



وَصَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكَ يَا وَلِيَّ الْعَصْرِ اَدْرَكْنَا

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

Is Imam (a.t.f.s) Observing Us?

The belief in the Imamatus of Ahle Bait (a.s) is the basis of all (other) Islamic beliefs and laws. It is on the basis of this belief that one can comprehend the accurate and genuine concept of Tauheed. The real grandeur and magnificence of Prophethood (Nabuwwat) is reflected only in the mirror of this belief. Actions are correctly performed under the guidance of this doctrine and it forms the basis of acceptance of all actions. The one whose heart is devoid of this belief will be in a great loss on the Day of Judgment. Salvation and entry in paradise is restricted to those who subscribe to this belief.

However, this belief does not imply that we only believe in the existence of our twelve Imams (a.s) and don't consider them as our guides and role models. The very fact that we consider these venerable personalities as our Imams (a.s) signifies that we accept them as our guides at every step and tread on their path without any questions. In all facets of our lives individual or social, commerce issues or complex personal relations, or those dealing with family life and the worship of Allah and gaining His proximity- we should adopt those principles which are enumerated by these honourable personalities as the aim of our life and try to emulate them.

This belief also demands that we acknowledge and are convinced that our Imams (a.s) are observing our actions and none of our deeds are concealed from them.

Witness to our actions

Imam Sadiq (a.s) was asked about the meaning of the following Quranic verse:

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ عَلَى هَؤُلَاءِ شَهِيدًا ﴿٤١﴾

'How will be the condition on the day of judgement when we shall bring forth a witness from every nation and we will make you (O Prophet) as a witness upon them.' (Nisa: 41)

Imam (a.s) replied,

'This verse refers particularly to the nation of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). In every era an Imam from among us is a witness upon them and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) is a witness upon us.'

(Al-Kafi, vol. 1, p.190, tradition 1)

Another person asked Imam Sadiq (a.s) about the following Quranic verse in which Allah says:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ

'In this way have We made you as the middle nation so that you be a witness on the people.'

(Baqarah: 143)

Imam (a.s) replied:

"We are the 'middle nation'. We are the witnesses of Allah upon the creation and His Proof upon them.'
(Ibid, tradition 2)

From these traditions, it becomes clear that our Imam (a.s) witnesses our deeds. In order to become a witness, it is necessary that the person should have comprehensive knowledge about the thing that he witnesses. Hence when we say that our Imam (a.s) is a witness to our actions, it means that he has encompassing knowledge of all our actions.

Deeds presented before Imam (a.s.)

A person by the name of Abdullah b. Aabaan az-Ziyaat was in the presence of Imam Raza (a.s). He requested Imam(a.s) that he (a.s) should pray for his well-being and that of his family. Imam (a.s) replied, "Am I not doing like that? I swear by Allah that your deeds are presented to us every morning and evening.' Abdullah says 'I was surprised (to hear that our deeds are presented before Imam (a.s). Imam(a.s) is at one place while he has the information of the entire world!)'Imam (a.s) replied:

'Have you not read the verse of Quran which says

وَقُلْ اَعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ -

'Then do your (good) deeds. Allah and His prophet and the believers are a witness to your actions."
(Taubah:105)

"I swear by Allah (the word) 'believers' (in the verse) refers to Ameerul Mo'mineen (a.s)."

(Al-Kafi, vol. 1 p. 219, tradition 4)

Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) used to say,

'Why are you people troubling the Holy Prophet (s. a.w.s.)?'

One person asked, 'How is it that we are troubling the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.)?' (i.e. Holy Prophet (s.a.w) is not amongst us, then how can we hurt or upset him). Imam (a.s) replied,

“Are you not aware that your actions are placed before him (s.a.w.s.)? When he (s.a.w.s.) witnesses a sin among your deeds then he (s.a.w.s.) gets distressed and sorrowful. Don't make the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) unhappy. Instead, try to make him (s.a.w.s.) cheerful”. (Ibid., tradition 3)

Imam (a.s.) recognises each one of us by our names

People are familiar with only those individuals whom they see and recognize and the majority consists of those individuals whom we don't recognise. Therefore a smart and cunning person can deceive others who don't really know him very well. However, none can deceive the Imams (a.s), because the Imams (a.s) recognise each and every one of us by our names.

Imam Raza (a.s) once wrote in one of his letters,

'Hazrat Mohammed Mustafa (S.a.w) is the Trusted One (Ameen) of Allah among His creatures. After his (s.a.w) demise, we are his inheritors and are the trusted ones of Allah on this earth. We know who among you will be involved in which examination and calamity and where you will die. We know the lineage of the Arabs. We also know who will be born on the religion of Islam. If we see someone then we immediately recognise how strong is his faith and the amount of hypocrisy in him. And we have the names of our every Shia along with the names of his father.'

(Ibid., p. 223, tradition 1)

Thus simply calling ourselves as Shias is not sufficient. Instead we should beseech Allah that our names should be included in the list of those Shias who are with our Imam (a.t.f.s.)

Imam (a.t.f.s.) has information of each and everything

Janabe Mufazzal (r.a) once asked Imam Jafar Sadiq(a.s) 'May I be sacrificed for you! Is it possible that Allah makes the obedience of a person obligatory on everyone but conceals from that person the knowledge of the heavens?'

Imam (a.s) replied,

'No. Allah is more kind, sympathetic and generous upon His servants than that He should make the obedience of an individual obligatory on everyone but should conceal the news of the heavens from him'.

(Ibid., p. 261, tradition 3)

In another tradition, Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s) declares,

Allah is much higher and greater than this that He makes the obedience to someone as obligatory on everyone else, but conceal from that person the knowledge of the heavens and the earth'.

(Ibid., p. 262, tradition 6)

In the light of these traditions it becomes clear that every morning and evening, the news of the heavens and the earth is presented before our Imam (a.s). In this way, he is aware of the minutest details of our actions.

Imam (a.s.) is more compassionate and tender than our father

Not only are our Imams (a.s) aware of all our deeds and actions, but they are also affected by our pains and sufferings. The following incident underlines this fact and shows us how much our Imams (a.s) value and cherish their Shias.

A person by the name of Rumailah narrates: 'In the days of Hazrat Ali (a.s) I was severely ill. On Friday I recovered a bit. I thought to myself - how nice would it be if I have my bath today and recite namaz behind Ali (a.s). Hence I got up and after taking a bath, went to the mosque. While Ali (a.s) was delivering the Friday sermon, my condition again deteriorated. After namaz Ali (a.s) went to a place by the name of 'Qasr', I too accompanied him. He (a.s) said to me,

'O Rumailah! Why are you restless?'

I narrated to him (a.s) about my illness and explained to him my condition. Then Imam (a.s) said,

'O Rumailah! When a believer becomes ill then we too are affected by his illness. If someone becomes sorrowful and distressed then we too become sorrowful. If someone prays then we say 'Aameen' for his supplication. And when he becomes silent (i.e. he stops praying) then we pray for him.'

Rumailah asked Imam (a.s) "My master! Are you referring about those believers who are staying in this place of 'Qasr'? What about those who stay in the different corners of the earth?' Imam (a.s) replied,

"O Rumailah! There is no believer - in the east or in the west - who is hidden from us'.

(Basaaer al-Darajaat; part 16, tradition 1)

Through this incident it becomes evident that our Imams (a.s) hold their Shias dearer than a father holds his son. Thus when Imams (a.s) love us so much, then the least that we can do is perform such actions that are a cause of happiness for them and refrain from those deeds which anger and upset them.

A signed letter (Tawqee) from Imam Mahdi (a.s.)

Now let us pay attention to this tawqee (a 'Tawqee' is a letter signed by Imam (a.s) himself in the time of his occultation) through which we learn that Imam's (a.s.) knowledge encompasses all our actions.

Every word of the blessed Tawqee addressed to Shaikh Mufeed (r.a) spells out this fact. Those people, who in the time of major occultation are serving the religion of Islam, are defending the laws and beliefs, are taking care of the weak and helpless Shias have been addressed by the one who is the cause of the existence of this Universe, Hazrat Vali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) - as "the brother with an upright character and a learned and intelligent friend". This form of address itself is a proof that our Imam (a.t.f.s.) is aware of our deeds and our character. Imam (a.t.f.s.) (may our lives be sacrificed for him) states,

"Even though we are residing away from the settlements of oppressors - as Allah has destined this in the best interest of the Shias - yet our knowledge encompasses all your information. Nothing is hidden from us. We are conscious of the problems and the degradation which all of you are enduring right now. The reason for all this is that you are indulging in all those (prohibited) things from which your elders used to abstain and you have abandoned the promise and the pledge that was taken from you as if you have never ever known this promise."

(These words of Imam (a.t.f.s.) reflect his remorse on our heedlessness, negligence and disgraceful actions. But the words that follow are an indication of his fatherly love and his compassion.) Imam (a.t.f.s.) continues

"We are not negligent of your affairs and neither do we forget your remembrance. If it would have been so, then calamities and difficulties would have encircled you and the enemies would have annihilated you."

At the end of this Tawqee, Imam (a.t.f.s.) continues,

"Then each one of you should perform such actions which will bring you close to our love and should abstain from those deeds which are a cause of our displeasure and anger. This is because our reappearance will occur unexpectedly and at that time your repentance will serve no purpose. Your remorse and your regret will not protect you from our chastisement."

(Al-Ehtejaaj of Shaykh Tabarsi, vol. 2, p. 497, 498)

Another Tawqee

In another Tawqee to Janab Shaykh Mufeed (r.a), Imam (a.t.f.s.) declares,

"May Allah grant the 'Taufeeq' (grace) to our Shias for His obedience. If our Shias would have remained united and would have been steadfast in fulfilling their pledge, there would not have been any delay in our meeting with them. They would have been blessed with our meeting and our presence through their recognition and their truthfulness. But the thing which has delayed our reappearance and has distanced us from them is the news that we get about their deeds which we dislike and don't expect from them." (Ibid., p. 499)

There is one very important thing that is highlighted from the above discussion - the Imams (a.s.) (particularly the Imam (a.s.) of our time) are aware of our each and every movement. Nothing in this world is concealed from their divine eyes. In the supplication on Fridays related to Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) we recite: السلام عليك يا عين الله في خلقه .

"Peace be upon you, O the eyes of Allah among His creation!

In the presence of an Emperor

If a blind individual stands in the presence of a king then he will observe the same etiquette of honour and respect due to a king, which are applicable to the one who is actually seeing the king (even though the blind man is unable to see the king.) This is because the blind man perceives the presence of the king and realises that he is standing before a king. He himself is unable to see the king, but he is convinced that the king is observing him.

The situation is similar during the time of the major occultation. A believer is unable to see his Imam (a.t.f.s.) but he is certain that Imam (a.t.f.s.) is observing him. Due to his conviction, he is always aware of the fact that he is standing in Imam's (a.t.f.s.) presence. He considers Imam (a.t.f.s.) to be a witness to his each and every action. In Dua-e-Nudbah we recite

"May I be sacrificed for you! You are that concealed one who is constantly present in all our gatherings!"

True faith and certainty demands that we always realise that we are in the presence of Imam (a.t.f.s.) and hence maintain the decorum of honour and respect.

O Allah! For the sake of Your immaculate, infallible friends (a.s) and their sincere followers, grant us such upright faith and perfect certainty. Aameen!

The Need For Representation

As you are aware, occultation is of two types: the Minor Occultation and the Major Occultation with the former being the foundation for the latter.

Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) was martyred in 260 A.H., within 5 years of the birth of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) in 255 A.H. Immediately after his martyrdom, the soldiers of the Abbassid Caliph surrounded his house. They were in search of his son, who was his successor.

These historical incidents in themselves are a proof of the danger to the life of Imam Hasan Askari's (a.s.) son. Occultation was thus necessary for the protection of Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s.) life and for the continuity of the institution of Imamate and successorship of prophethood.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) had already prophesied about this:

ثُمَّ يَغُيِّبُ عَنْهُمْ إِمَامَهُمْ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَ يَكُونُ لَهُ غَيِّبَتَانِ.....

'Then till Allah desires, their Imam will be hidden from them and he will have two occultations...'

(Behaarul Anwaar, Vol. 52, Pg. 380)

Selection of the Special Representatives

Subsequent to the martyrdom of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.), the Shias were enveloped in the darkness of doubt and indecision. The demise of Imam (a.s.) was not the sole reason for their condition, essentially it was also due to the political situation prevailing at that time.

The atmosphere of fear and anxiety unleashed by the Abbassid Caliphs towards the Shias and the lack of direct contact with the Imam (a.s.) aggravated things further. Soon the Shias disintegrated into different sects. The martyrdom of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) disturbed the Shias even more. The situation worsened to such an extent that many Shias despaired of their faith. Such conditions marked the beginning of the minor occultation. Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.) was physically absent from the midst of the people. To ensure his safety and wellbeing, Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) had not introduced him to everyone, but only to the innermost circle of his Shias. In the words of Shaykh Mufeed (a.r.), 'To the extent that he (Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) had not introduced his son to a large group of his followers'. . (Kitabul Irshad, pg. 345)

However, it was not as if Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) had not introduced his son and successor at all. The introduction was made, but only to the trustworthy ones. Ahmad b. Ishaq-e-Qummi was informed through a letter. He was instructed to inform reliable people about the birth of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). Also, care was taken to ensure that this news did not break out to the general masses.

Some Incidents

(i) Some descendants of Janabe Abu Talib

(a.s.) stayed in Medina. They were true believers, having complete faith that the son of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) would be the twelfth Imam. However, after the martyrdom of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) some of them turned apostates (i.e. they turned away from Shiaism).

(Al-Kaafi, vol. 2, kitab al-Hujjah, Chapter of Birth of Sahebuz Zaman (a.t.f.s.))

(Although they were Shias of Hazrat Ali (a.s.), they deviated after the demise of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.))

(ii) Muhammad b. Ibrahim was confused after the martyrdom of the eleventh Imam (a.s.). This was despite the fact that his father Ibrahim b. Mahziyar was a representative of Hazrat Vali-e-Asr (a.s.) in Ahwaz, Sheikh Kulaini (a.r.) narrates that when the father of Muhammad b. Ibrahim died, some amount of Khums (Sahm-e-Imam) was in his possession. His father had mentioned in his will that he should be careful about the Sahm-e-Imam and it should reach to the correct person. In a state of confusion, Muhammad b. Ibrahim carried the money to Iraq. He decided to hand over the amount only after a satisfying proof was presented to him. Later, a messenger came to his house and advanced some convincing signs about the money and took custody of it. Muhammad b. Ibrahim became distressed and few days had not passed when he received a letter appointing him as a representative in his father's place.. (Ibid., Vol.2, Pg. 456)

(iii) Sheikh Saduq (a.r.) narrates from Abu Raje Misri, 'Two years after the demise of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.), I undertook a journey to search for his successor but I failed in my mission. In the third year while I was still seeking Imam Hasan Askari's (a.s.) successor in Medina, Abu Ghanim invited me to his house one evening. At that time, a thought crossed my mind that if at all there was any son of Imam (a.s.) then after three years he would definitely have made himself known. Suddenly a voice reached my ears. The voice declared, 'O Nasr b. Abdullah (Abu Raje), ask the Egyptians whether they have seen the Prophets (a.s.) in whom they believe?' Abu Raje says, 'Till then I was unaware of my father's name as I was born in Madyan and Naufali had brought me to Egypt. After my father's death I was brought up in Egypt. Listening to this I got up. Instead of going to Abu Ghanim's place I took the road to Egypt.. .

(Kamaaluddin, by Shaykh Saduq, vol.2, pg.491, chap. 25, tradition 15)

(iv) Hasan b. Abdul Majid says, 'I was in doubt about Hajiz b. Yazid (he was one of the representative of Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) in Baghdad and among the foremost assistants of Usman b. Saeed (r.a.)). Then I collected some money and reached Saamarrah. There I received a letter stating - It is not proper to doubt about us or about those who are helpers in our affairs.

Whatever you have brought with you, deposit it in the custody of Hajiz b. Yazid'.

(Al-Kafi, vol. 2, Chapter of birth of Imam (a.s.))

There are many such incidents in the books of traditions. Nevertheless, such doubts and confusions led to the disintegration of Shiaism into many sects. Al-Masoodi in 'Muroojuz Zahab' mentions about twenty such sects. Sa'd-e-Qummi in 'Al Maqaalaat wal Feraq' has mentioned 15 such sects. While Nawbakhti in 'Feraqush Shia' and Sheikh Mufeed (a..r.) in 'Fusool-ul-Mukhtaar' have named fourteen sects each. Shahrastani in 'Al Milal wa al-Nahal' has mentioned eleven sects.

It is famous among the scholars that after the demise of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.), the Imamites (Shias) were divided into fourteen sects and according to the contemporary ulema these 14 sects from the aspect of beliefs, form 5 sects.

Currently, only the Imamiyyah sect (believers in the Imamate of Imam Mahdi (a.s.)), among all others, has survived.

Reminder

We observe that despite the foresight and anticipation of the Shias of that time, they were afflicted with doubt and skepticism Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.), who never forgets his Shias has himself declared to the Shias:

'We are neither negligent of your affairs nor are we forgetful of your remembrance. If it were so, you would have been already destroyed'.

Surely, if it wasn't for the link between the noble and extraordinary Shias and Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.), the entire foundation of Shiaism would have been decimated.

To avoid such a scenario, in the initial period of occultation, Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.) maintained contact with the Shias through the special representatives. The common people were thus trained to live without an apparent Imam for a long period. This contact satisfied the people who were denied even a glance of their leader.

The Important Role of the Representatives:

The leadership of the four special representatives transformed the conditions of the Shias for the better. The Shias were saved from disintegration and deviation. Of course, this was possible only with the guidance of Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.).

The era of the first representative was marked with the presence of many groups having variant views vis-a-vis the son of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.). However, the era of the second

representative witnessed a successful transition, as his teachings prevailed among the Shias, thereby weakening the other groups.

Consequently, at the time of the third and the fourth representatives, the new generation of Shias had become acquainted with the true Shiite beliefs. They considered the words of the special representatives as the words of Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) himself and they were desirous of meeting him.

Same signature in every Tauquee :

The belief of the new generation was strengthened by the presence of the same signature in all the letters issued to the four representatives. The fourth (and last) special representative was issued the last letter, which announced the termination of the minor occultation and the onset of the major occultation. The foundation of the major occultation of Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.) was laid with the help of the minor occultation.

Under these circumstances the Shias were united. Shaykh Mufeed (a.r.) in 373 A.H. while writing the book, 'Al Fussol-ul-Mukhtarah' records that out of the fourteen sécts only the Imamiyyah sect survived. He further writes that this sect had the maximum number of scholars, visionaries, righteous ones, worshippers, jurists, traditionalists, linguists and poets. As these personalities were the leaders and were highly revered in society, the Shia Imamiyyah led an honourable existence. (Peeramun Zindagi-e-Nawwaab-e-Khassa-e- Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.), p. 84)

Purpose of Representation

Representation had two basic objectives:

(i) Mentally preparing the masses for the major occultation and gradually habituating them to live in the period of occultation. At the same time they had to safeguard the people from any negligence towards the matter of occultation. Had Imam (a.t.f.s.) directly gone into occultation, people would have denied his very existence and would have deviated. The special representatives of Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) in the minor occultation prepared the people mentally for the major occultation.

(ii) Guiding the lovers and followers of Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.) and protecting the unity of the Shia community. To a certain extent the special representatives filled the void created by the occultation of Imam (a.t.f.s.). Through them, Imam (a.t.f.s.) guided his Shias and ensured that no adversity touched them in his absence.

The deviation that would have occurred without the special representation is unimaginable.

Lastly, let us discuss some of the general responsibilities of the special, representatives:

a) Concealing the abode of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). This responsibility involved two facets. The dwelling of Imam (a.t.f.s.) was to be concealed not only from the enemies but also from the Shias. They prohibited their local representatives from even mentioning the name of Imam (a.t.f.s.) among the general masses. The Shias were thus protected from the Abbassides.

On the other hand they were also responsible for proving the existence of Imam (a.t.f.s.) among the reliable Shias to prevent any doubt from creeping in their beliefs. In some instances they even arranged meetings or indicated a place for meeting Imam (a.t.f.s.) to reliable people so as to disperse the cloud of uncertainty.

We shall further enlighten our readers about the responsibilities of the special representatives in the brief life-sketch of the second representative, Janab Muhammad b. Uthman (a.r.). Insha-Allah.

b) Preventing the disintegration among the Shias:

We have mentioned this point in some detail in the preceding paragraphs.

c) Resolving the religious and legal problems and explaining beliefs and knowledge:

They were the channels for presenting the religious and legal problems of the Shias before Imam (a.t.f.s.) and conveying Imam's (a.t.f.s.) reply to the people. One can find a number of questions and their replies during the time of the second representative.

d) Contending the false claimants of Mahdaviyat.

This too will be discussed Insha-Allah in detail in the life history of the second representative.

e) The collection and distribution of the wealth of Imam (a.t.f.s.):

The special representatives collected the share of Imam (a.t.f.s.) from the Shias and their own local representatives. It was then presented to Imam (a.t.f.s.) and expended according to Imam's (a.s.) instructions.

f) Appointing local representatives

The practice of appointing local representatives was prevalent since the time of the previous Imams (a.s.). This practice continued during the occultation of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). The local representatives were appointed by the special representatives. Sometimes the local representative got the opportunity to meet Imam (a.t.f.s.) along with the special

representatives. Some local representatives got the honor of meeting Imam (a.t.f.s.) once, while others got this taufeeq several times. The second special representative had ten local representatives in Baghdad. The highest among them was Janab Husain b. Rauh (a.r.) who later went on to become the third special representative.

Details of the life histories of the special representatives will continue in subsequent issues of Al-Munatazar, Inshallah.

Occultation Of Imam (a.s.) An Immense Deprivation

Allah, the Blessed, the High says in the Holy Quran:

يَوْمَ نَدْعُو كُلَّ اُنَاسٍ بِمَا هُمْ

"The day when we will call every people with their Imam" :

(Bani Israel: 71)

Allah, the High at various places, has promised guidance to the people. To fulfill His promise, He sent Prophets and Messengers (peace be on them all) one after another, who called people towards His religion, recognition and worship. When the Prophethood was completed with the advent of the last prophet Mohammad (s.a.w.s.), He introduced Imamate in the progeny of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) so that people may turn to them and save themselves from straying and attain eternal happiness. The greatest and the highest bounty of Allah from amongst His bounties is the presence of Imam (a.s.). No other bounty can match this bounty. Other bounties have reached their relative position due to this bounty, without which all other endowments are imperfect. As it is mentioned in the Holy Quran,

الْيَوْمَ اكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَاتَّمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

"This day (on the day of Ghadeer) I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion."

(Maaedah: 3)

وَمَا بِنِعْمَتِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ

"And as for the favor of your Lord, do announce (it)."

(Zoha: 11)

Our guidance and salvation depends upon the fourteen infallibles therefore, it is obligatory upon us that we discuss and talk about this bounty. . . .

We would like to make an important point over here. And that is, a believer should never give preference to any bounty over that of the mastership and love of Ahle Bait (a.s.). To consider the gift of 'Mastership of Ahle Bait (a.s.)' as light or equating it with other endowments like wealth, children, business etc. will lead to our destruction and devastation.

The Islamic nation's received the distinction of living with the thirteen infallibles and reap benefits from their holy lives. However, the majority breached their covenant with their Lord and the people who actually remained loyal and faithful, could easily be counted on fingers.

Instead of deriving benefits from their existence, the people oppressed and tortured them no end. Their barbarism and brutality had reached to such pits that had they been told to oppress the family of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.), they would have not been able to repress than what they actually did. Notwithstanding such a disgraceful demonstration of ingratitude and

inhumanity, the Merciful Allah did not snatch away the bounty of the physical presence of the infallibles (a.s.) from amongst the people, till the commencement of the occultation of Imam Mahdi (a.s.).

It should be borne in mind that if Allah bestows bounty on any one without he deserving it, then this bounty of Allah is His 'Grace'. If He snatches the bounty after sometime, it is not injustice because he had bestowed it without the person deserving it. On the contrary, it will be sheer justice. It is not obligatory on Allah that He should always deal with 'Grace'. But on occasions, He deals with His grace and on others, with justice. None of His dealings are devoid of wisdom. It is not necessary that we should know the prudence behind all His actions. Whatever He does is sheer wisdom, whether we comprehend or not. We can comprehend the wisdom behind any of His action only in the light of the Holy Quran and the traditions. The intellect of men cannot comprehend the rationale behind His actions....

However, from the divine practices of Allah is the practice which has been related in Holy Quran and the traditions is:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ -

"Surely Allah does not change the condition of people until they change their own condition..."
(Ra'd: 11)

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِّعْمَةً أَنْعَمَهَا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ -

"This is because Allah has never changed a favor which He has conferred upon the people until they change their own condition..."
(Anfaal: 53)

Imam Mohammad Baqir (a.s.) in the exposition of the above Quranic verses says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَضَىٰ قَضَاءً حَتْمًا لَا يُنْعَمُ عَلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ نِعْمَةً فَيَسْلُبُهَا إِيَّاهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ يُحْدِثَ الْعَبْدُ ذَنْبًا يَسْتَوْجِبُ بِذَٰلِكَ الذَّنْبِ سَلْبَ تِلْكَ النِّعْمَةِ وَ ذَٰلِكَ قَوْلُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ -

"It is a definite and certain decree of Allah that when He bestows a bounty on His servant, He does not snatch it till the servant commits a sin which becomes the cause of its deprivation. This is the meaning of Allah's word "Surely Allah does not change the condition of people until they change their own condition".
(Tafseer Noor al-Saqalain, vol.2, p. 488)

In brief, the actions of the people are the cause of Allah, the High, confiscating the bounty from them. Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) in the opening sentences of his famous supplication, Dua-e-Kumayi, says:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي الذُّنُوبَ الَّتِي تُغَيِّرُ النِّعَمَ

"O Allah! Forgive those of my sins which convert the bounties (into calamities)."

The Divine practice shows that Allah's Mercy takes precedence over His Wrath. Therefore, Allah seizes the bounty only when people are ungrateful and unappreciative.

Thus, we are not aware of the actual wisdom behind the occultation of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) and according to some traditions, Imam Zaman (a.t.f.s.) will himself give the reason of his occultation when he reappears. However, one of the reasons that we are familiar with is that occultation is due to the anger of Allah on account of the ingratitude of the people. The physical presence of Imam (a.s.) among the people was the greatest bounty of Allah upon the people that was snatched from them. While explaining the importance of the physical presence of Imam (a.s.), Imam Reza (a.s.) says:

الْإِمَامَةُ تَمَامُ الدِّينِ، أُنْسُ الْإِسْلَامِ، أَصْلُ كُلِّ خَيْرٍ يَنْظُمُ الْأُمَّةَ، سَبِيلُ الرَّبِّ، نُورٌ...

"Imamat is complete religion, the foundation of Islam, the basis of all goodness, the discipline of the nation, the path to Allah and the light through which people acquire guidance."

Imam Mohammad Baqir (a.s.) says:

بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ: عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ وَالصَّوْمِ وَالْحَجِّ وَالْوَلَايَةِ وَلَمْ يَبْدَأْ كَمَا تُؤَدَّى بِالْوَلَايَةِ

"Islam is based on five principles - Namaz, Zakat, Fasting, Haj and the Mastership (of Ahle Bait (a.s.)) and the manner in which importance has been given to Mastership no other thing has been given such importance." (al-Kaafi, vol.2, p.18)

While explaining the following Quranic verse, Imam Mohammad Baqir (a.s.) says:

“قَامِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَالنُّورِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلْنَا”

"Then believe in Allah and His Messenger and the light which we have sent down",

“النور والله الامتة من آل محمد صلى الله عليه وآله الى يوم القيامة وهم والله نور الله في السموات وفي الارض والله لنور الامام في قلوب المؤمنين انور من الشمس المضيئة بالنبأ”

"By Allah in the above verse, 'light' refers to the Imams from the progeny of Mohammad (s.a.w.s.) till the day of Judgement and by Allah these are the lights' which Allah has sent. And by Allah, they are the 'lights' in the heavens and on the earth... By Allah the 'light' of Imam in the hearts of the believers, is brighter than the shining sun."

(Tafseer Noor al-Saqalain, vol. 5, p. 321)

When people disregarded this great bounty, Allah, the High concealed Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.) from their eyes. No other calamity can be greater than this concealment of Imam (a.s.) from the sights of the people. The simile of the above is like a child who is left alone in darkness to seek

out his way, he is not aware of its beginning nor its end. Resultantly, he will fall a prey for the beast or will become needy of somebody.

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) says:

إِذَا غَضِبَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى عَلَى خَلْقِهِ نَحْنًا عَنْ جَوَارِهِمْ

"When Allah, the Blessed and the High is angry with His creation then He makes us - the Ahle bait (a.s.), distanced and away from the people."

(al-Kaafi, Chapter of Occultation, Tradition No. 31)

The presence of Imam (a.s.) among the people to solve their questions and problems is a divine grace of immeasurable magnitude. The concealment of Imam (a.s.) from the sights of the people and their helplessness to reach the Imam (a.s.) is the justice of Allah. Grace takes precedence over justice but the disobedience and ungratefulness of the Muslims has replaced the grace of Allah with His justice... . It is an irrefutable reality that the benefits that we would have enjoyed in the physical presence of Imam (a.s.), are not available now. It is a great loss and nothing can make the loss good. We only are to be blamed for the loss and nobody else.

One question arises here: The cause of occultation was due to the disobedience and ingratitude of the earlier Muslims. Then why are we suffering for their action and misdeeds? Is it not injustice?

Answer: Firstly, as we have already mentioned that if Allah has kept His Proof among the people, then it is His grace. And if He conceals Him, then it is His justice.

Secondly, we are also responsible for the occultation of Imam-e-Asr (a.s.) by our conflicts, internal fighting, sins, misdemeanours, etc. These actions are the cause of prolonging the occultation of Imam (a.s.). Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.), in one of his 'Tawqee' to Sheikh Mufeed (a.r.) writes: "If the hearts of our Shias (may Allah give them the taufeeq of His obedience) were united in their fulfillment of the covenant (of Shiasm), then certainly our meeting with them would have not been delayed".

The words of Imam (a.s.) show that our disunity not only makes him sorrowful but is also a cause of prolongation of his occultation and loneliness. In other words, our actions and sins are the cause of sorrow and grief for our Imam (a.s.). If we sincerely love our Imam (a.s.) then let all of us take this oath that we will not commit sins and disobey Allah the Almighty, as these sins deprive us of our Imam and consequently, we lose the greatest bounty of Allah, the High. On the flip side, if we keep our covenant and refrain from sins, we can undo the misdeeds of the earlier Muslims and can obtain the privilege of an earlier meeting with our Imam (a.s.).

Discussion Of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) On The Arsh

Certain conclusions derived from historical events and incidents not only astonish the conscious-minded, the righteous and the knowledgeable, rather, these make them see rays of a firm divine plan or movement which makes man debase himself, his forehead in prostration in front of the Needless Creator, in confession of his Infinite Power and Authority.

It seems beyond intellect and rationale that on one side is the matter of human guidance and on the other is the contamination of the environment in the Arabian Peninsula after the martyrdom of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Conditions had become even more wretched when compared to the days of ignorance (Jahiliyya). On one hand, there were a handful of companions, trained by the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and on the other hand, there was the multitude of helpers (Ansaar) and the migrants (Muhajireen). That is why Ameerul Mo'mineen Ali (a.s.) had said, 'This caliphate is like a she-camel and I have left its reins to itself (i.e. allowed it to go wherever it wants).'

At times one could hear the complaints of Janabe Fatema Zahra (s.a.) in Masjidun Nabawi on the usurpation of her father's legacy (Fadak), and at other times, one could see her in the darkness of night, in the House of Grief (Baitul Huzn) lamenting over her father's (s.a.w.s.) demise. Then again on occasions, one witnesses the successor and brother of Allah's Prophet (s.a.w.s.) - Ali (a.s.), being dragged with a rope in his neck and then one could see his house being set aflame. Those in the forefront of this repression and tyranny were the ones who had lived their lives in the company of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.). Why such a dramatic change of attitude? This question itself raises many other related queries. For instance, how did the Muslims ignore the immaculate and brilliant traditions that are termed as Hadithe Qudsi (divine traditions)? These traditions that are attributed to Allah Himself, are the best means of guidance and appeal to man's intellect. These traditions elaborate the irrefutable truthfulness of the Holy Quran and along with it, illumine the path for his deliverance. Even in these divine traditions (Ahadithe Qudsi) the successorship of Allah's greatest Prophet (s.a.w.s.) has been clearly outlined and defined for the people. If only the people had referred to these traditions, the Muslim community would not have been afflicted with such devastating disputes and conflicts. If they had merely adhered to these holy words, they would have fulfilled the wishes of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and would have gained Allah's proximity and satisfaction.

Alas! The refusal to submit to these brilliant traditions was one of greatest tragedies to distress Islam. They were revealed by Allah the Almighty to His Noble Prophet (s.a.w.s.), are explicit in their implication and leave no room for any refutation or misinterpretation.

The most significant and resilient belief of the Shias is the concept of Imamat. But today we see that the Islamic community in general has dealt with the topic of the Promised Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)

with some injustice by not giving it the place it deserves in Islam. They have breached the trust vis-à-vis this belief, with the result that a large section of the Muslim population is either unaware of this belief or at least, are not well informed about it. Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s.) birth, his holy existence, his glorious personality, his leadership, his successorship of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.), his protection of Islam and the Majestic Quran - all these facets are never mentioned to the Muslims. It is a miracle that despite this wide-scale unawareness, the brilliant personality of Imam (a.t.f.s.) glows in the darkness of ignorance. It is among the miracles of Allah the Almighty that He has kept His last proof concealed, yet has made it impossible for men of understanding and intellect to deny his existence.

We shall quote Hadithe Qudsi so that those who believe in Tauheed (Unity of Allah), Prophethood and Imamat understand that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) left no stone unturned in introducing his last successor to the Muslims. : The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) frequently explained to the Arabs and reminded them about Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). In addition to the Quran, he (s.a.w.s.) showed them proofs from other divine scriptures to establish Imam's (a.t.f.s.) advent. However, the Arabs were indeed wretched that after listening to all the traditions and seeing all the proofs, they ignored the advent of Imam (a.t.f.s.) and exchanged their hereafter for this world.

The Noble Quran in the very first verse of Surae Asraa, declares:

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي نَارُكُنَّا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِن آيَاتِنَا ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴿١﴾

"Glory be to Him who made His servant to go on a night from the Sacred Mosque to the remote mosque of which We have blessed the precincts so that we may show to him some of our signs."

It is apparent that after the incident of ascension (Me'raj), the companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) would have asked him about his experience in minute details. And it is also apparent that on every occasion, the Prophet (s.a.w.s) would have described the incident involving his successors. It is indeed miraculous how such prophetic traditions found their way in books of traditions after the total ban on narration of prophetic traditions during the reign of the first three caliphs. For instance

Algamah b. Qais narrates: 'Ameerul Mo'mineen (a.s.) recited the sermon of Loloah in front of us.. One person by the name of Aamir b. Kathir who was seated in the gathering rose and asked Ameerul Mo'mineen (a.s.), 'Inform me about the evil leaders of the disbelievers. Then inform me about the righteous leaders of the truthful ones who will succeed you in Imamat.'

Ameerul Mo'mineen (a.s.) replied,

'This is the position which the Prophet (s.a.w.s) conferred on me. He (5.a.w.s) informed me that there would be twelve pure and immaculate personalities who would occupy this position (of Imamat). Of these, nine would be from the lineage of Imam Husain (a.s.). The Prophet (s.a.w.s) informed me:

'When I was taken around the heavens, I happened to glance at the foot of Arsh (Throne). I observed that it was engraved on the foot of the Throne -

“لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ أَيَّدْتُهُ بِعَلِيٍّ”

'There is no god other than Allah. Muhammad is the prophet of Allah. I have supported him through Ali.'

Then I witnessed twelve lights. I asked Allah:

'O my Lord, what are these lights?' It was told to him (s.a.w.s), 'O Muhammad these are the lights of the Imams from your progeny.'

Then Ameerul Mo'mineen (a.s.) narrates,

"I asked the Prophet (s.a.w.s), 'Can you inform me about their names?' The Prophet (s.a.w.s) revealed, 'O Ali, you will succeed me. You alone shall pay my debts. and fulfill my vows. (Then the Prophet (s.a.w.s) revealed the names of each and every successor as till Imam Ali Nagi (a.s.)). Then your son Hasan Askari. (a.s.) will succeed Ali Nagi (a.s.) and will be renowned with the title of 'Ameen'. Hasan Askari (a.s.) will be succeeded by his son Qa'im (a.s.) who will have the same name as I have and will resemble me. He will fill the earth with peace and equity, as it would be fraught with oppression and inequity.' (Kifaayatul Asar, p. 213-219. The same tradition can also be found in Behaarul Anwaar)

On the same lines, Imam Sadiq (a.s.) also narrates from his forefathers that when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) ascended to the heavens for Me'raj, he (s.a.w.s) informed,

'My Lord ordered me to raise my head. When I did so, I saw the radiant light of. Ali (a.s.), Fatema (a.s.), Hasan (a.s.), Husain (a.s.), Ali b. Husain (a.s.), Muhammed b. Ali (a.s.), Jafar b. Muhammed (a.s.), "Moosa b. Jafar (a.s.), Ali b. Moosa. (a.s.), Muhammed b. Ali (a.s.), Ali b. Muhammed (a.s.), Hasan b. Ali (a.s.) and Muhammed b. Hasan - al-Qa'im (a.s.). I witnessed that the name of the last Imam was like a brilliant, shining star among all other Imams (a.s.).' ... Then the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) asked Allah,

'Whose names are these?' Allah, the High, replied,

'These are the names of the caliphs of Islam. They are the ones who will make permissible what I have made permissible and will prohibit what I have made forbidden.'

(Kamaaluddin, vol.1, p. 252, Ch. 23, tradition 2)

Imam Ali Raza (a.s.) narrates from his ancestors (a.s.) that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) related:

When I ascended the heavens (Me'raj) I asked, 'O my Lord, who are my successors?' I heard a voice exclaim - Their names are inscribed on the foot of the Throne. When I glanced towards the Throne, I witnessed twelve rays of resplendent light. Each light was radiating in a ray of green light. The names of the twelve Imams (a.s.) were engraved on the Throne. That the last Imam would be the Mahdi of my nation was also mentioned.'

(Kamaaluddin, vol.1, p. 254, Ch. 23, tradition 4; Yanaabiul Mawaddah, p. 486)

Umme Salma (a.r.) relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) informed that.

'When I ascended the heavens I asked, o Allah, what is this light that I see? Who does it belong to? Allah replied, O Muhammed, this is the light of Ali (a.s.) and Fatema (s.a.), and the other light is that of Hasan (a.s.) and Husain (a.s.). That light that you see is of the Caliphs of your nation who will be from the progeny of Husain (a.s.). The light at the end is of the 'Hujjat' who will establish justice and equity on the earth.'

(Kifaayatul Asar, p. 185-186; Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 36, p. 348)

(Note: In the night of Ascension the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) has mentioned the name of his last successor explicitly on several occasions. Over here we have narrated only a few instances for our readers for the sake of brevity, otherwise there is no scarcity of traditions highlighting the name of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) as Allah's final Hujjat on the earth.)

As explained above, the matter of the Prophet's (s.a.w.s.) successorship has been established beyond doubt in the night of Ascension. Similarly there are many divine traditions (Ahadith-e-Qudsi) like Hadith-e-Lauh that announce the successors of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.), ending with the name of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). Such traditions underline the fact that these leaders alone would guide the Muslims after the Prophet (s.a.w.s.).

Jaabir b. Abdullah Ansari (r.a.) recounts, 'I visited the house of Janabe Fatema Zahra (s.a.) on the birth of Imam Husain (a.s.). At her house, I happened to catch a glimpse of a tablet (Lauh) that was green like emerald. When I glanced upon its contents, I saw that the writing was white as if written in light. When I asked Janabe Fatema Zahra (s.a.) about the tablet, she remarked: O Jaabir, my Lord has presented this tablet to me. It has in it the names of my father (s.a.w.s.), my husband and both my sons (a.s.) It also has the names of my sons, who will succeed the Prophet (s.a.w.s.). Janabe Zahra (s.a.) offered the green tablet to Jaabir (r.a.) who took it from her and rubbed it against his face (for blessing).'

Many years later, Jaabir (r.a.) related this incident to Imam Muhammad Baaqir (a.s.). Imam (a.s.) told Jaabir (a.s.), 'Show me your copy of the tablet.' Jaabir (r.a.) brought a parchment made of thin deerskin. He said, 'I take Allah the Almighty as a witness that I have recorded exactly what I saw on the green tablet with Janabe Fatima Zahra (s.a.).'

While Hadith-e-Lauh mentions the name and characteristics of every Imam (a.s.), we have highlighted below the relevant statements pertaining to Imam (a.t.f.s.).

...after that I shall raise Hasan Askari (a.s.) from your (Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.)) progeny. He shall be the treasurer of My knowledge. After him, I shall bring forth his son MH MD (Arabic), who will be mercy for the world. He shall take this world to its perfection. He shall have with him the inspiring awe of Moosa (a.s.), the command of Esa (a.s.) and the patience of Ayyub (a.s.). He will be the leader of My friends and slaves. His occultation will be an adversity upon My friends. Their heads will be sent as gifts, just like the heads of Turks and Dailimites are presented as gifts (by the apostates of that time). They will be killed, burnt and will live in perpetual fear. The earth will be coloured with the blood of these innocent ones and this will raise the shrieks and complaints of their women. Surely they are My friends and beloved ones. For their sake I will rectify every dispute raging on the earth (through My last Proof). I will make steadfast, their trembling feet. I will ward off their calamities and adversities.. May Allah have mercy upon them, they are the rightly guided ones.'

(Jaameul Akhbaar, Al-Jawaaherus Saneeyyah, Irshadul Quloob)

There is another narration reported by Abu Mufazzal in five different versions on the authority of Aisha. She narrates, 'There was a room in my house which had a stone. Whenever the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) wished to converse with Jibrail (a.s.), he (s.a.w.s.) used to sit on that stone. Once the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) was engaged in a conversation with Jibrail (a.s.). Earlier he (s.a.w.s.) had left instructions that no one was supposed to disturb him (s.a.w.s.) in the room. After a while Husain b. Ali (a.s.) entered the house and went directly to his respected grandfather (s.a.w.s.). I was engaged in some work and did not see Husain (a.s.) enter, so I could not stop him. When Jibrail (a.s.) saw Husain (a.s.), he asked the Prophet (s.a.w.s.), 'Who is he?' The Prophet (s.a.w.s.) replied, 'He is my son Husain.' Then Jibrail (a.s.) informed the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) about Imam Husain's (a.s.) martyrdom and even showed him (s.a.w.s.) the land of Karbala where Imam (a.s.) would be martyred. Jibrail. (a.s.) gave the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) some earth from the land of Karbala. On hearing about the heart-rending incident of Karbala, the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) wept excessively. Jibrail (a.s.) consoled the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) thus, 'Don't cry. Don't grieve. The ninth son from Husain's (a.s.) progeny will be the Qaim, who will avenge his martyrdom. He (Qaim) will be the son of Hasan Askari (a.s.). Through him, Allah will manifest His good word, truthful tongue and the evident truth. (And Allah declared - he will be My. Proof over My creatures.)

(Kifaayatul Asar, Behaarul Anwaar, Abqareeyul Hesaan)

It is recorded in Beharul Anwar, Iqbalul A'maal, Abqareeyul Hesaan, that Sayyid b. Tawoos (r.a.) in a detailed explanation, reports from Sahifa-e-Ibrahim: Ibrahim (a.s.) glanced at the last Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and saw Hazrat Ali (a.s.) next to him. Similarly Ibrahim (a.s.) witnessed all the fourteen infallibles and was introduced to them by Allah. Finally Allah introduced Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) thus:

'He is My Promised One, through whom My Mercy shall reach every dwelling-place, and through him, I shall adorn My virtuous servants. I shall do this at a time when the despair and hopelessness of My servants reaches its peak, and when they begin to feel that I will no longer heed their supplications.'

'Then when you remember Muhammad and invoke blessings upon him, also remember My successors and invoke blessings upon them.'

Abdullah b. Sulaiman, a great scholar with authority over divine scriptures, narrates: (we have only mentioned the portion relevant to Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)) Hazrat Esa (a.s.) asked,. . . O Allah what is 'Tooba?

A voice replied, ..

'It's a tree that encompasses the entire Paradise. I Myself have nourished it and have watered it with the stream of Tasneem. This is the stream, coolness of which is Camphor, and as delicious as dry ginger. If one drinks one glass from it, he shall never experience thirst again.'

Hazrat Esa (a.s.) requested Allah,

'O My Lord, give me some water from this stream.'

Allah the Almighty replied,

'A drink from this stream is prohibited for mortals, until My beloved Prophet (s.a.w.s.) drinks from it first. O Esa, I shall raise you to the heavens and you will reside here until the last age, when I will make you descend on the earth once again, so that you may see the exalted and glorious personality of this nation, and contend with Dajjal along with him. I will make you descend on the earth when it is time for prayers (namaz) and you will make way for him to lead the prayers. Indeed this is the nation on which I have bestowed My mercy.'

(Kamaaluddin, vol1, p. 261, tradition 18, Amaali of Shaykh Saduq (r.a.))

In addition to the traditions mentioned above, it is also necessary for us to refer to the tradition of the covenant.

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) narrates, 'Allah, the High, took the covenant from the Prophets (a.s.) - Am I not your Lord? Is Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) not My Prophet? Is Ali (a.s.) not the commander of the faithful?' All the prophets (a.s.) testified to the covenant. This covenant proves the successorship of the Imams (a.s.) after the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.).

After this, Allah took the covenant from the Ulul Azm Prophets (a.s.): .

'I am your Lord. Muhammad is My prophet. Ali (a.s.) is the commander of the faithful. And after him, My successors shall be the obedient ones, who will be the manifestation of My knowledge. And the Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is the one with whose strength and might, I shall reform My religion. Through him I shall manifest the beauty of My Essence. Through him, I shall avenge My enemies, and make My worship prevail across the corners of the world, so that only My. reign is supreme. And all this will definitely happen, regardless of whether the people are satisfied with it or are unsatisfied.'

A Gathering Adorned With The Remembrance Of Imam-e-Asr (a.s.)

Allah, the Blessed and the High says in the Holy Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَاضُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٢٠٠﴾

'O you who believe! Be patient and excel in patience and remain steadfast and be careful of your duty to) Allah, that you may be successful.' (Sura-e-Aale Imran 3: 200)

In the interpretation of the above verse, Hafiz Qunduzi Hanafi, the famous scholar of the Ahle Sunnah, narrates a tradition from Imam Baqir (a.s.) in his book 'Yanabiul Mawwadah' pp. 5-6,

"Be patient in complying with the obligatory acts, and remain steadfast against the cruelties and oppression of enemies and establish contact with your Imam, Imam Mahdi al-Muntazar (the Awaited One)

A similar exegesis is also narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s.), which is mentioned in various books like 'Ma'anil Akhbaar', 'Tafseer-e-Ayyaashi', 'Usul-e-Kafi', etc. Imam Saadiq (a.s.) says:

'Be patient concerning your religion and be patient against your enemy and establish contact with your Imam'. (Tafseer al-Meezan, by Allamah Tabatabai, p. 201)

There is no doubt that Allah, the Blessed and the High desires that His creatures on the earth should be in touch with His Proof and their Imam in every moment of their life. History is a witness to the fact that in the past, people failed to establish contact with Imam of their time. As a result, they could not acquire his recognition and consequently, refused to accept the caliphate of Hazrat Ali (a.s.), threw arrows on the bier of Imam Hasan (a.s.) and brutally killed Imam Husain (a.s.) in Karbala.

Each and every Imam (a.s.) was tortured and oppressed. The light of guidance did not reach the hearts of the people. As time went by, the situation turned for the worse. Today Muslims are living in a situation where there is no recognition of Imam and the true Islam. In fact, in the name of religion and justice, irreligiousness, injustice and oppression is widespread in Islamic society. Islam, which had come to enliven the people, has itself become lifeless. Imam Reza (a.s.) says in this regard:

رَجَمَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا أَخِيَا أَمَرْنَا فَلْتِ كَيْفَ يُحْيِي أَمْرَكُمْ؟ قَالَ يَتَعَلَّمُ عُلُومَنَا وَ يُعَلِّمُهُ النَّاسَ -

'May Allah bless the one who enlivens our affairs.'

The narrator inquired, 'How are your affairs enlivened?' Imam (a.s.) replied,

"By learning our traditions and teaching them to the people."

Thus, according to the above quote of Imam Reza (a.s.), Islam can be enlivened only through the acquisition of knowledge as subscribed by the Ahle Bait (a.s.) and acting upon it. For this, it is essential that one remains steadfast on his religion and maintains contact and relations with the Imam of his time and at the same time, prepare the ground for others to acquire the same knowledge.

Moreover, Islam cannot be enlivened unless one does not teach the knowledge of the Ahle Bait (a.s.) to others and the same cannot be achieved till one obeys the aforementioned verse of Quran by being steadfast in maintaining contact with the Imam (a.s.). The aim behind the above injunction is that no doubt, there is widespread unawareness concerning Islam in the society but there exists even more ignorance regarding the Imam of the time who is alive and active. Therefore, it is obligatory upon us to hold such gatherings. There are various ways and means to enliven Islam through such congregations, a few of which are mentioned hereunder:

- 1) The recognition of the real divine proof is gained.
- 2) Such congregations are by themselves, worship of Allah. This fact has been testified by none other than the great Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) himself when he (s.a.w.a.) declared,

"Remembrance of Ali (a.s.) is worship."

(Jaame' al-Sagheer, p. 16; Kunooz al-Haqaaeq, p. 120; Khair al-Bareeyyah, p. 51).

Today, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) enjoys the same divine position and status that Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) enjoyed during his time. Thus, the remembrance of the former too is divine worship. .

- 3) The love for their Imam (a.s.) will increase in the hearts of the people when their knowledge about him (a.s.) will be augmented. When they realise that the world exists because of him (a.s.), and that they themselves exist due to his existence. This dawn of this reality on the people will itself make people proximate to their Imam (a.s.) and their love, affection and respect for him (a.s.) will increase manifold.

- 4) The very mention of this holy persona will make the people near to goodness and piety.

- 5) The aim of the Holy Prophet's (s.a.w.a.) messengership is this very act. He (s.a.w.a.) declares,

“قَالَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ: بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ”

"I have been raised so that I may complete the nobility of morality."

- 6) People will be trained for the obedience of Imam (a.s.). The efforts of such gatherings to prevent the occurrence of situations that led to the battles of Jamal and Siffeen. The attention

of the people will be particularly drawn to the fact that Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.) should not face that situation which Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba (a.s.) had to encounter..

7) As Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.) is Allah's sign, people attending such congregations will learn to respect the signs of the Almighty.

8) Through such gatherings, people will get the taufeeq (grace) to pray for the early reappearance of Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.), a desire explicitly expressed by the Imam (a.s.) himself,

”وأكثر الدعاء بتعجيل الفرج فان ذلك فرجكم“

"And pray more for (my) early reappearance, for in it only is your salvation."

(Muntakhabul Asar, p. 348) 9)

9) The possibility of an early reappearance will increase just as Allah had brought early respite for the Bani Israel from the clutches of the oppressive Firaon, due to their excessive pleadings and supplications.

10) People will always be attentive towards the fact that they should be ready to sacrifice all that they have of their lives and their wealth for the sake of their Imam (a.s.) at any given time.

11) Through Imam (a.s.), people will gain the recognition of Allah, which is the main aim behind creation.

12) Such gatherings will lead to the recognition of the Imam (a.s.) by its participants. Therefore, even if they die before the reappearance, their death will not be one of ignorance, as announced by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.),

”من انكر القائم من ولدي في غيبته مات ميتة الجاهلية“

"One who dies without recognising the Imam of his time, has died the death of ignorance."

(Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 51, p. 38)

Apart from enlivening Islam, such gatherings and meetings are also beneficial for the believers. Following are some of the benefits for the participants:

1) There is a tradition the gist of which is as follows: Certainly a scholar who teaches people religion and invites them towards their Imam, is better and superior than seventy thousand worshippers.

(Mikyaal al-Makaarim, vol. 2, p. 389)

2) Imam Sadeq (a.s.) says,

"One who recites even one eulogy in the praise of his Imam in such gatherings, Allah will construct one house for him in paradise."

(Wasaael al-Shiah, vol. 1, p.467; Mikyaal al-Makaarem, vol. 2, p. 243)

In another tradition Imam Sadeq (a.s.) says,

"None recites a poem in our glorification but that he is praised and glorified by the mighty angel Rooh al-Qodos himself."

3) As such gatherings are a medium for the preparation of the reappearance of Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.), Imam Sadeq (a.s.) says,

"It is necessary that each one of you should prepare for the reappearance of his Imam (a.s.) even if it is with one arrow. If one even intends for the same, Allah increases his age."

(Mikyaal al-Makaarem, vol. 2, p. 583)

Come, in this 15th Sha'baan, let all of us act on the following injunction of Allah's Book,

"Then compete with each other in goodness."

This is a very critical command. The life of Islam depends on it. All of us should strive to outdo each other in our performance in such gatherings as these are embellished with the remembrance of our beloved Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.). By this insignificant service, may be, we can help him in the achievement of his lofty aim.

A Few Distinctive Characteristics Of Hazrat Vali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.)

Allah the Most High has blessed the Imam of the time Hazrat Vali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) with innumerable noble traits and distinctive characteristics. This shows the special position held by Imam (a.t.f.s.) near Allah, the Almighty. It is not even possible to list all of these attributes. We have listed below some of these special characteristics.

1. Light:

During his ascension (Meraj) the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) witnessed the light of the Holy Infallibles (a.s.). Among these, the light of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) was most bright and was the only one in an upright position.

2. Lineage:

The lineage of our Imam (a.s.) is the most noble and honorable. He is the grandson of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.), he is of the family of the pure and holy Imams (a.s.). In addition to this, from his mother's side his lineage extends to the Caesar (Qayser) of Rome and further to Shamoon al-Safa, who was the successor of Hazrat Isa (a.s.). Consequently his lineage extends to Hazrat Ibrahim (a.s.) from both of his sons, Hazrat Ishaaq (a.s.) and Hazrat Ismaaeel (a.s.). Thus the supplication of Hazrat Ibrahim (a.s.) reaches fruition through Imam Mahdi (ait.f.s.).

3. Imam (a.t.f.s.) visiting the skies:

When Imam (a.t.f.s.) was born, two angels took him up to the Throne and there, Allah The Most High spoke to Imam (a.t.f.s.) thus, 'Welcome my servant, welcome! You are created for helping My religion and for the manifestation of My Glory. O Mahdi of the servants! I swear that I will accept through you, I will reject through you, and because of you will I forgive.'

4. Baitul Hamd:

Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) has a house called 'Baitul Hamd'. Inside this house is a lamp, which is alight from the time of his birth and will remain so till his emergence from occultation.

5. The name and agnomen of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.):

It is generally prohibited in traditions for a person to have both the name as well as the agnomen of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). But Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is an exception as his name and his agnomen is the same as that of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

6. Termination of Imamatus:

Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is the last link in the chain of Imamatus. In his holy personality is the culmination of Imamatus and successorship.

7. Occultation:

From the time of his birth itself, Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.) was concealed from the common people. He was in the care of Hazrat Roohul Qodos (an angel who enjoys a higher position than even Hazrat Jibraeel (a.s.) and Hazrat Mikaaeel (a.s.) as is found in the exegesis of Sura-e-Qadr). In the world of light (Aalam-e-Noor) and an environment of holiness (Fizaa-e-Quds), Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) was always away from the filth of the innumerable sins of men and the Devil (Shaitan).

8. Staying away from unbelievers, sinners and hypocrites:

Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) was never in the company of unbelievers, sinners and hypocrites. In fact none among them have even touched him.

9. Being free from oppressive governments:

Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) has never been and will never be under the allegiance of any oppressive government.

10. Seal of Imamatus:

As the seal of prophethood was present • on the back of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), similarly there is a seal of Imamatus and Wilayat on the back of Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) as well.

11. Heavenly Books:

All the heavenly books and revelations of ascension (Meraj) mention the titles of Imam (a.t.f.s.). In fact he (a.t.f.s.) has been referred to, in them with numerous titles.

12. Signs in the heavens and the earth:

Unique signs were manifest at the time of Imam's (a.t.f.s.) birth and such will also be seen at the time of Imam's (a.t.f.s.) reappearance. Imam Sadiq (a.s.) says about the verse,

'Soon will we manifest our signs in the worlds and in themselves, so that it is clear for them that this is the truth.'

سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ -

(Fusselat: 53)

This verse is regarding the reappearance of Qaim (a.t.f.s.). Up to 400 signs of his reappearance have been narrated. (It must be borne in mind that the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) does not depend on the manifestation of the signs but only and only upon Allah's will. Then, it is possible that Allah may order for the reappearance, while the signs have not been manifested. For more information regarding this matter please refer to (Al-Muntazar 1412 A.H.)

13. Voice from the sky:

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) says:

(At the time of reappearance) a caller will call from the sky, which will be heard by all the people of the world. If someone is asleep, then by hearing this call he will wake up, the one who is standing will sit down and he who is sitting will stand up due to fear and this call will be given by Hazrat Jibreel (a.s.).'

14. Movement of the skies (planets):

During the rule of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), the movement of the heavenly bodies will slow down. It is narrated from Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) that Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) will rule for seven years, each of which will be equal to ten years (as calculated today). The narrator inquired 'How will the day be prolonged?' Imam (a.s.) replied: 'Allah will decrease the speed of the rotation of skies.' The narrator said 'People say that if the skies were changed, the world will be destroyed.' Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) replied, 'This is the saying of the unbelievers (Zindiq). Muslims do not have any choice but to accept it because Holy Prophet (SAWA) has cleaved the moon into two parts, the sun was made to return for Yusha b. Nun and nothing has happened. And moreover one day of Qiyamat will be as long as one thousand years of this world.'

15. Book of Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.):

After the demise of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) Ameerul Mo'mineen (a.s.) compiled a book (mus'haf) in which all the things revealed upon the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as miracles were present without any change or distortion. When the people turned away from this mus'haf, Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) kept it safely with himself. This Mus'haf of Ameerul Mo'mineen(a.s.) is with Imam Mahdi (a.s.) and only after his reappearance, people will have access to it.

16. White cloud:

A white cloud will always hover over Imam Mahdi (a.s.). A caller will call from it and will be heard by everyone across the world, including all the men and the jinn. 'This is the Mahdi from the progeny of Muhammad peace be on them who will fill the earth with equity and justice like it was filled with injustice and oppression.' This call is different from the one referred to under point 13.

17. Imam's (a.s.) army:

His army will include the jinn and the angels. The companions of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) will be able to see them.

18. Imam (a.s.) will always appear youthful:

The passage of time affects each and every one of us. By its passing we grow from childhood to maturity and consequently to old age. The Holy Quran speaks of the old age of the prophets in the 72nd verse of Sura-e-Hud and 4th verse of Sura-e-Maryam. But when Imam Mahdi (a.s.) will reappear, notwithstanding his age of more than a thousand years, he will appear as a youth of forty years or even younger.

19. The end of hate and hostility:

Hate and hostility among men is common and among animals, it is even more intense. After the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s.), there will be no hate or hostility. According to a tradition narrated on the authority of Ameerul Mo'mineen (a.s.), there will be peace among all animals and for men there will be no fear of hostile animals.

20. The dead will be resurrected:

Some people like Ashaabe Kahf, Yusha b. Nun (a.s.), Janabe Salman (r.a.) Janabe Abu Zarr (r.a.), Janabe Abu Dujana Ansari, Janabe Malik-e-Ashtar (r.a.) will be raised from their graves for helping Imam Zamana (a.s.). They will be appointed as governors by Imam (a.s.) in various cities. It is found in traditions that if a person recites Dua-e-Ahad for forty days and dies before the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s.), he will be raised at the time of reappearance and will join the supporters and helpers of Imam (a.s.). One of the sentences of this supplication is as follows

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنْ خَالَ بَيْنِيْ وَ بَيْنَهُ الْمَوْتُ الَّذِيْ جَعَلْتَهُ عَلٰى عِبَادِكَ حَنْثًا مَّقْضِيًّا فَارْخُجْنِيْ مِنْ قَبْرِىْ مُؤْتِرًا كَفْنِيْ شَاوِبًا سِنْفِيْ مُخْرِدًا قَتَاتِيْ مُلَبِّيًّا دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِيْ فِي الْخَاصِرِ وَالْبَاسِ.

"O Allah! If there occurs between me and him (Imam's (a.t.f.s. reappearance) death, which you have decreed for your servants, then raise me from my grave, wrapped in my shroud, my sword unsheathed, my spear bared, answering the call of the caller in the cities as well as the deserts.'

21. Treasures of the earth:

The earth will reveal all its hidden treasures to Imam Mahdi (a.s.)

22. Abundance of provisions:

Rains, vegetation, fruits and crops will be so abundant that it will seem as if the earth has been changed anew and the following promise of Allah in the Holy Quran will actualise:

يوم تبدل و الأرض غير الأرض .

"On that day this earth will be changed to another earth."

(Ibrahim:48)

23. Perfection of intellects:

After his reappearance, Hazrat Vali-e-Asr (a.s.) will place his hand on the heads of the people by which their intellects will become perfect and their hearts will be purified of malice and ill will. The hearts of the believers will become full of knowledge and wisdom. Then no believer will be in need of any help from other believers for gaining knowledge. This will be the manifestation of the following Quranic verse,

يُعْنِي اللَّهُ كُلًّا مِنْ سَعَتِهِ

"Allah by His Grace will make each of them independent of the others"

(Nisa: 130)

24. Increased sight and hearing:

The sight and hearing of the companions of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) will become so sharp that they will see Imam (a.s.) and listen to him from a distance of four farsakh (approx. 22 kilometers)

25. Long life:

The companions of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) will lead very long lives, so much so that each of them will be able to bear and rear a thousand children.

26. End of all calamities:

Calamities, afflictions and weaknesses will not be there. The companions of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) will not experience fatigue.

27. Strength:

Each companion and helper of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) will have the strength of forty men. Their hearts will be strong like iron and if they so desire, they will be able to uproot mountains.

28. The sun will not be needed:

The light (noor) of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) will make people independent of the light of the sun. This is the explanation of the following Quranic verse:

واشرقت الارض بنور ربها

'The earth will be luminescent with the light of its Lord.'

(Zumar: 69)

The light in the verse refers to Imam's (a.s.) light and he will be the master of earth.

29. The banner of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.):

Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) will have the banner of the Holy Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.a.)

30. The armour of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.):

Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) will have the armour of the Holy Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.a.) and it will fit him as it used to fit the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

31. Special cloud:

Allah the Almighty has created a special cloud for Imam Mahdi (a.s.) which contains 'Barq and Raad'. Imam (a.s.) will ride it and it will carry him to the seven heavens and the seven earths.

32. End of Taqaiyyah:

In the time of Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) there will be no fear for the believers of any kind from the unbelievers and hypocrites. The people of the whole world will worship Allah alone. Then the following promise will be fulfilled.

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّن بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا ۚ يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا ۚ وَمَن كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

'Allah has promised those of you who believe and do good that He will certainly make them rulers in the earth as He made rulers before them. And that He will most certainly establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them, and that He will most certainly, after their fear give them security, in exchange; (as) they serve Me only and do not associate anything with Me.'

(Noor: 55)

33. Universal Government:

The whole world will be under the dominion of Imam Mahdi (a.s.). Each and every creature from the skies to the earth will be obedient to Imam (a.s.) and will serve him unconditionally. The Holy Quran informs us about such a situation.

وَلَهُ أَشْهَدُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا

'And to Him submits whoever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly'.

(Aale Imran: 38)

34. Justice and equity:

The earth will be filled with justice and equity. Filling the earth with justice is widely acknowledged as it is talked about in most traditions regarding Imam Mahdi (a.s.)

35. Legal decisions:

Imam (a.s.) will judge among the people on the basis of his divine knowledge as was practiced by Hazrat Dawood (a.s.) and Hazrat Sulaiman (a.s.).

36. Establishment of Islamic law:

Imam Mahdi (a.s.) will establish the Islamic law along with those rulings that have not been acted upon till date. For example Imam (a.s.) will kill that irreligious old man who is not paying due Zakat and similarly will also kill the twenty-year-old youth who does not know the Islamic rulings (Ahkam). People who have taken the oath of brotherhood in Alam-e-Zar, will be given each other's bequests.

37. Complete knowledge:

When Imam Mahdi (a.s.) will reappear, all sciences will make themselves manifest. Imam Sadiq (a.s.) says,

"There are 27 letters of knowledge. The knowledge that is revealed till date through all the Prophets (a.s.) is the interpretation of only two of those letters. When our Qaem (a.s.) will rise, then Allah will reveal the remaining 25 letters and will add to these the two letters already present. In this way knowledge with all 27 letters will become complete."

38. Heavenly swords:

Allah will send swords from the sky for the companions of Imam Mahdi (a.s.).

39. Obedience of Animals

All the animals will be obedient to Imam Mahdi (a.s.) and will submit to his authority.

40. Rivers of water and milk:

Imam (a.s.) has the stone of Hazrat Moosa (a.s.) from which streams had gushed forth. Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) says,

"When the Qaem (a.s.) reappears from Mecca, and sets forth for Kufa, a caller will call out, 'Do not take anything for eating or drinking but only take that stone of Hazrat Moosa (a.s.) from

which 12 springs had gushed forth. Wherever you camp, fix that stone (on the earth) and the springs will gush forth. When a thirsty man will drink from it, his thirst will be quenched and when a hungry man will drink from it his hunger will be satiated.' This stone will be with Imam (a.s.) till he reaches Najaf. By this time, milk and water will start flowing from the stone near the outskirts of Kufa."

41. The descent of Hazrat Isa (a.s.):

It is widely acknowledged that when Imam (a.s.) will reappear, Hazrat Isa (a.s.) will descend from the heavens and will pray Namaz behind Imam (a.s.).

42. Killing of Dajjal:

Dajjal's evil will be a punishment for the people. Imam (a.s.) will slay Dajjal and end the dissension spread by him.

43. Takbeer:

To proclaim the takbeer seven times on any funeral is prohibited except for Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.). After Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.), the seven Takbeer are associated only with Imam Zamana (a.s.).

44. Tasbeeh of Imam (a.s.):

Specific dates of every month are associated with the Tasbeeh of Masoomeen (a.s.). The 1st of every month is associated with the Tasbeeh of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Similarly 2nd is for that of Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.), 3rd is for that of Hazrat Fatemah (s.a.), 10th and 11th is for that of Imam Reza (a.s.), 12th and 13th is for that of Imam Muhammad Tagi (a.s.), 14th and 15th is for that of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.), 16th and • 17th is for that of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) and 17th onwards till the end of the month is for the Tasbeeh of Hazrat Hujjat (a.s.). The following is the Tasbeeh of Imam (a.s.):

سبحان الله عدد خلقه سبحان الله رضا نفسه سبحان الله مداد كلماته سبحان الله زينة عرشه والحمد لله مثل ذلك

45. End of oppressive governments:

After the reappearance of Imam (a.s.) no oppressor will survive in the world. The government of Imam (a.s.) will last till the Day of Judgement. Imam Sadiq (a.s.) used to often recite this couplet:

ليكن اناس دولة يرقبونها دولتنا في آخر الدهر يظهر

'Every one is waiting for the time of his rule, Our government will manifest in last days'

(Al-Hamdo-li-Allah-Rabbil Aalameen)

All the above mentioned characteristics are taken from the book of Muntahal Aamaal by Theqatul Ilm Shaykh Abbas-e-Qummi (r.a.) (author of Mafaatihul Jinan). These characteristics are mentioned in detail in the second volume, from pages 763 to 771 Of the aforementioned book. May Allah reward the author and have mercy on him. Let us pray that Allah keeps us alive to see the time of reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) or if death overtakes us then may He raise us from our graves to serve Imam (a.s.). Aameen.