

The Desire Of An Everlasting Life Is A Natural Prerequisite

The literal meanings of Everlasting are:

1. Which does not age, remains new, does not become obsolete.
2. Continuity, permanence

Paradise: the word everlasting has been used in Quran as an everlasting life for both a good or bad life.

Desire: Wanting, yearning, longing, craving in this case for a long life)

The topic under consideration apparently appears ambiguous but after pondering, the curtains on the secrets of the reasoning of human creation begin to unveil and the ones of virtuous birth and pure audience visualize the theatres on the firmaments of the nobility of their being. The fearful heart thence turns to the Divine Word: He who sent down tranquility into the hearts of the believers

The element in nature for the perpetuity of life in this world is present in humanity from the time of the world's creation. The principle that he has to live has gripped the thought of mankind from the beginning of his first breath. Being reluctant to die and driven in his passion for life, he searches everywhere. He remains busy in his utmost capacity to collect the means of prolonging his life so that there should not come in his life a turn, where his life would be in danger.

The life of this world and its progress: Remember the ancient time called the Stone Age. This is the initial phase in the history of human civilization. Since man is a social animal, groups were created. Historians have recorded early man hunting animals for food and preparing stone weapons for hunting them. When this ancient human civilization was mentioned, it was seen that the mother was made patron of the tribe so that rivalry would not be created in one another. Intellect gave mother preference and made her a guarantee for survival. These very stones showed the inception of fire and this is how ancient civilization found a way for survival and longevity of human life. When mother was made a leader, justice was part of her nature and the possibilities of benevolence and sacrifice took root. Thus, due to the aspiration for continuation of life, a human society was formed on the basis of protection of life and has left its mark from ancient times.

Historians and researchers base their research on the beginning of human life and its progress; this is dependent on their intellectual advancement and the categorizing and researching the ancient structures. This differs from Islamic history and its view of human progress. However the topic here is human nature and his natural life, hence the writer has begun with how the requirements are applicable in this context. I must pause here to make this comment that as Allah has never performed an act in vain, how then would He leave the work of human nature unfinished? That is why He has established an earthly guardian in this world. We began to explore the analysis of the stipulation of nature as soon as we entered the world. This will be explained in time.

It can be concluded from the above facts that: The desire for an everlasting life is a prerequisite of nature. (i.e. human mind is always searching for an abode to stay and stay evermore or at the least for a very long period of time).

Mother from the beginning of time: 'This prerequisite calls out becoming imperceptible, and traverses the grades with intensity. Mother is the name of a noble being, which has given birth to humans. The Almighty has honored her with every blessing and excellence. Man after inception, moved from darkness to the light of the world, the distinctive nature of his environment instinctively made him cry. He wailed out loud while his own cars were unprepared for this. But just as the mother embraced him, the young life gravitated to the breasts of the mother as if the motherly love had transformed into waves of a heavenly rivulet and the new born suckles it eagerly. When bereft of milk for a few minutes, the love for life awakens in him and he starts crying. Mother, the protector of the life of the new born, busy in her chores, immediately leaves everything and rushes towards the baby sweeping him into her bosom. The mothers milk trickles down his throat and he dissolves into a smile after a while. This was a hidden prerequisite for the desire of an everlasting life. This ability was created in his nature by the Creator

Reaching to its destination: It is the effect of mother's milk that a child in his childhood, the young in his youth and the aged in his old age safeguards himself to prolong his life, makes his utmost effort like a lamp to save the flame of his mortality. When the glow of this worldly life ebbs to its last flicker, he remembers his Creator and collects himself in hope for the transition from the transient to the everlasting

Fire

The readers recollect that man discovered the making of fire in the early stages of civilization. Gradually, intellect and wisdom, in the words of Allama Iqbal: 'God made earth, I made the bowls': made inroads. Meals were prepared, gusts of wind made the fire brighter. Water and plants were used. Tastes developed. Different preparations of food were cooked for the continuation of life. What food is good for health? What meal makes you refreshed, wards off disease? Which foods bring physical and mental wellbeing, strengthen the heart, brighten the eyes, and give power to your walk, removes weakness? An elder advised: Walk to walk more. I asked: What does that mean? He replied: Walking increases the lifespan. Hearing it from an aged personality felt like hearing it from all the constituents of a human; water, wind, earth and fire. The elements spoke as one that every man, every intelligent person tries to keep all the constituents in symmetry and concentrates his efforts all his life. Today, universities have courses for dieticians who are then occupied in hospitals and other institutions. In the same vein, I recall an incident of about 50 years back. A child weighing only 3 pounds was born. The doctors forbade him mother's milk and put him in the incubator and fed him with milk laced with medicine. The child survived only 20 days. In contrast, another child weighing just 2 pounds was born and the mother did not separate him from herself but fed him her own milk. The child survived and grew up to be a strong man. It was then the theory emerged that mother's milk contained all the elements necessary for survival. Today, there appears research, development, discovery and innovation everywhere. They have used all their intellectual efforts

for prolonging life. Big hospitals, nursing homes, physiotherapy, etc. are all a product of the natural desire for an everlasting life.

The aforesaid discussions of untiring research fall under the stipulations of the natural desire for prolonging life. But the statistics of worldly advancement and innovations have shown that the life of man remains stagnant at the mean of old figures. For the prolongation of life and for lessening difficulties, pain and anxiety, every intellect and scholar of psychology has taken refuge in religion. Is there a psychiatrist in the world who is himself not stuck in the whirlpool of confusion, anxiety, suspicion and fear? Every man searches for the alleviation of problems and anxiety and hopes for peace and tranquility. Here open two paths for the confused man to change his problems to peace. One is of religion and the other of corruption. Thus, humanity has been divided into two groups. The evil who seek the worldly life and the virtuous who are visionaries sigh in satisfaction saying: Verily, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured. In the meanwhile, the foolish remain perplexed: The blind and the seeing are not equal. The one, who ponders over the verses of Quran, takes lesson from the signs of Allah. However, the thinking of these disparate groups revolves around the aim of a long life.

It is for this long life that people wade through blood and toil to put crowns upon their heads or brothers fight each other for riches and property. This is reflected in the incident of Prophet Yusuf (a.s.). The divine messengers (a.s.) came and explained the secret of life, desire for its prolongation and taught us the way to a righteous life. They imbued us with the orders of the Almighty. The Prophets, Successors and the righteous were sent to this world for guidance of man whom God had created with nature that would make him the best of creation. Hence He notes in His Book, i.e. the Holy Quran:

(To) those who love this world's life more than the hereafter, and turn away from Allah's path and desire to make it crooked; these are in a great error. And We did not send any messenger but with the language of his people, so that he might explain to them clearly; then Allah makes whom He pleases err and He guides whom He pleases and He is the Mighty, the Wise.

(Surah Ibrahim: Verses 3-4)

I draw the reader's attention towards the words 'error' and guidance and submit that the secret of the prerequisite of desire for everlasting life is hidden therein. He wants a long life, to remain in luxury but what remains and where it remains, he sees the result with his own eyes.

Why does man not reflect on his creation in the light of the orders of Allah's Messengers (a.s.) so that he has a long life in consonance with his nature? The hope for a long life itself speaks of time and an end. He feels the end but fears it. The prerequisite of a desire for everlasting life is woven in the intricacies of his fear and anxiety of an end to life. Look at the system of nature. Prophet Khizr (a.s.) is present in this world. Prophet Yunus (a.s.) was granted salvation after a stay in the stomach of a fish and then he lived for a long period before ascending to the heavens. Prophet Noah (a.s.) earned the sobriquet of the second Adam' due to his longevity. The Messengers (a.s.) made it apparent after preaching the divine orders that termination was always present at the end of a long life. But if you want to understand the reason for the conditions of this end, you should focus your attention on the divine orders. Life will bring the message of continuity. The eastern scholar Dr. Allama Iqbal says:

You have understood death O ignorant, as the end of life

This evening of life is the morning of an everlasting life.

Esteemed readers! Thinking of the desire of everlasting life being longevity in this worldly life is the result of shortsightedness. Man keeps this condition foremost in his thoughts and tries ways and means to escape death, but perceives the end like distant smoke at the destination. Islam has weighed up this idea in relation to other religions in an open and transparent manner with logical and natural arguments and built its case in history upon solid proof:

And nothing devolves on us but a clear deliverance of the message).

(Surah Yaasin (36): Verse 17)

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) executed the statutes of his station till his last breath. After his death, he had established a pillar of light of his objective in the Noble Quran and his pure Ahle Bait (a.s.), which would keep on calling the people of the east and west towards their creation, their greatness and the everlasting life. Hence, man according to Islamic view, undergoes five stages in his life after his creation.

The First Stage:

Man in the womb of his mother. "Man was created from a life germ. The child gives proof of living by his movements in the womb.

The Second Stage:

The world of nature. When the child completes its term in the womb, it comes out of the darkness into the light of this world. Gradually, the child passes from youth to old aged and inches towards death passing his natural life by

And We did not ordain abiding for any mortal before you. What! Then if you die, will they abide?

(Surah Anbiya (21): Verse 34)

The Third stage:

Barzakh, wherein the soul of man is transferred after death; either in the valley of Salaam or that of Barahoot, depending upon his deeds.

The Fourth Stage:

It is Judgment Day. And they are sure of the hereafter.

The Fifth Stage:

The Conclusion: The desire of the everlasting, people of the fire or the people of paradise.

Question

Has the Creator kept the clement of desire for an everlasting life in the nature of man without reason or aim? Or by this determinant, made man a source and a beacon of hope for an everlasting life?

We tremble in fear on reading that the Lord, that Creator of humanity, Who created humanity from nothing and shaped it into being, asks someone: Do you wish complete oblivion? The soul

will cry out in denial. Hence, even if they are the chastised ones - they are the inmates of the fire in it they shall abide. They will prefer it to complete oblivion.

In the five aforementioned stages after creation, the most important, decisive and path breaking for the four other stages is the stage of life in this world. The Omnipotent Creator has left man free and powerful in this world. He alerted man with a call: I am a hidden treasure; one who reaches its greatness and follows it will be from the non-chastised. One who has acted with laziness and oppression, for him is a painful chastisement.

Intellect

The Creator has gifted man with a great bounty called intellect, which distinguishes between right and wrong. Reward and punishment depend upon the intellect. He then established great examples after giving man reason, so that he can test himself, stay away from mistakes and sins. He completed His Proof by saying: Do they not then reflect on the Quran?

Then established a long chain of messengers (a.s.) who taught man salvation from deviation and perdition. He completed and perfected His religion through the last Prophet, Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). Thus, He completed His Proof by appointing the Imams (a.s.) for safeguarding it. The Holy Quran and witnesses testify that the Master of the Affair (a.t.f.s.) safeguards the religion in his occultation. The foretelling of the Last Prophet (s.a.w.a.), the testimony of the Noble Quran was all made available for the guidance of man. A lengthy list still refreshed through the 14 centuries.

Question

Why all this? Why were the great examples established?

Satan

Satan challenged the divine justice after the creation of Prophet Adam (a.s.). He gained respite until a fixed time to deviate the children of Adam in lieu of his worship. Satan started his mission of deviation in earnest against humanity and the near ones of Allah in particular. The Beneficent gave the accursed respite saying that he could never lead the pure ones astray.

Divine Power

The Almighty Allah made all the necessary arrangements and provisions that Satan would not be able to mislead humanity.

Delusions

It was human delusion and the figment of his imagination that established idol worship.

The Almighty prepared a succession of idol breakers from Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) to Ameerul Momineen Ali Murtuza (a.s.). The intellect poses question after another. For examples,

Q) Has the Satan-induced fire of Nimrod, which blazed many a mile, burn the Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.)?

A) No. The divine order was issued. "We said: O fire! Be a comfort and peace to Ibrahim

Q) But why did the fire not change its effect in Karbala?

A) The fire did not change its effect in Karbala. The tents caught fire, the faces of the children, thirsty for the last three days, were swollen in the heat of the burning fires rather than the sweltering heat. How did the virtuous family face that evening. Were they not the special ones of Allah who saved Islam? Islam was saved from drowning and eternal destruction. What do you know of Karbala?

Q) Why Allah did not issue an order here?

A) The higher the stature, the higher the difficulty. Allah has made this earth a place of examination and the result is with Him in the hereafter. When Hurr succeeded in all his examinations, Imam Husain (a.s.) said: Hurr look between my two fingers. Hurr obeyed and said: I have seen my house and the shade of Tuba!

Hazrat Abbas (a.s.) said to Imam Husain (a.s.):

The soul moves towards the hereafter.

Master a sleep overcomes your servant.

Q) Is this not the imagination of a poet?

A) Reflect, intellect, upon the words of 13 year old Qasim. If we are on truth, then death is sweeter than honey. This is not the idea of a poet but the voice of truth which resonates from every corner of the sky. It is not just poetry but a heart rendering version of the truth.

Conclusion

Thence, it is this life which foretells the everlasting. There exists a test at every step, every word and every side. Every moment portends a difficulty. For, Islam is last of the divine religions. The one who has discarded the doubts, torn the devils' snares from all facets has traveled this life successfully. (Remember the words of Amirul Momencen (a.s.) in his martyrdom: By the Lord of Ka'ba, I have succeeded) In the tradition of the cloak, there is a persuasive version of this truth.

Till when Satan would remain silent. He too started spreading his influence. The governments opposed Islam with their agenda of deception and oppression. The Almighty made the successors as the safeguards of religion. After 329 years, the last successor (a.t.f.s.) was seated in this position in occultation. He said: Surely Satan is an open enemy. And: the remainder of Allah is good for you if you are believers. Be vigilant towards him. And worship Me, this is the straight path. You have all come from Allah and to Him will you return. He does not say destroy. He says return

As the centuries passed and the eras flew by, Satan started using all his tricks. The temples of idols blazed in light and free thought broke the restrictions of religion. Economic renaissance produced corruption. The virtuous were called conservative not only by outsiders but our own people. Blood shedding became common. The Jews captured the Aqsa mosque. And the rest was done by terrorists. Blood thirsty terrorists and terror organizations were supported by the so-called upholders. Innumerable houses are razed in Iraq daily. Children are orphaned. Even the graves of brothers are unknown to the sisters. The mothers are wailing. Why is the caliph of Allah, the one with authority and power over the divine creation silent on this? No this is not so. If that was the case then the nation which follows him would have been decimated. The

earth still has green cover. The farms are flourishing. The springs still flow. The rivers are contained within their banks. The sea has not swallowed up the land. The mountains have not crumbled to pieces. This bounty is due to Allah's representative will come out of occultation in due course. The sun of Imamate will give even the dead earth new life. The earth will grab hold of the feet of all the oppressors. He will decimate all the attacks. The signs appear. The Holy Quran endorses: They deem it far while we deem it near. Has the word of God refused us support? No, it has clearly stated that the heirs to the earth will be those servants who have been weakened in the land. (It implies the reappearance of Hazrat Hujjat (a.t.f.s.)).

The discussion began with the mention of the fleeting life of this world and the desire of the everlasting life which is imbibed in every particle our being. Hence, it is a divine stipulation that He grants us everlasting life and saves us from oblivion. But it is also the requisite of divine justice that one who passes the test, keeps his freedom within the borders of the divine orders will be entitled to the divine bounty. While one lives for his desires and passion and lives an ignorant life refusing the grace of his Lord will get an eternal curse. They are the embodiment of the reviled: the people of the fire, in it they will abide. For the worshippers the eternal abode stands in welcome.

My master, my helper in occultation! There are traps everywhere. The bait is beautiful. My carnal-self gravitates towards them. Help me Master, to keep it in check. When we leave this world, it should be looking at your beautiful visage. And the ways to the eternal abode be tranquil for us.

Amen

My intense love calls you. This insanity, and a thousand reasons be sacrificed for it, searches you. Like a mother who searches haywire for her lost child in a big crowd. When will I hear the sweet call to service from you? Call to us Master, your servants hit their heads on walls in grief.

Maybe the voice says: Establish namaz. It is the soul of worship. Pray for my early reappearance.

The breath of morning air will carry the smell of musk

The world aged will once again become young

Longevity – A Divine Practice

Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), as per Allah's command, while informing about the names of his successors to the people, explicitly and distinctly declared that:

"After me there shall be twelve successors in this nation."

It was very clear that the number (12) mentioned shall remain till the Day of Judgment, the time of which is not fixed. This implies that either all the successors should necessarily have long lives, without which this chain would not continue till the Day of Judgment or at least one individual of this chain should have a long life. Allah, His Messenger and his true successors were aware that eleven of these noble personalities (peace be on them all) will not be able to complete their actual appointed term of life and each one of them would either be slain or poisoned. Thus, longevity and occultation was fixed for the last one, right from the beginning. His example was always compared to those who had long lives and Muslims were well aware of this distinct feature.

Imam Zainul Abedeen (a.s.) has informed:

In the Qaem is a tradition (Sunnah) of Hazrat Noah (a.s.) and that is long life.

[Muntakhab al-Athar, p. 341]

In verse 14 of Surah Ankaboot (29) it is mentioned:

And certainly We sent Noah to his people, so he remained among them a thousand years save fifty years. And the deluge overtook them, while they were unjust.

It is evident from this verse that Prophet Noah (a.s.) preached in his nation for 950 years before the deluge, after which his nation was destroyed. But Prophet Noah (a.s.) and those who boarded the ark along with him lived even after the deluge. This verse does not cap his age at 950 years rather Prophet Noah (a.s.) obviously had to have lived for more than 950 years.

There are some people who make an excuse of long life to deny the existence of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) and they also present this as an objection against the Shias.

If today someone claims that he can walk on water, the entire city will turn up to see this extraordinary feat displayed by this person. This is because people would be surprised as they would have never seen such an act before. But after some days if someone else performs the same act, people would still gather to witness it albeit the number would reduce. But what if a third person performs this feat? Now this time the number of people to witness it will decrease and so will their amazement towards this feat. Similarly if a fourth or fifth person performs this act, the amazement of people will reduce with every performer. If there are many people who can accomplish this act, then the act shall be deemed ordinary and there would remain no element of surprise nor would it be a crowd puller. Thus, we know that amazement is only seen for the first few times but when a thing becomes ordinary then the amazement attached to it finishes.

The long life of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) is not the first instance in history for people to be surprised and question its possibility.

The ordinary masses, especially Muslims, believe in the long life of many people, some of whom were born before the birth of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) and are still alive. Prophet Idris (a.s.) is still alive in the heavens, Hazrat Khizr (a.s.) is still alive, at least from the time of Prophet Musa (a.s.) and Prophet Isa (a.s.) is alive conforming to the truthfulness of the Holy Quran. As per traditions, he is in the heavens awaiting the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) and will pray behind him (a.t.f.s.) after his reappearance. When Allah the Almighty can grant long lives to all of these respected personalities, can He not grant the same to the last member of the household of the pure progeny of the noblest of the Prophets and the greatest of the Messengers Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.w.a.)? Some people are indeed strange; they agree to the excellence of all the others while the excellence of the progeny of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) appears unacceptable to their so-called intellect and rationale? If man ponders in the light of intellect it becomes clear that if an inferior person can live a long life, why can't a superior one be granted similar excellence?

People of the past nations having long lives

Hazrat Lutfullah Safi Golpaygani, may Allah prolong his life, has brought in his precious book Muntakhab al-Athar, pp. 341-342 instances of divine Prophets (a.s.) and people who had been bestowed with long lives as per the ancient editions of Torah which was published from Beirut in 1870. Here we list some of these personalities

Prophet Adam (a.s.) 930 years

Prophet Shees (a.s.) 912 years

Prophet Anush (a.s.) 900 years

Prophet Kiyaan 910 years

Prophet Minheel 895 years

Prophet Yaroo 992 years

Prophet Akhnooq 365 years

Prophet Shushalch 969 years

Prophet Noah 2500 years

Prophet Lamik 777 years

Luqmaan Ibn Aad 3500 years

Luqmaan the Sage 4000 years

Apart from these, others with long lives have also been mentioned. Shaikh Saduq (a.r.) has cited individuals who have been granted long lives in the book Kamaaluddeen wa Tamaamun Ne'mah, written on the instruction of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) himself, under the chapter of "Individuals with long lives" For the sake of brevity we shall only discuss 10 such individuals in this article.

1) Umar Ibn Aamir 800 years; he was called Maziqsiya, spent 400 years of his life as an ordinary person and the remaining 400 years as a king

2) Hubla Ibn Abdullah Ibn Kinaana 600 years

- 3) Luqmaan Ibn Adi al-Kabeer 860 years
- 4) Duwayd Ibn Zayd Ibn Nahd 450 years
- 5) Satughar Ibn Rabcela Ibn Kaab Tamim 330 years
- 6) Ruwaa Ibn Kaab Ibn Zahal Ibn Qays an Nakhai 300 years
- 7) Ubaid Ibn al Lecras 300 years
- 8) Sharieyaa Ibn Abdullah 300 years
- 9) Saadi Korb Al Himyari 250 years
- 10) Rabi Ibn Bay' 240 years

A Question

If 100 trees are planted together and it so happens that 10 out of these perish then what will the people ask? Will they question why these 90 trees are still alive? Or do they question the cause of death of those 10 trees? If 10 infants are born in a hospital on a single day and if after a few days, two of them die, will the life of the remaining infants be questioned or will the cause of death of the two be probed? Under normal circumstances will someone inquire the reason for living or about the cause of death? This proves that staying alive is a normal condition while there needs to be a reason for death.

Likewise, vis-a-vis Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.), investigating the reason of his being still alive is baseless; rather the martyrdom of the remaining eleven Imams (a.s.) must be investigated. The reasons of martyrdom of the remaining eleven Imams (a.s.) are not discussed due to the fact that this will result in not just unveiling their killers and oppressors but even those who were related to their martyrdom will be put to shame and disgrace; this list will also comprise of those personalities who are considered sacrosanct and holy for some groups even today. This is the root cause that people continue to object the longevity of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) so that the discussion of the martyrdom of the remaining eleven Imams (a.s.) does not come to the fore.

Why this amazement?

It has already been discussed that amazement is seen only for a rare phenomenon. When something occurs for the first time, there can be scope for amazement and surprise. But for an act that is no longer a rarity, there remains no element of surprise attached to its occurrence. From the time of the father of mankind, Prophet Adam (a.s.) till date, Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) is not the first person to live a long life; rather, the list of those who have been bestowed with long lives is exhaustive. Hence, the longevity of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) is nothing new and there remains no scope for any surprise or objection concerning it.

Something more amazing than longevity

Something repeated several times is more amazing or a thing that has never come into existence at all? It is evident that something that has never come into existence is more deserving of surprise and amazement.

Since the time of creation of this world there has not come a time when the earth has been filled entirely with justice and equity and oppression and inequality been completely

eliminated, monotheism spread across everywhere in this earth and Allah being worshipped with utmost sincerity and humility, no type of fear of anxiety be felt by any individual and safety and security prevailing at every nook and corner. Now, if someone claims that there shall come a day when this whole earth will be filled with justice and equity then this statement is worthier of surprise more than the longevity of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.). But it is indeed surprising that those who doubt and object to the longevity of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) readily accept this tradition of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.):

"If there remains one day in the life of this world, the Almighty Allah shall prolong that day such that a person from the progeny of my Ahle Bait (a.s.) shall appear, whose name shall be my name and whose agnomen will be my agnomen. He will fill the earth with justice and equality as it would be filled with injustice and tyranny."

All Muslims accept that this prophecy of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) shall be fulfilled through the existence of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). For the earth to be filled with justice and equity is more difficult to accomplish than leading a long life because long life is connected to just one person while for the earth to be filled with justice and equity, all the inhabitants of the earth have to reformed. What can be said about the skeptics who readily accept something that is extremely difficult to achieve while they object to a common and repetitive occurrence?

In the light of traditions narrated by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), we are awaiting Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). Only he (a.t.f.s.) shall fulfill the Promise of Allah in this world. He shall have a prolonged occultation, enjoy a long life and at the time of his reappearance, despite his long life, will appear like a youth of forty years. These traits also act as distinguishing features to separate the real Promised Mahdi from the impostors.

Reason of longevity is the knowledge of Imam (a.t.f.s.)

Imam Mahdi (a.s.), through whom Allah has promised to fill this earth with justice and equity, is bestowed with the knowledge of the first and the last. His Imamate is not restricted to just a few people; rather, it extends over every particle in this universe. There are ignoramuses who do not believe in his Imamate and do not submit to him but the fact is that every particle of this universe accepts Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s.) mastership and Imamate and submits to his authority. He (a.t.f.s.) is also cognizant of each and every particle of this universe.

Firstly - Allah has created man's body in a manner that it is capable of staying alive timelessly. If it was not so then it was not possible for people to have such long lives.

Secondly - bad diet and carelessness towards physical wellness causes deterioration of the body. Since we do not have complete knowledge of an adequate diet, despite practicing it we are unable to take complete precaution, whereas for Imam (a.s.) there is no such restriction. He has the knowledge of all things. Moreover, harmful things will reveal their harm when placed on his blessed hands. Thus, the ill effects of food on his body are ruled out from his case.

Thirdly - Things that affect well-being more than food are worldly sorrows and grief. The Imam whose heart is tranquil with the remembrance of Allah, is safe from worldly concerns.

Fourthly - Since he is the Imam of the time, he can influence time and not vice versa. Thus, he is not affected by the vicissitudes of time. Since age is calculated based on passage of days and years, and days and years come into existence due to the rotations of the sun and moon, one

upon whom the revolutions of sun and moon affect his body, will become old. But what about the one due to whom the sun and the moon are controlled and through whose effulgence, they acquire their brightness? How is it possible that they impact the body of Imam (a.s.)? So the passage of days has no effect on Imam (a.s.) and he lives and remains young till Allah wishes.

Fifth - Life and death are all in the hands of Allah. Everything else is the means and not the cause. The real cause of life and death of each one of us is the infinite Grace of Allah. Allah can keep an individual alive and young till He wishes, in the way He wishes, in a manner He likes and whomsoever He desires. Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is the representative of Allah, His vicegerent and His Caliph in this world and thus He can keep His vicegerent alive till the time He wishes and in a way He wishes. There is no scope for any type of objection by any one in His case. We are awaiting that same Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) who is the vicegerent of Allah and a medium of grace and blessings between the Creator and the creatures. Hence, the long life of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) can, in no way, be a source of his denial and rejection

If the basic principles of research are analyzed and if we perform a reality check on the whimsical interpretations, self-established deviations and the poisonous effects of differences and its dangerous consequences and wash them away with the pure water of the prophecies of Allah and His Messenger then at least Muslims can unite over Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.).

Time, as it passes by us, is informing us Beware, all is not lost even now! Reappearance of Imam (a.t.f.s.) is fast approaching. It is the rise of a new dawn and only "they (the enemies) consider it to be far while we see it to be near"

Prophets With Long Lives & Longevity Of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)

The celebrated scholar, Syed Ibn Tawoos (may Allah sanctify his grave)* **(His full name was Raziuddin Abu al-Qasim Ali and was famous by the title Syed ibn Tawoos. He was born in Hilla, Iraq in 589 A.H., died in Baghdad in 664 AH. and is buried in the mausoleum of Ameerul Momineen (a.s) in Najaf.)**

wrote a will for his sons Muhammad and Ali, which was published multiple times in the form of a book titled 'Kashf al-Mahajjah le Samara al-Muhjah He mentions in chapter 75 of Kashf al Mahajjah:

"...O my son, if the opportunity of unveiling the truth and secrets is conferred upon you, I will give you such information about Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) that there will never remain any doubt and you will be independent of rational proofs and traditions because he (a.t.f.s.) is certainly alive and present and till the time Allah, the Merciful, the Benevolent, does not grant him permission to unveil His plans, he is exempted from revealing and manifesting his affairs. This affair (occultation) is not confined to him but decreed for many messengers and their successors. Hence, consider this to be certain and assume it (belief in occultation) to be your religion and faith and know that your father's recognition in this regard is brighter than his recognition of the shining sun."

Continuing with the will in the 76th chapter he mentions:

Coincidentally, once I was present in the gathering of non-Shias and I asked them: What is your objection against Shias? Tell me without being hesitant or dissimulation (Taqiyyah) so that I may be able to answer you with my belief and views. And to do so freely, please shut the door so that no one can enter.

They said that our objections against the Imamiyyah (Shias) are: They oppose the companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and address them with immoral names, they believe in Raj'at, consider temporary marriage (Mut'ah) as permissible, believe in the Imamah and longevity of Imam Mahdi (a.s.).

I answered them and said* **(Syed ibn Tawoos (r.a) briefly answered the objections regarding the companions, the belief of Rajat, and temporary marriage on the basis of Shia faith. However, since these are not pertaining to our topic we shall not mention them here.)** that the matter concerning Imam Mahdi (a.s.) is the same because you (Sunnis) have narrated that Prophet Idris (a.s.) is alive, Hazrat Khizr(a.s.) is alive from the time of Prophet Moosa (a.s.) or even before that. Prophet Isa (a.s.) is alive and present on the sky and will return along with Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). They are all humans whose lives have been extended and there is no doubt, uncertainty or concern regarding their long lives. Then why can't this phenomenon be repeated for someone from the progeny of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and manifest a sign of divinity i.e. long life?

And you have mentioned a tradition regarding conditions and characteristics of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.): Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) will fill the earth with equity and justice as it would have been filled with oppression and tyranny

If you reflect on this prophesy and prerequisite for Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), you will agree that dissemination of justice and equity throughout the universe is more astonishing than his long life. But by the grace of Allah, it is easy for His chosen ones.

You testify and agree that the great Prophet Isa Ibn Maryam (a.s.) will pray behind him and assist him in wars. This affair is more important than long life which you doubt and consider distant.

Hence, my son, all those who were present agreed to this and accepted it!* **(For more details please refer 'Barnaamah-e-Sa'adat Persian translation of Kashf al-Mahajjah, pp. 73-77. chapter 74 to 76)**

Conclusion

Syed ibn Tawoos (may his grave be sanctified) has pointed out towards the firm faith of Muslims which cannot be denied i.e. the long lives of Prophets Idris (a.s.), Khizr(a.s.) and Isa (a.s.) who are still alive.

Another aspect is that although longevity is not common it is not impossible either.

Traditions

We mention a few traditions related to longevity. These traditions are regarding those divine messengers whose lives were long. Apart from traditions, books of history have also narrated incidents of their long life. We are mentioning the details of long lives of Prophets similar to the long life of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.).

Ayatullah Lutfullah Safi Gulpaygani has narrated in his book Muntakhab al-Athar narrating from Kamaaluddeen that Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) said:

Certainly my son, after me is the Qaim and he is the one who will reappear as per the tradition (Sunnah) of Prophets (the Sunnah of the Prophets will be revived through him) i.e. longevity and occultation. (Muntakhab al-Athar, part 2, Chapter 30, p. 274. H. 1)

This tradition is pointing towards a generic concept that Imam Mahdi (a.s.) possesses similarities with a few divine messengers. In this tradition, similarities like long life and occultation are mentioned. Our topic is not occultation hence we shall discuss only those messengers who had long lives.

The long life of Hazrat Idris (a.s.)

He was the great grandfather of Prophet Noah (a.s.). His name was Akhnookh. Allah raised him to a lofty place and it is said, he was ascended to the fourth sky and as per some traditions to the sixth sky. In Majma al-Bayan, Mujahid has mentioned that Hazrat Idris (a.s.) was raised to the skies just like Hazrat Isa (a.s.) was ascended to the sky while he was alive and not dead.

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) said: *Allah will ascend Imam Qaem (a.s.) to the skies. Allah made Hazrat Idris (a.s.) sit on the hair of an angel and made him traverse the skies.* * **(Mikyaal al-Makaarim (Persian) vol. I, p. 200 narrated from Tafseer Majma al-Bayaan, vol. 6. p. 519)**

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) mentioned in the exegesis in the verse of Surah Maryam 'And we raised to lofty position' the journey of Hazrat Idris (a.s.) to the skies and meeting the angel of death and narrated the incident of capturing his soul between the fourth and the fifth sky."

(Tafseer al-Qummi by Ali ibn Ibrahim Qummi (r.a) (exp. 304 or 306 A.H.) vol. 2. p. 51)

Note

Allah made Hazrat Idris (a.s.) traverse such long distances between the skies and kept him alive for such a long duration. However, in one of the traditions of Ibn Abbas, it is mentioned that Hazrat Idris (a.s.) is alive in Paradise. (Mikyaal al-Makaarim, vol. 1. p. 200)

The conclusion is that long life is possible if Allah wishes it for a servant.

The long life of Hazrat Khizr (a.s.)

Allah the Almighty granted Hazrat Khizr (a.s.) a very long life and he is still alive. This belief is common between Shias and Sunnis and many traditions express it. He is still alive today so that the long life of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) can be proven through his long life. Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said:

Allah granted long life to his noble servant Hazrat Khir (a.s.), not because he was a Prophet or because a book had to be revealed unto him or a shariat is initiated which overrules another shariat or to grant him the position of Imamat or make his leadership obligatory on His servants and make his obedience mandatory on them. But Allah had it in His knowledge that Imam Qaim (a.t.f.s.) will have a long life during his occultation to the extent that His servants will not believe in his long age and will deny it. Hence, Allah - Blessed and High be He - prolonged the life of the righteous servant (Hazrat Khizr (a.s.)) without any (apparent) cause, except that it be a basis for proving the age of Qaim (a.s.) so that the arguments of the deniers may be invalidated through this and that people may not have any argument against Allah.

(Mikyaal al-Makaarim, vol. 1. p. 216 narrated from Kamaaluddin, vol. 2.p.357)

In another tradition, it is mentioned from Imam Reza (a.s.) that:

Khizr (a.s.) drank the elixir of life and will remain alive till the Day of Judgment. He comes to us regularly and salutes us. His voice can be heard but he cannot be seen and whoever mentions him then he makes himself present in that gathering and whoever amongst you remembers him he sends his greetings to them. He is present for Hajj every year and performs all the rituals of Hajj. He stays in Arafat and prays for the fulfilment of the supplications of the believers. Allah will substitute the loneliness and fear of our Qaim (atfs) into security and will ward off his loneliness.

(Kamaaluddin, vol. 2. p. 357. Chap 33 under tradition 53)

The True Emir of Hajj

Those who have been for Hajj and those who will go for Haji, Inshallah, should remember that Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) is present every year for Hajj. He is present in Makkah, Mina, Arafaat, Mash'ar, Muzdalfah, Safa, Marwah, at the place of sacrifice, during circumambulation and Sacc. In short, he is present at every instance. Hence, it is necessary for all pilgrims that they follow

the true Emir of Hajj viz. Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.), pray for him and pray to Allah for his early reappearance. Hazrat Khizr (a.s.) prays for the fulfilment of his invocation.

The long life of Hazrat Ilyas

Hazrat Ilyas (a.s.) is alive even today and is present in the rituals of Hajj every year. Allamah Majlisi (a.r.) in his invaluable book "Hayaat al-Quloob brings three traditions that clearly prove that Hazrat Ilyas(a.s.) has been granted a long life. One tradition is narrated by Imam Mohammad Taqi (a.s.) who has narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) who in turn narrates this incident from his father Imam Baqir (a.s.) that he and Imam Sadiq (a.s.) have met Prophet Ilyas (a.s.) in a house near the mount of Safa. In this tradition, there is a discussion between Imam Baqir (a.s.) and Hazrat Ilyas (a.s.) regarding the knowledge of Allah, knowledge of Messengers and knowledge of successors. At the end of the tradition, Imam Baqir (a.s.) said to Hazrat Ilyas (a.s.),

'We too (like the Holy Prophet (s...w.a.)) do not manifest our knowledge as we know that people will not obey us and we are not permitted from the side of Allah to fight against them. I wish that you see that era when the Mahdi of the nation reappears, angels annihilate the progeny of Dawood, punish the past disbelievers in the air and crush the mouth and teeth of others who think like them. He (Ilyas) drew his sword and said that this sword is from those swords (which will be used against those disbelievers) and I am from his (a.s.) helpers.'

Hayaat al-Quloob, Urdu, vol. 1. pp. 564-565, chap. 16 under the tradition of Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.)

Similarly, Allamah Majlisi (a.c.) has mentioned in the exegesis of Imam Hasan (a.s.) that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) mentioned to Zaid Ibn Arqam: Khizra.s.) and Ilyas (a.s.) meet each other in every Hajj.

Hayaat al-Quloob, Urdu, vol. 1. p. 566

Reminder

It is evident from both these traditions that Hazrat Ilyas (a.s.) is not only alive but he is awaiting the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) and will fight the enemies of Allah.

The long life of Hazrat Isa (a.s.)

All Muslims believe in the long life of Hazrat Isa (a.s.) and that he (a.s.) will descend from the sky after the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) and recite prayers under his leadership. Many traditions have been quoted under this context in various issues of Al Muntazar.

The Jews and the Christians believe that Hazrat Isa (a.s.) has been killed but Allah has belied them and declared:

He was neither killed nor crucified but it appeared to them so (like Isa).

Surah Nisa (4): Verse 157

As if Allah has condemned the deniers of the long life of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) that you are denying My clear proof as well.

Today, the age of Hazrat Isa (a.s.) is more than 2000 years.

The long life of Hazrat Adam (a.s.)

Shaikh Saduq (a.r.) in his book Kamaluddin has narrated from Imam Zainul Aabedeen Ali Ibn Husain (a.s.) that:

In our Qaem (a.s.), there are similarities of messengers As for the similarity with Hazrat Adam (a.s.) and Hazrat Nooh (a.s.), it is his long life.

(Kamaaluddin, vol. 1. p. 322, chap. 31. H.3)

We shall first discuss about Hazrat Adam

Allamah Majlisa... has narrated many traditions under the context of the death, life, place of burial of Hazrat Adam (a.s.) and advices to his son Shoes (Hebatullah). It is narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) that Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said that the holy life of Hazrat Adam (a.s.) was 929 years.

(Hayaat al-Quloob, Urdu, vol. 1. pp. 146-147)

Sayed ibn Tawoos (r.a.) has written about Suhuf-c-Idris (a.s.) that Hazrat Adam (a.s.) was in fever for ten days. He passed away on Friday, 15th Muharram and was buried in the cave of mount Abu Qubais facing the Qibla. His age then was 1030. A year and 15 days later Janabe Hawwa (a.s.) fell ill and passed away. She was buried next to him.

(Hayaat al-Quloob, Urdu, vol. 1, pp. 146-147)

Sayed ibn Tawoos (r.a.) reports that I had seen in the third chapter of Old Testament that the age of Hazrat Adam (a.s.) was 930 years.

Is Hazrat Adam (a.s.) buried in Makkah or Najaf?

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said: *When Noah (a.s.) was in the ark, Allah ordered him to circumambulate the Holy Kaaba seven times. When he completed the circumambulation, he alighted from the ark. At the time, the water had reached up to his thighs. There, a coffin was found that had bones of Hazrat Adam (a.s.) and it was kept in the ark. The ark circumambulated the Ka'bah again and departed till it reached Kufa where Allah ordered the earth to soak in all the water just like how it began from the Mosque (of Kufa). Then Noah (a.s.) was buried in this coffin in Najaf.*

(Hayaat al-Quloob, Urdu, vol. 1. p. 146. The difference between Hazrat Adam and Hazrat Nooh was 1500 years)

Allamah Majlisi (a.r.) says that it is proven through traditions that Prophets Adam (a.s.) and Noah (a.s.) are buried in Najaf al-Ashraf. Hence, the traditions that mention that Hazrat Adam (a.s.) was buried in Makkah and those which mention that he is buried in Najaf are on the basis that he was first buried in Makkah and then in Najaf.

Conclusion

Hazrat Adam's (a.s.) age was more than 900 years and Janab Hawwa was also around the same age.

The long life of Hazrat Shees (a.s.)

Imam Hasan (a.s.) said: The first person to be raised as a Prophet after Hazrat Adam (a.s.) was Shees (a.s.) and he lived for 1,000 years.

(Hayaat al-Quloob, Urdu, vol. 1. p. 147)

Allamah Majlisi (a.r.) narrates that many scholars of history have narrated that Shees(a.s.) was born when Hazrat Adam (a.s.) was 235 years old and his (Shees) age was 912 years.

(Hayaat al-Quloob, Urdu, vol. 1. p. 147)

The long life of Prophet Noah (a.s.)

Prophet Noah (a.s.) is called as Shaikh alAnbiya (Oldest of the Prophets). It is narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) and Imam Hadi (a.s.) that the age of Hazrat Noah (a.s.) was 2,500 years. Imam Qaim (a.s.) is the last of the successors and as per Shia narrations, he was born in the year 255 A.H. Hence his holy age on 15 Shabaan 1436 A.H. is 1181 years which is not even half of Noah's (a.s.) age. The Holy Quran has mentioned the period of propagation and guidance of Noah (a.s.) as 950 years.

"And certainly We sent Noah to his people, so he remained among them a thousand years save fifty years. And the deluge overtook them, while they were unjust."

Surah Ankaboot (29): Verse 14

The verse after this mentions 'So We delivered him and the inmates of the ark

It is narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s.), "Noah(a.s.) lived for 2,500 years - he was raised a Prophet 850 years before the deluge, stayed among his people for 950 years, took 200 years to build the ark and survived 500 years after the deluge. When the water dried up, he laid the foundation of cities and settled his children there. After the passage of 2,500 years, the angel of death came to him while he was sitting under the sun. He said: Peace be upon you. Noah (a.s.) replied to the salutation and asked 'O Angel of Death! Why have you come?' He said to take your soul. He (a.s.) asked, "Can you permit me that I go from sunlight into shade?' He granted permission and Noah (a.s.) came from the light to the shade and said '*O Angel of Death! My (long) life in this world was like coming from sunlight to the shade (i.e.it has passed so fast). Now act upon whatever you have been commanded. The Angel of Death took away his soul.*'"

(Hayaat al-Quloob, Urdu, vol. 1. p. 147)

Reminder

The above mentioned verse of Holy Quran and the tradition prove that Noah a.s.) lived for 2,500 years.

Longevity And The Scholars Of Ahle Tasannun

The long life of Hazrat Vali-c-Asr, Imam Mahdi al-Hujjah Ibn al-Hasan al-Askari (a.t.f.s.) has long been a topic of contention with the skeptics rejecting the belief of Mahdaviyyat on account of Imam's (a.t.f.s.) long life.

Allah the Almighty's reply to the skeptic is sufficient:

"They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, and Allah will not consent save to perfect His light, though the unbelievers are averse."

[Surah Taubah (9): Verse 32]

Even though such long life is not the norm, any true and sane Muslim will not oppose this belief. This is because longevity is as per the Will of Allah. A person's lifespan is as per the wish of Allah and He lengthens or shortens the life of whomsoever He wishes.

Only the enemies of religion, who attribute everything to nature or astrology, consider longevity to be impossible. However, one who believes in the All-Powerful Creator shall not entertain such uncertainties and doubts.

To summarize the objections raised by the skeptics, of which two are striking

- a. Such a long life is not a usual occurrence
- b. Apart from Prophets (a.s.), long life does not seem possible for anyone else

We reply to these objections with Allah's Help.

Examples of people who have been granted long life

All Muslims are unanimous that the Ulul Azm Prophet, Prophet Noah (a.s.) lived for a very long time and he spent at many as 950 years of his life in the propagation of religion. This fact is established from the Holy Quran:

"And certainly We sent Noah (a.s.) to his nation then he lived among them for a thousand years save fifty..."

Surah Ankaboot (29): Verse14]

All Muslims are unanimous that Prophet Khizr (a.s.) who was from the second generation of Prophet Noah (a.s.), witnessed the cra of Prophet Moosa Ibn Imran (a.s.) as evidenced in Surah Kahf(18) and is still alive.

The above two examples are sufficient to prove our point and are from accepted and indisputable facts.

Historians are also unanimous in their belief that Hazrat Luqman (a.s.) likewise lived a long life.

Numerous traditions and reports have mentioned the long life of the great companion of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) -Salman-cMuhammadi (a.r.). Some have even written that he was alive since the time of Prophet Isa (a.s.) and passed away during the time of Ameer al-Momineen's (a.s.) apparent caliphate.

The great traditionalist, Shaikh Muhammad Ibn Ali Ibn Husain Ibn Babawayh al-Qummi (a.r.), famous as Shaikh al-Saduq (a.r.) in his book, "Kamaluddeen wa Tamaamun Ne'amah" has written a very interesting fact about those who have lived long lives. He writes,

"The incidents of people with long lives that have been documented are not an argument to establish the occultation of Imam Mahdi (a.s.). Rather, his occultation is established for us through the traditions of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the Infallible Imams (a.s.). These traditions are as important for us as the traditions which mention the Basics of Religion, Laws of Shariah and Ahkaam. Undoubtedly, these traditions are more reliable for us than the reports of people who enjoyed long lives. The reason for documenting such incidents in this book is that everyone enjoys reading them no matter whether they conform to it or oppose it and when they read these incidents is it possible they might read other topics in this book as well and may learn about them.

The second reason for mentioning about people with long lives is that the Arabs were very particular about recording the family trees of individuals and in this regard, details about people who have lived a long life are recorded along with the names of their ancestors. Hence, it is established that these reports are not fables rather they are based on reality."

Traditionalists and reliable narrators (regardless of their sects and beliefs) have written about people with long lives and have also narrated poems about them.

The famous and highly respected traditionalist, scholar and theologian Abu alSalaah al-Halabi (374 A.H. - 447 A.H.) in his book, "Taqrīb al-Ma'arif has mentioned people who lived long lives. Although he has mentioned several of such persons but for the sake of brevity, we will suffice in mentioning only a few. Those who wish to read further can refer to the aforementioned book.

Amr Ibn Hamhamatah al-Dawsi lived for 400 years. He says about himself, "I have become old and have lived long. I am like that person who has been bitten by a snake but is unable to die. Death has not overtaken me although I have seen many springs and winters. 300 years have already passed and I expect to live for 400 years.

[Al-Moammaroon wa al-Wisaaya by Abu Hakim al-Sajistaani.p58: Kanz al-Fawaid. p.295]

Mastooqar whose real name was Amr Ibn Rabee'ah Ibn Ka'b Ibn Sad Ibn Zaid Ibn Manaah Ibn Tameem Ibn Murr Ibn Adi Ibn Talha Ibn Ilyas Ibn Mudharr, lived for 300 years and wrote many poems.

[Al-Moammaroon wa alWisaaya - Pp.12-14]

Zohair Ibn Janab - he lived for 200 years. He has written poems on the topic, "Surely I have lived a long life. Now, I do not care whether it is day or night, after passing 200 years of my life I have really become tired, now I do not desire to live anymore."

(Al-Moammaroon wa al-Wisaaya - p. 34]

Zul Asbagh Udwan - He was an eloquent poet and was considered among the chieftains of Arabia. As reported by Abu Hatim, he lived for 300 years and many beautiful poems have been narrated from him.

[Al-Amaali by Syed al-Murtaza (r.a.), v. 1. pp. 244-251]

SHABAAN 1436 A.H.

Rabee Ibn Zaba' Fazari - He too lived for a long life. It is said that one day he visited Abdul Malik Ibn Marwan who told him, "O Rabee! Tell me, how long have you lived and what have you witnessed in your long life?"

Rabee' replied, "I have written this poem about myself. I am the same person who wished for an eternal life and undoubtedly I possess a sound mind and I was born in Hajar" (Hajar is the same city of Yamama and is the name of a locality in Bani Aqeel).

Abdul Malik commented, "I heard this poem in my childhood. O Rabee you are very fortunate. Please narrate further details of your life for me

Rabee' said, "I spent 200 years in the time of Fatrah (period between Prophet Isa (a.s.) and Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)), 120 years in Jahiliyyah and 60 years as a Muslim."

[Kamaluddin, vol. 2. p. 549-550; Al-Amaali of Syed al-Murtuza (a.r.). vol. 1. pp. 253-255)

Abdul Maseeh Ibn Bagaslah - he lived for 350 years. He was alive during the advent of Islam but did not accept Islam and died as a Christian

[Al-Amaali of Syed al-Murtuza (a.c.) vol. 1.PP. 260-262]

Aqşam Ibn Saifi al-Asadi - he lived for 330 years and attained the time of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). He believed in the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) even before he saw him (s.a.w.a.). Many traditions and words of wisdom have been narrated from him.

[Al-Moammaroon, pp. 14-25]

Saifi Ibn Ribaah - he lived for 270 years and retained a sound mind until his last breath

[Al-Moammaroon, p. 146]

Zabirah Ibn Saad Ibn Sahm Ibn Amr - he lived for 220 years but never experienced old age.

[Al-Moammaroon, p. 25]

Harith Ibn Muzalliz arhaimi - he lived for 400 years and he saw the advent of Islam but did not accept Islam. He was sent to hell in the battle of Hunain.

[Al-Moammaroon, p. 8]

Conclusion

People acquainted with traditions are quite familiar with individuals who have been mentioned in this article. However, what is noteworthy is that along with divinely appointed Prophets (a.s.), disbelievers, polytheists, people of the Book and blatant sinners are also mentioned. Hence, those people who hold this belief that longevity of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) is miraculous and miracles are restricted only to Prophets of Allah (a.s.) have no basis for their belief since the aforementioned list contains both good doers and evil doers. Nevertheless, as we have mentioned, no Muslim can ever doubt the power of Allah Who can grant a long life to whomsoever He pleases and can cause whomsoever He wishes to die in the mother's womb.

"Nay, We gave provision to these and their fathers until life was prolonged to them."

[Surah Anbiya (21): Verse 44]

"O people! if you are in doubt about the raising, then surely We created you from dust, then from a small seed, then from a clot, then from a lump of flesh, complete in make and incomplete, that We may make clear to you; and We cause what We please to stay in the wombs till an appointed time, then We bring you forth as babies, then that you may attain your maturity; and of you is he who is caused to die, and of you is he who is brought back to the worst part of life, so that after having knowledge he does not know anything, and you see the earth sterile land, but when We send down on it the water, it stirs and swells and brings forth of every kind a beautiful herbage."

[Surah Hajj (22): Verse 5]

"... and no one whose life is lengthened has his life lengthened, nor is aught diminished of one's life, but it is all in a book; surely this is easy to Allah."

[Surah Faatir (35): Verse 11]

Allah, the High, has attributed fixing the duration of a person's life to Himself. It means this is an action which Allah performs through His own Authority and Wisdom. Those who doubt about His Authority are not only expelled from the realm of Islam rather they are even devoid of humanity. Especially if you pay attention to the verse of Surah Faatir wherein Allah has clearly expounded that providing longevity to someone is very easy for Him.

The famous Sunni scholar, Sibte Ibn Jawzi writes in his book *Tazkerah al-Khawaas* on page 377, "All Shias claim that Last Vicegerent Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) is alive and receives his sustenance from his Lord. They present several arguments to establish this belief of theirs of which some are as follows:

Several people have been granted long life like Prophet Khizr (a.s.), Prophet Ilyas (a.s.) and no one is aware of their real age. It is also mentioned in Old Testament (Torah) that Prophet Zulqarnain (a.s.) lived for 3,000 years but Muslims believe that he lived for 1500 years..."

Hafiz Ganji Shafei has compared the long life of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) to that of Prophet Isa (a.s.), Prophet Khizr (a.s.) and Prophet Ilyas (a.s.). Apart from this, he has also brought the long lives of Dajjal and Iblees as a proof. In order to establish his argument, he narrates traditions from *Sihah-e-Sittah*.

[Al-Bayaan fee Akhbaar Sahib al-Zamaan, p. 25]

If we refer the Torah, then the Book of Creation under chapter 5, verses 5, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23, 27 and 31 mentions the long lives of several people.

In this regard, it would be appropriate to put forth an argument which has been recorded by the great scholar Syed ibn Tawoos (a.r.) in his book, "*Kashf al-Mohajjah*" Chapter 79. He writes that he had presented this argument before Ahle Tasannun scholars during a debate:

If someone in Baghdad claims that he can walk on water, then a large group would gather in order to witness this miracle and once he performs this extraordinary feat then people would express their amazement at this. The next day, another person makes the same claim and performs the same action, but now the amazement of the people will not have the same level and intensity as earlier. Since, prior to him, this act had already been performed by someone else. On the third day, another person makes the same claim but now hardly any people will

gather since two people have already performed this action earlier and now the expressions of amazement will also be muted. If ten or more people were to perform this action then people will no longer express any amazement since this action will be a common thing among them. When you already accept the long lives of Prophet Isa (a.s.), Prophet Idrees (a.s.) and Prophet Ilyas (a.s.) then what is so surprising about Allah granting a long life to a descendant of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)? You have mentioned this in your very books that a person shall fill the earth from the east to the west, with justice and equity just as it would be filled with injustice and tyranny. Definitely, this matter i.e. filling the earth with justice and equity is more amazing than longevity of Imam Mahdi (a.s.)! You have also recorded that Prophet Isa (a.s.) shall descend to the earth from the fourth heaven and shall follow Imam Mahdi (a.s.) in prayers. This action too is more amazing than the long life of Imam Mahdi (a.s.)!

After such clear proofs, there is no room for any doubt. When so many people in history have lived long lives and their incidents have been recorded in the Torah, Bible, history, the Holy Quran and in traditions, then what is so surprising about Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s.) longevity? What is truly astonishing is that Muslims do not have an iota of doubt about the long lives of Iblees and Dajjal but when it comes to the Hujjat (Proof) of Allah, they are engulfed in doubt and skepticism. It is likely that these doubts are due to satanic whisperings and serve to distance them from Allah and His Hujjat!

"Then take heed, O people of vision!"

Longevity From A Scientific Viewpoint

Prelude

It is our firm belief that Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) is the Proof of Allah upon the earth in this era. It is also our belief that Allah, by His Infinite Grace and Mercy, has granted him a long life. This belief is doubted by people who do not believe in it by questioning its validity and saying that such a belief is unscientific.

The purpose of this article is not to elucidate to prove the long life of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) from science. Rather it is an attempt to broaden the conceptual understanding of longevity in the minds of the esteemed readers. To make them aware of the relevant views prevalent in the scientific arena today. Thus, longevity of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) is logically possible and well within the realm of scientific probability.

Science as it is defined today, though progressing at an exponential rate, has a minute area in its circle of influence and that is the physical part of the body of the human being and that too only the human systems that could be empirically recorded and verified. Even in this, scientists view in awe the intricacies of the human system that they are unable to fathom and the inadequacy of their measuring systems.

In the measuring systems too, many-a times, the effects have been monitored but the causes and the drivers of the effects remain hitherto unknown. Hence, there are innumerable factors which govern human life encompassing physical and spiritual parameters that have not been studied or even acknowledged. But what we find imminently surprising is that every study, theory and idea eventually runs aground when it tries to put a limit to human life and every researcher of note, be it in any field of science, grudgingly admits that there can be no limit to human life. Scientific research becomes in fact a means to extending human life.

It is this conclusion which we together will strive to arrive at through the explanation of various theories, factors and opinions of data and scholars. The first fact we put on record is that empirical evidence has only been the norm for the last 200 years at most. There has been no substantive record before that and even if the facts are true, science will only say, in circumstances, that they are unproven though they may not be incorrect. So we come severely hobbled in our quest. We also do not question that most people live a lifespan of only a century at best but we will point out that there have been instances of extraordinary events recorded which normally do not occur but cannot be ruled out.

We will try to maintain brevity and relevance in the discussion.

Biological Immortality

The readers will be surprised to know that there is a scientific term called biological immortality meaning everlasting life and certain living organisms are characterized with exceptionally long lives, almost endless in definition.

1. Pando is a *Populustremuloides* (Quaking Aspen) tree or clonal colony that has been estimated at 80,000 years old. (Quaking Aspen". Bryce Canyon. National Park Service.)
2. The Jurupa Oak colony is estimated to be at least 13,000 years of age, with other estimates ranging from 5,000 to 30,000 years

3. A huge colony of the sea grass *Posidonia oceanica* in the Mediterranean Sea is estimated to be between 12,000 and 200,000 years old. The maximum age is theoretical, as the region it occupies was above water at some point between 10,000 and 80,000 years ago. (Pearlman, Jonathan (2012-02-07). "Oldest living thing on earth' discovered". The Daily Telegraph (London)).

4. King's Lomatia in Tasmania: The sole surviving clonal colony of this species is estimated to be at least 43,600 years old.

(Discovery Channel (21 October 1996)). 5. *Eucalyptus recurva*: Clones in Australia are claimed to be 13,000 years old. ("Oldest Living Organism: Ancient Bacteria". Extreme Science)

These are some examples of a seemingly very long list of organisms which are already so old and expected to continue living for a very long time. Let us include two examples of organisms which undergo stasis and can be revived into activity.

1. Various claims have been made about reviving bacterial spores to active metabolism after millions of years. There are claims of spores from amber being revived after 40 million years. (Cano, RJ; Borueki, MK (19 May 1995). "Revival and identification of bacterial spores in 25- to 40-million-year-old Dominican amber". *Science* 268 (5213): 1060-1064).

2. Spores from salt deposits in New Mexico being revived after 240 million years. ("The Permian Bacterium that Isn't". Oxford Journals. 2001-02-15.).

The reason for these examples is to clarify that organisms can live for a long period of time and the above cases are not extreme in their noting but show that some species can and do stay alive for a very long period.

The proofs presented next seek to confirm the fact that though other organisms of the same species have lived less, these proven examples have lived more. Again we take brevity into account while examples are numerous

Individual Plants with a long life

1. A Great Basin Bristlecone Pine (*Pinus longaeva*) is measured by ring count to be 5063 years old. ("oldlist". Rocky Mountain Tree Ring Research) - The normal life of a pine tree is between 20 to 100 years but there have been several examples of pines living for thousands of years.
2. Llangernyw Yew, the oldest individual tree in Europe and second or third oldest individual tree in the world. Believed to be aged between 4,000 years and 5,000 years old, this ancient yew (*Taxus baccata*) is in the churchyard of the village of Llangernyw in North Wales - The normal life for a yew tree is 100 years but there have been proven examples of some living thousands of years.

Note: Lives of trees can be easily measured so examples which buck the trend are clear and recorded. This is much more difficult in the cases of animals

Individual Animals with a long life

1. *Turritopsis dohrnii*, the immortal jellyfish, is known to be the longest living creature which could live on forever without dying of old age - Normally jellyfish live for 5-30 years except this one type.

2. Some species of sponges in the ocean near Antarctica are considered to be 10,000 years old - Normally sponges live from a few months up to 20 years.
3. Specimens of the black coral genus *Leiopathes* are among the oldest continuously living organisms on the planet: around 4,265 years old –normal life is from several decades to a century
4. Adwaita, an Aldabra Giant Tortoise died at the age of 255 in March 2006 in Alipore Zoo, Kolkata, India - Normally they live for 80 years.

This proves that the normal life spans of a society, culture or species does not limit the extraordinary life span of some members of the same species or culture. The first point therefore stands logically argued and that is - **A long lifespan maybe improbable but not impossible.**

We would have gladly added names and examples of people who neither figure in mythology nor in Islamic traditions - like Devraha Baba (1477-1989) who was supposed to be over 700 years old. But these remain scientifically unproven so we have desisted from giving what is indeed a very long list of people.

The second point we prove is that there are many things in this world which cannot be explained logically or scientifically but they are very much present and recorded. So science does not and cannot have a stand stating that long life is impossible.

A few things out of sync with scientific wisdom:

1. Ronnie and Donnie Galyon (born October 28, 1951) are two American conjoined twins, who hold the current record for the oldest living conjoined twins. - They are joined at the waist, live together, sharing one set of organs and **THEY ARE ALIVE STILL.**
2. Lina Medina, from the Ticsapo District of Peru, gave birth by cesarean section in Lima at age 5 12. The infant was a 2.64 kg (5.8 lb), 47.5 cm (18.7 in) boy named Gerardo. Medina's parents, who assumed their daughter had a tumor, took her to a hospital in late March, where she was found to be 7 months pregnant – This has been scientifically recorded
3. A 25 year old West Virginia man has two complete stomachs. This was a UPI press release on the 5th of August 1981. - And working without a hitch. Surprising yet true.

These examples illustrate the limitations of generalizations in science and open the mind to new ideas. So **Longevity may be an aberration to general trend but eminently possible.**

The next step in this discussion is that scientists themselves believe that long life is possible. The best way to prove this is to document various scientific efforts to rout out the impediments to long life and their steps to prolong it.

1. Longevity and lifestyle:

The attempt at increasing longevity in the human population is by providing them a better lifestyle i.e. nutrition, hygiene and healthcare. This has already paid rich dividends. In preindustrial times, deaths at young and middle age were common, and lifespans over 70 years were comparatively rare. This is not due to genetics, but because of environmental factors such as disease, accidents, and malnutrition, especially since the former were not generally treatable with pre-20th century medicine. Deaths from childbirth were common in women, and many

children did not live past infancy. In addition, most people who did attain old age were likely to die quickly from the above-mentioned untreatable health problems. For example, an 1871 census in the UK (the first of its kind) found the average male life expectancy as being 44, but if infant mortality is subtracted, males who lived to adulthood averaged 75 years. The present male life expectancy in the UK is 77 years for males and 81 for females. The following are some of the steps recommended by researchers and doctors to increase lifespan.

a. Spiritual Calmness

Religious people seem to have a longer life. Example: (i) Ayatullah Burujerdi (teacher of Ayatullah Khomeini) was confronted with so many problems but he was a Marja-e-Taqlid and lived for 88 years. (ii) Ayatullah Khomeini himself lived for 96 years and was solving the problems even at such an old age.

Dr. Williams Paak, a famous American physician while giving statistics says that "... In Europe those who reach the age of 70 years out of every 1000 are 43 religious people, 40 farmers, 29 scholars and 24 physicians ..."

We see that religious people are almost double the number of physicians which should be the reverse. Other religions and disciplines also advise meditation in various forms to increase life and stop or slow the ageing process.

b. Inheritance

Genetics play a great role in the long life of a person. Also mice have been genetically engineered to live twice as long as ordinary mice. This proves that genetics play a role.

c. Nutrition

It has been observed that the Queen bee lives 400 times more than the other bees. Balfour, a famous French biologist, discovered that the queen bee during its entire lifetime eats jelly which is procured by workers whereas the other bees eat this jelly only three days.

d. Eating less

It has been observed that people having a long life are those who eat less. Islam too has emphasized on eating less.

e. Environment

Freedom from pollution, stress, etc.

f. Fresh air

Breathing fresh and gentle air/breeze (especially at the time of morning) and living in green environment and in a room with ventilation.

g. Cold climate

Cold plays an important role in long life and statistics shows that people living in colder areas live longer than those in warmer areas.

h. Hard work & Exercise

It is an indisputable fact that people, who work hard, live a longer life as compared who have no work to do. Recent studies find that even modest amounts of leisure time, physical exercise can extend life expectancy by as much as 4.5 years.

The above points are widely acknowledged. If a man lives a healthy lifestyle and has proper medical facilities at hand, his lifespan will increase. But the eye opener is the research paper published in the Science magazine in the year 2002 where the scientists Oeppen and Vaupel observe that experts who assert that "life expectancy is approaching a ceiling ... have repeatedly been proven wrong." That man can and will have an unlimited increase in lifespan reflecting the progress in science.

2. Aging should be classified as a disease:

Various eminent scientists feel strongly that aging is in fact disease attacking normal bodily functions. Harry R. Moody, Director of Academic Affairs for AARP, notes that what is normal and what is disease strongly depends on historical context. David Gems, Assistant Director of the Institute of Healthy Ageing, strongly argues that aging should be viewed as a disease. Because of the universality of aging he calls it a 'special sort of disease'. Robert M. Perlman, coined the terms 'aging syndrome and disease complex' in 1954 to describe aging

3. Anti-ageing drugs:

The most popular scientific method to prolong human life is anti-ageing drugs and prescriptions. You cannot live in a city or a town without encountering advertisements from skin rejuvenation, hair implants to enzymes to increase lifespan.

4. Nanotechnology:

Future advances in medicine could give rise to life extension through the repair of many processes thought to be responsible for aging. K. Eric Drexler, one of the founders of nanotechnology, postulated cell repair machines, including ones operating within cells and utilizing as yet hypothetical molecular computers, in his 1986 book Engines of Creation. Raymond Kurzweil, a futurist and trans-humanist, stated in his book "The Singularity Is Near" that he believes that by 2030, advanced medical nano-robotics could be a complete remedy for the effects of aging.

5. Cloning:

Some life extensionists suggest that therapeutic cloning and stem cell research could one day provide a way to generate cells, body parts, or even entire bodies (generally referred to as reproductive cloning) that would be genetically identical to a prospective patient. Recently, the US Department of Defense initiated a program to research the possibility of growing human body parts on mice.

6. SENS (Strategies for Engineered Negligible Senescence):

Another proposed life extension technology would combine existing and predicted future biochemical and genetic techniques. SENS proposes that rejuvenation may be obtained by removing aging damage via the use of stem cells and tissue engineering, among other ways. It is important to note that there are regular SENS conferences and that there is a field specialized in increasing lifespan and arresting aging. It is called Bio gerontology.

There are many other such advances in the scientific fields. The obvious conclusion is that thousands of scientists, researchers and doctors around the world work solely to stop aging and increase lifespan. They also met with modest success in increasing lifespan which points to a bright future. The message is unmistakable - increased Lifespan is very much possible.

It is evident that the body today, as it has been made, is capable of an almost unlimited longevity. Though that potential has not been exploited due to lack of knowledge as to what triggers this process

The Theory of Regeneration

In biology, regeneration is the process of renewal, restoration, and growth that makes genomes, cells, organisms, and ecosystems resilient to natural fluctuations or events that cause disturbance or damage. Every species is capable of regeneration, from bacteria to humans.

Simply put, cells make up the body. Man has the cellular capacity to create and replace those cells which have been damaged, aged or inefficient with new cells manufactured inside the body itself. Man ages and dies because this capacity to regenerate cells slows down and the damage and residue increases. Also it was a long held view that man lacked the capability for regeneration of some parts like bones. But studies have shown that some humans do have this capacity too. In May 1932, L.H. McKim published a report in The Canadian Medical Association Journal, that described the regeneration of an adult digit-tip following amputation. The severed finger digit grew back. Toes damaged by gangrene and burns in older people can also regrow with the nail and toe print returning after medical treatment for gangrene.

The clear biological reason for aging is not known to science though they have put forward a lot of theories. However, laboratories and research centers all over the world have begun to use body stem cells to manufacture various body parts.

Scientists are unanimous that man does possess an inane capability to regenerate his body against damage and wear and tear. They do not possess the knowledge yet as to what triggers the slowdown of this capability. But if this capability were to continue as it indeed does in some species then man too would live for a very long time existing naturally. Only accidents or fatal bouts of disease would discontinue his life span.

Conclusion

It was our primary goal to prove the possibility and probability of a long life span by putting forward credible scientific research and data as proofs. In that we have succeeded by the Grace of Allah, the Almighty, clearly establishing that a long life span though not common is very much possible in the realm of science.

The long life of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) therefore should not surprise anyone, least of all those who claim that it is against nature.