, cultural and social gatherings
- Knowledge of his current times and being aware of own responsibilities Special attention towards the Wilayat of Ahle Bait (peace be upon them)
- Special focus on the defense of the Imamate of Imam of the time (may Allah hasten his reappearance)
- Opposing the infiltration of strangers
- Defending the rights of the oppressed

One of his special characteristics was his attention and love for Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (may Allah hasten his reappearance) which is found in majority of the people trained in the Saamarrah school.

However, some so-called visionaries deemed this school as a factor which led to the foundation of Baha'ism, who spread incorrect interpretations regarding the belief in Mahdaviyyat. Nevertheless, the Saamarrah school urged its scholars to defend the correct beliefs concerning Mahdaviyyat. The reality is that the factors resulting in the rise of Baha'ism were external and not internal. Although external factors were not apparently manifested but some internal factors had reached to such an extent that this school had prepared themselves to defend the belief in Mahdaviyyat and were known as defenders of Mahdaviyyat. This was just an overview. Insha Allah, a comprehensive research on this topic at some other time.

Mirza Husain Noori, a defender of the boundaries of beliefs and the one who exposed the external and internal innovations in religion, was born on 18th Shawwal 1254 A.H. in a village near the radiant city of Mazandaran called 'Yaalu'. While he was eight years old, his father Mirza Muhammad Taqi Noori passed away. After attaining puberty, Maulavi Muhammad Ali Mahallaati took care of him and he was instrumental in making Muhaddis Noor a scholar, jurist, pious, devout and noble person. Subsequently, he visited Iraq numerous times. In 1273 A.H. he stayed with Shaikh Abdul Rahim Burujerdi for 4 years. In 1278 A.H. he travelled and met the great scholar and jurist Shaikh Abdul Husain Tehrani and both went to Karbala. For two years, he was in Kazimain. In 1280 A.H. he benefitted by staying with Shaikh Murtuza Ansari for 6 months, which were the last 6 months of the latter's life. Then, in 1286 A.H. he returned to Najaf and till 1312 A.H, stayed with Mirza Shirazi in Najaf and Saamarrah till the end of the latter's life and Muhaddis Noori was included among his special trustworthy ones. In 1314 A.H. he returned to Najaf from Saamarrah and in 1320 A.H. at the age of 66 years, he passed away.

In this article, our aim is to introduce his book, “Kashf al-Astaar”. Therefore, let us curtail this and move to our topic. In order to read more about the intellectual struggles and other writings

of Muhaddis Noori, refer to Al Muntazar special issue of Sha'baan alMoazzam 1416 A.H., pp. 21-24.

In the month of Rabi al-Saani 1317 A.H., a panegyric written by Mahmood Shukri Aalusi, reached Najaf al-Ashraf and became famous as "Qaseedah al-Baghdadiyyah". Its beginning was as follows:

O scholars of the time, for whom it is known That their intellect is always baffled in (solving) delicate issues.

Aalusi wrote 25 couplets in this panegyric which raises objections on the existence, long life, occultation and other special attributes of Imam-e-Asr (may Allah hasten his reappearance). When this poem reached Najaf-e-Ashraf, Muhaddis Noori (may Allah sanctify his grave) was preoccupied in writing "Khaatemah al-Mustadrak". In those days, he had kept all other requests for other books on hold with the condition of completing "Khaatemah al-Mustadrak". This is also mentioned in the preface of his book "Lulu wa al-Marjaan" wherein he wrote that "Syed Murtuza Jaunpuri from India has requested me several times to compile traditions and Maqal for the convenience of those reciting from the pulpits. However, since I was busy with Mustadrak I delayed my reply to him." In short, after compiling "Khaatemah alMustadrak" in 1318 A.H. "Lulu wa al-Marjaan" was completed in 1319 A.H.

During those strenuous days, he encountered the poem of Aalusi, and as you know by now, he had delayed all other assignments for Mustadrak. But the story here was different. An important pillar of religion was challenged and that too in a poetic form, whose words had an intense impact on the Arabs. Hence, Muhaddis Noori gathered his might and gave a fitting reply to the doubts of Aalusi in a short span of two months. The book "Kashf al-Astaar an wajh al-Ghaab an alAbsaar" was completed on 9th Jamaadi alSaani 1317 A.H. which means this book took precedence over Mustadrak. Keeping in mind the importance of the book, Muhaddis Noori took it upon himself to publish it and on 17th Jamaadi al-Awwal 1318 A.H. it was printed by Tehran's 'Haaj Ahmed Muayyad al-Ulema' publications.

This book includes a preface, two chapters, conclusion and sources of references. The preface consists of the reasons for writing this book and its content includes Qaseedah alBaghdadiyyah. The first chapter (pp. 37 – 154), Muhaddis Noori has mentioned about the opinions of Muslims on the birth of ImamMahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance). He has proved that Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) is the torch bearer of universal salvation and this is based on the reliable narrations. But in the following two instances, the Imamiyyah scholars differ from some Ahle Tasannun writers:

1. Whether Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) is Hasani or Husaini?
2. Whether Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) is born or not?

The initial part of this chapter talks about Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) who bears the same name as Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) and is the son of Imam Hasan Askari (peace be upon him), being born in 255 A.H. Therein 40 Ahle Tasannun scholars have been quoted who have testified the birth of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) and have accepted it. The position and knowledge of these scholars has been substantiated through Ahle Tasannun books of Rejaal. Some have been directly quoted from

relevant and authentic sources, while some others have been quoted from the book "Isteqsaal-Afhaam" of Late Mir Hamid Husain Hindi (Abaqaati). Some concepts in this chapter are in Persian. In the first chapter, along with brief arguments where it is mentioned that the Promised Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) is none other than Hujjat Ibn al-Hasan al-Askari (peace be upon them) and discussions concerning this topic are as follows:

Some traditions prove the Imamate of 12 Imams, either under the general discussion of 12 caliphs or sometimes clearly spelling out their names and attributes. For instance:

- Muslim has brought a tradition in his Saheeh from Haseen who narrates from Jabir Ibn Samrah who says, "I arrived in the presence of Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) along with my father and heard his eminence informing, "Surely this affair will not come to an end until there are twelve caliphs in it." Jabir says, "Then Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) whispered something which I couldn't hear. So I asked my father about it. My father said that Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said: "All of them would be from Quraish"

(Kashf al-Astaar, p. 108)

- *Bukhari has brought a tradition (from Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny)) that: "After me, there will be twelve leaders" and said that: "All of them will be from Quraish."*

(Ibid., p. 109)

- Likewise, Shaareh (in Ghaayat alAhkaam) has quoted from his chain of narrators that Abu Qataadah said: I heard Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) saying, "The Imams after me will be twelve equal to the chiefs of Bani Israel and the disciples of Isa (peace be upon him)."

(Ibid.)

- Imam Husain Ibn Ali Ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon them) said: "There will be twelve Mahdis from us. The first of them is Ali Ibn Abi Talib and the last of them is Qaem (peace be upon them)."

(Ibid.)

- In addition to these, it is also mentioned in other Sihaah, Masaneed and Sunan.

(Ibid.)

Note

Muhaddis Noori proved that traditions which talk about there being twelve caliphs after the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) are authentic and all scholars unanimously agree to those. He has also proved that whatever the Imamiyyah scholars have narrated is evident for all those who are known to be just and that these prophetic traditions do not comply with anyone except the Imamiyyah sect. Noteworthy point

All Ahle Tasannun scholars have deemed this tradition as correct. They also conform to its meaning. But they differ in its interpretation. Within themselves, Ahle Tasannun have come up with various lists of twelve Imams. For example, they brought a list that has their four "Rightly

guided Calpihs" and the rulers of Bani Umayyah or the rulers of Bani Abbas. However, not a single list could conform to the necessary conditions. For example, "all of them must be from Quraish" or "religion will get honor and strength through them" or "caliph of the Prophet would be possessor of good characteristics and will be free from evil attributes", "will be the guided one" or "will be on the truthful religion" and so on.

Muhaddis Noori (may Allah sanctify his grave) has very efficiently proved that under the light of many more authentic traditions it can be concluded that only Ahle Bait (peace be upon them) are the twelve successors of Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) unto whom the Prophet has emphasised to hold fast. The Late author has also narrated Hadees al-Saqalain from Ahle Tasannun sources. For instance, Abu Saeed Khudri narrates that "I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his progeny) inform: Surely I leave among you two precious things, two caliphs. If you take from them you will never go astray after me. One of them is superior to the other. The Book of Allah - a rope extended from the skies to the earth (or from the earth) and my progeny, my Ahle Bait (peace be upon them). Know that these two will never separate from each other until they meet me at the pond of Kausar."

Reminder

This tradition has been repeatedly mentioned by Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) on numerous occasions. During the farewell Hajj, at Mount Arafat, at Ghadeer-e-Khum, during the final stages of his life in Medina when his house was brimming with companions, in the sermon delivered after returning from Taa'ef and numerous other occasions. In short, with regards to the belief in Twelve Imams, Muhaddis Noori has not only refuted the objections of the Ahle Tasannun from their own sources but also proved that only Ahle Bait (peace be upon them) are the successors of Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) and accordingly Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) is alive and present even today.

The Flag Of Imam Mahdi (may Allah Hasten his Reappearance)

A flag is such an honoured and valued symbol of a nation that despite being lifeless it is so high in status that every member of the nation bows his head in respect. When this flag is established or unfurled national anthems and slogans start echoing around with full pomp and glory. If battalions pass by it without saluting its glory and majesty it is disrespect to its awe and splendour. Bravery and valour are nurtured under the shade of this symbol. Though lifeless in itself, it is still a symbol for every child, youth and elderly person of the nation who is willing to sacrifice his life for its honour.

From the beginning of creation this earth has always been a center for evil and corruption. Since times immemorial, by going through those signs which aide in documenting history of human civilisation, or those symbols which illuminate the progress of human society, we find that this world was divided into various nations and communities and every nation crafted its own culture. In order to identify with that culture, each of those nations created their own unique flag. Slogans of unity were given under the shade of the flag. Upon hearing the name of the flag and based on its shape and form, we are able to recognize the cultural progress of the nation.

Keeping the flags of various nations and communities aside, let us now draw your attention to the Islamic flag. Before we proceed to take a look at it from a historical perspective, it is important to understand the literary and terminological meaning of a flag. We also have to be aware of its past in order to understand the importance and significance of the Islamic Flag.

In Arabic the words, 'Ra'yah', 'Liwaa', 'Alam' etc. are terms used for flag. The author of Majma al-Bahrain has explained the terms "Ra'yah" and 'Liwaa' thus: "Ra'yah means a big flag and Liwaa is other than this. Ra'yah is owned by a warrior and war is fought based on it and towards it is the end of the war as well."

[Majma al-Bahrain, vol. 1, p. 199]

In the history of mankind the first flag was made by Hazrat Ibrahim (peace be upon him) as has been narrated by Imam Jafar Sadiq (peace be upon him):

"The first person who made a flag was Hazrat Ibrahim (peace be upon him)."

[Tehzeeb al-Ahkaam, vol. 1, p. 170]

History has witnessed two types of battles - either truth against falsehood or falsehood against falsehood. Never has a war been fought between two rightful groups. There could be misunderstanding based on certain mistakes but these would never lead to war. The innate human nature always dislikes war, disputes, arguments and fights and based on this same principle it does not refrain from temporary extremism in order to break the back of crime and corruption.

Nevertheless, people prepared their own flags in order to distinguish themselves from other groups and every flag is considered to be a manifestation of the opinions of its bearer.

Among all flags, the flag of truth is only with the divine proof, which indicates towards the falsehood of all other flags apart from itself. Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon them) beautifully describes:

"The flag of truth and guidance is with us, one who goes ahead of it will be deviated, one who forsakes it will become extinct, and the one who holds fast unto it receives guidance."

[Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 34, p. 262]

This flag of truth does not suit any hand but that of the divine proof. If an undeserving person tries to catch hold of it, this flag exhibits his incapability and becomes a source of disgrace for him. The words of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his progeny) clearly resonate this in a distinct tone:

"Tomorrow I shall hand over the flag to a man whom Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him and his progeny) love and he also loves Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him and his progeny) equally. He is neither coward nor will he flee the battlefield and Allah will grant victory through his hands."

[Kitaab Sulaym, vol. 2, p. 641]

Being a flag bearer is specific for Ahle Bait (peace be upon them) in this world and the hereafter and this is what Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) announced:

"(O Ali) You are my flag bearer and my standard bearer in this world and in the hereafter".

[Amaali al-Tusi, p. 550]

This standard had always been with Ameerul Momineen (peace be upon him). After him it reached Imam Hasan and Imam Husain (peace be upon them). In the battle of Karbala Imam Husain (peace be upon him) placed this standard in the hands of the Qamar-e-Bani Hashim, the author of the history of loyalty and the possessor of its universal status Hazrat Abul Fazl al-Abbas (peace be upon him). So much so that Imam Husain (peace be upon him) gathered his small army in Karbala and handed over the flag to Hazrat Abul Fazl al-Abbas (peace be upon him). Be it a person of my insignificant stature or even a great scholar, none can elucidate the grandeur and majesty of that flag. For its celestial and universal superiority, it is sufficient to state that when both the hands of the flag bearer Hazrat Abbas (peace be upon him) were severed, he still held tight the water bag of Janabe Sakina (peace be upon her) between his chest and kept the flag furling high. When the time of his martyrdom arrived, it was his last will that his body should not be taken back to the tents. The divine personality of Imam Husain (peace be upon him), while fulfilling this last will of his beloved brother left the blessed body of Hazrat Abbas (peace be upon him) in the battlefield and took this flag back to the tents.

Had this standard not been lifeless and if we were to request it to unravel its excellences, most certainly this flag would have started narrating its lofty merits and virtues thus:

I am the one who shall now successively pass on from the hands of Imam Sajjaad (peace be upon him) unto the hands of Imam Hasan Askari (peace be upon him) while bearing all the difficulties and tribulations in protecting the religion, propagating the Prophetic teachings. It will now be an honour for me to reach those blessed hands in the city of Saamarra, who shall

unfurl me in the whole world. Glad tidings about him have been given by the beloved of Allah, the greatest Messenger Muhammad Mustafa (peace be upon him and his progeny) thus:

"After me shall be my twelve successors, the last of whom shall be the promised Mahdi, the Qaem (peace be upon him). And only he shall fill this world with justice and equity like it would be fraught with injustice and tyranny." He is none other than Imam-e-Zamana (may Allah hasten his reappearance) whose hands own this flag.

Peculiarities of the Flag of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappear

It is narrated from Imam Jafar Sadiq (peace be upon him): "It is the standard of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) which Jibraeel (peace be upon him) brought in the battle of Badr... by Allah, this flag is neither of fiber, nor cotton, nor silk... it is a flag made out of the leaves of Paradise, which Holy prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) unfurled in the battle of Badr. Then he rolled it up and handed over to Ali (peace be upon him). Since then it was always with Ali (peace be upon him) and he unfurled it in the battle of Jamal, and Allah made him victorious in it. Then it was folded and kept aside and now it is with us. None shall unfurl it now until the Qaem (may Allah hasten his reappearance) rises. Thus, when he rises he shall unfurl it. When he would unfurl it, none shall remain in the east and the west except that he shall join him. Its awe shall always be at a distance of one month ahead of it, behind it, on its right and on its left..."

(Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 52, p. 360)

Hazrat Imam Jafar Sadiq (peace be upon him) says: "When he (Imam-e-Zamana) would take along this standard against anyone, Allah shall disgrace that person. When he (may Allah hasten his reappearance) shall unfurl it, hearts of the believers shall become as strong as iron."

[Kaamil al-Ziyaaraat, p. 120, H. 5]

Muhammad Ibn Muslim says that I came in the presence of Imam Muhammad Baqir . (peace be upon him) and wanted to inquire from him about the Qaem of Aale Muhammad (peace be upon them). Imam (peace be upon him) began the discussion by informing me: "O Muhammad Ibn Muslim! Indeed in the Qaem of Aale Muhammad (peace be upon them) possesses the similarity of five Prophets... the similarity that he shares with our grandfather Muhammad Mustafa (peace be upon him and his progeny) is that he shall rise with a sword. He shall kill the enemies of Allah and His Messenger. He will kill the oppressors, tyrants and the rebellious ones. He shall be assisted through the means of sword and awe and his flag shall never be overpowered."

[Kamaaluddin, vol. 1, p. 327, H. 7]

The inscription on the Flag of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance)

It is mentioned in traditions that the inscription on the flag of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) shall be:

"Allegiance is for Allah, Mighty and Majesty". (Kamaaluddin, vol. 2, p. 654, H. 22]

Allamah Majlisi (may Allah have mercy upon him) has narrated from the book of Fazl Ibn Shazaan that the standard of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) shall bear the inscription: "Listen and abide".

[Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 52, p. 305, H. 77]

The Flag of Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him) vis-à-vis Flags of the rebellious

Hatred of the innate human nature towards evil acts in every era gave rise to revolutionary movements against the oppressive and tyrant rulers. But more often than not, because of ignoring the divine proofs, it was observed that proponents of these revolutionary movements and those who raised slogans against oppression and tyranny, after having successfully come to power, themselves began adopting those very oppressive measures against which they protested some time back. We have the example of the movement of Bani Abbas against Bani Umayyah. When Mansoor al-Dawaaneqi (the accursed), sat in front of the royal table spread, he uttered: "This is the table for which we waged a war. Until yesterday, it was with Bani Umayyah and now it is with us." This was the culmination of revolts that commenced with Abdullah Ibn Zubair waging a war against Yazid, the accursed, in the name of avenging the blood of Imam Husain (peace be upon him).

Hazrat Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) foretold in one of his traditions: "Every flag that shall be raised before the rising of Qaem (may Allah hasten his reappearance), its bearer shall be deviated (Taghoot). Instead of Allah, Mighty and Majestic be He, this person shall be worshiped."

(Al-Kaafi, vol. 8, p. 295, H. 452]

Finally, it is relevant to bring the discussion of one flag that has been furling in the memory of the awaited Imam since 14 centuries. The heat within the hearts of those who await his reappearance, has always kept it upright and that it is the red flag which is restlessly waving on the dome of Imam Husain (peace be upon him). It is an Arab custom that when someone's blood has not been avenged, a red flag is affixed on his grave. Imam Husain (peace be upon him) discussed about Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him) among his companions in the night of Aashurah. It is Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) who shall avenge the blood of Imam Husain (peace be upon him) and this standard over the grave of Imam Husain (peace be upon him) is incessantly calling out, "Hasten Hasten".

We plead to Allah with hands outstretched, that may this red flag unfurl alongside the standard of Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (may Allah hasten his reappearance). May Allah hasten the reappearance of Hazrat Wali-e-Asr and include us among his helpers and supporters. Aameen! O Lord of the worlds!