Special Issue

AL-QAEM AL-MUNTAZAR

(a.t.f.s.)

Shabaan 1447 A.H.



Peace be upon you, O path of Allah, for the one who follows any path other than him, will be destroyed.

(Ziyaarat of Hazrat Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) in the holy Sardaab)

In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful
Blessings of Allah be upon you, O Wali al-Asr (a.t.f.s.), help us

The remedy of repentance

The world is replete with trials and tribulations. To protect His servants from these afflictions and calamities, Allah, the Almighty has provided every means and safeguard. Allah has declared in the Holy Quran through the teachings of Holy Prophet Hazrat Mohammad al-Mustafa (s.a.w.a.) that O My creation! If you listen to Our word with seriousness and act upon it fully, then in this world filled with trials and calamities, nothing can harm you. Yet, in the same manifest book, He also declared that He would test us. Man possesses the ability and the right to ask his Lord about the whereabouts of these trials. But the Holy Quran gave glad tidings and replied that this worldly life is ephemeral and not eternal and that Allah has made men superior and the most noble among all His creation and there would be levels of trials. The trials of this world exist so that man may be worthy of embracing the eternal life, of attaining a station so elevated, a stature so weighty, a nobility so radiant, and a capacity so vast that those who behold him would, of their own accord, proclaim: This is the noblest of all creation.

Thus, Allah, the Almighty, by His divine grace, appointed His guides on this earth, from the Seal of the Prophets (a.s.) to the Seal of the Successors (a.s.) so that people may be protected from deviation, error, sin, immorality, prejudice, and self-worship, and remain devoted solely to the worship of Allah. Yet, despite these divine teachings, man has been granted free will, and in this world countless avenues of self-centeredness have been opened before him. It has been filled with trials and tribulations that constantly attack him. Those who possess noble character, the virtuous and beloved ones, at times falter, at times stumble, but recoup and march towards their destined goal. Nevertheless, when environment throws severe trial, even such people may fall prey to their inclinations.

When man commits a sin, the depths of his nature, his innate goodness call out to him, reprimand for the wrong he has done, the sin he has committed, the act of disobedience against the Lord, the violation of law of Allah, that he be remorseful, regret for it and develop fear and awe of Allah.

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As emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar said:

> *"Zafar, count not anyone as a man no matter how wise or intelligent he may be the one who forgets God in times of pleasure, and feels no fear of God in times of anger."*

Man, stumbles and falls yet possesses the strength to regain balance. When he regains his footing, the voice of his innate nature tells him to seek forgiveness from his Creator. When he pleads for pardon and returns to his pure self and goodness, he encounters many hardships. But upon witnessing his suffering and repentance, the mercy of Allah rejoices. Thus, when we say "Al-Afw" in the night prayers, the angels carry and present these words before Allah, and the Almighty becomes pleased with him.

Just as Prophet Yunus (a.s.) called out from the belly of the fish, from the depths of darkness: **"Surely I was among the wrongdoers";** Allah is so Merciful, so Generous, that He said: **"So We responded to him and saved him from distress. I forgave him at once, and in the same manner do I forgive My servants who feel remorse for their errors. I guide them toward a life of goodness and grant them the ability to walk upon the straight path."**

Such incidents are plentiful throughout history. Drawing upon these examples, we shall now continue the discourse by citing two or three instances from the blessed era of Holy Prophet Hazrat Mohammad al-Mustafa (s.a.w.a.).

The First Incident

A man once came to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) and said:

"O Messenger of Allah, I am a great sinner. There is no path left for me except that of Hell. Yet, since you are the Messenger of Allah, and I have heard that you were sent as 'Rahmatul lil Aalameen' (a mercy to the worlds), I beg you to convey my state of suffering and distress to Allah."

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) said: "Tell me what sin you have done that has left you so shaken that even your bones tremble?"

The man replied: "There was a very beautiful woman, and I fell deeply in love with her. But she died. After her death, one dark night, I went to the place where she was buried. I gathered the courage to dig up her grave and took her out. Then I committed a grave sin with her. But as soon as I left that place, it felt as though the flames of hell were embracing me. I felt a terrible heat, as if the fire of Hell was pulling me toward itself and divine punishment was about to descend upon me. I said to myself, before that punishment overtakes me, I must go to the Prophet of Mercy and confess my sin."

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) said: "Go away from me, for even here I can see the flames of hell emanating from your very being."

The man left, filled with despair. He then went to a place where he tied himself to a tree and said: "O my Lord! I will not move from this place until You forgive me." There he remained, weeping and seeking forgiveness repeatedly, until he became weak and frail. After several days, he sensed someone approaching. His eyesight had dimmed, but from the sound of the footsteps he realized that someone was drawing near. When the person came close, he asked: "O man, who are you and why have you come here?"

The person replied: "I have been sent by the Messenger of Allah, the Mercy to the

Worlds, the Beloved of Allah, the Seal of the Prophets. Untie yourself, for you have expressed your remorse fully. You have passed through all the stages of trial. Now, Allah has forgiven you."

This was the remedy born out of repentance, through which Allah accepted him back into His Mercy and forgave him.

The Second Incident

Leaving behind hundreds of other incidents, we now turn toward Karbala. Karbala is the solution to all the problems of the world; it is the greatest school of human development. Nothing is akin to Karbala when it comes to elevating humanity. Indeed, it is narrated that on the Day of Resurrection, the whole of Karbala will be manifested before all. Hence, we now turn our hearts toward it. It was the dark night of Aashura and in the army of Yazid (l.a.), everyone was fast asleep in their tents, awaiting the ensuing battle in the morning. Yet, there was one man who could not rest, he would rise, sit, and then begin to stroll restlessly. His son noticed and asked: "Father, what is the matter with you? I see you perspiring, your hands and feet are trembling, your whole body is shaking, and you seem to be in great distress. You are known for your courage, bravery, and mastery over the sword, yet you appear so fearful that it seems as though your very life is slipping away!"

The man then turned to his son and said:

> *There is the cry of 'Water! Water!' all around and I feel ashamed.*
>
> *As the children weep in thirst, I die within myself out of honour and guilt.*

From these words, the readers would have realized that this incident is of Janab Hurr (a.s.). The dawn had not yet broken; it was the dim light before true morning. The sun's rays had not yet engulfed the horizon. Each passing moment felt like centuries upon Hurr. Finally, he blindfolded himself, took along his servant, his brother, and his son, broke through the chains of the enemy ranks, rushing straight to the presence of Imam Husain (a.s.). Imam Husain (a.s.) lifted him up with his blessed hands. Overwhelmed with tears, Hurr said: "My master, I am a sinner. I am responsible for the cries of 'al-Atash! al-Atash!', the thirst of your children. O my master, can there be forgiveness for my sin?"

We would like to draw attention of our esteemed readers that if we possess true recognition of Imam Husain (a.s.), then understand his reality, his blessed life from his birth to his martyrdom, which is a continuous link between heavens and the earth. For when he (a.s.) was born, the "Lauh-e-Fatema (s.a.)" (Tablet of Fatema (s.a.)) descended from the heavens.

Imam Husain (a.s.) lifted Hurr by the arm and said: "O Hurr! How beautiful is the name your mother gave you, for you are free in this world and free in the Hereafter." From this incident, we are given a profound lesson to reflect upon. The lamp of hope within Hurr was still burning. He thought: "If I go to Imam Husain (a.s.), perhaps this ocean of calamities will part before me; perhaps the walls that surround me will crumble; the illusions of the world will fade away." Indeed, when Hurr said: "Is my sin forgivable?" Do we not realize the stature of Imam Husain (a.s.)? He is the son of "Mushkil Kusha" (the one who removes all difficulties), he holds the key to solution for every hardship. Even today, when we recite "al-Afw" in

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Means to establish connection with Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.)

Piety, fearing Allah and its various stages, love and devotion, the loftiest degrees of affection, abstaining from the forbidden and fulfilling the obligatory, establishing a spiritual and heartfelt connection with the Imam, mutual bond of love, Ma'refat of Imam, remembering him at all times, spreading and proclaiming his name among people, holding his name in utmost reverence, weeping over his separation and loneliness, expressing grief and sorrow over his occultation, praying excessively for the hastening of his reappearance, dedicating the reward of one's acts of worship to him, reciting and acting upon the Holy Quran on his behalf, frequently reciting *Ziyaarat-e-Aashura, Ziyarat-e-Jaamea' Kabirah,* and the Night Prayer *(Salaatul Layl)* on his behalf, reciting Ziyaarat of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) and especially the supplications narrated by him, commemorating the mourning of his noble forefathers, loving, respecting, and honouring his sincere and loyal followers; and extending help to his devotees and relieving them of their difficulties.

These are among the noble signs of faith, loyalty, and heartfelt connection to the Imam of our time (may our souls be sacrificed for him).

The ways of connection

A list of the ways and means to establish connection with Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) has been mentioned above. In the following lines, we shall explain and elaborate upon some of those words and expressions. While it is not possible to elaborate everything in this brief article, some of them will be explained in detail while some of them will be mentioned only briefly.

It is important to understand that the recognition of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.), having faith in him, and remaining steadfast in it take precedence over everything else. History bears witness that during the era of previous Imams (a.s.), certain individuals were blessed with their presence yet because they lacked true recognition and faith in these divinely chosen personalities, they could not benefit from them but on the contrary, they opposed and even denied their authority. For brevity, we will not discuss about these individuals in detail, but people acquainted with history and religion are well aware of their wickedness and misdeeds. Right from the era of Imam Ali ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) up to the era of twelfth Imam (a.s.), a long list of such opponents and deniers can be found in the scrolls of history.

Summary

What should we do to truly recognize the Imam of our time, have faith in him, and remain connected to him? The word *"Raabita"* (connection) is originally an Arabic term, and it is also widely used in Urdu and Persian. Its plural form is *"Rawaabit"*, and it means to remain joined or attached, that which links two people or two things, creating a bond or connection. The term

Rabt can also refer to the affection or love between two people or things. In Arabic, *Irtebaat* (connection) is the verbal noun (Masdar) of the verb form pattern (Baab Ifte'aal). Words in this pattern can have different meanings such as exertion, exaggeration, etc. For example, in the phrase *"Irtabaṭa Zaydul Mahdi",* it can mean *"Zayd connected with Mahdi with great effort and exertion"* or *"Zayd established a strong connection with Mahdi."* The root idea emphasizes effort, attachment, and closeness in establishing a bond.

(Refer Arabic and Persian dictionary)

Reminder

In the time of occultation, one of our important responsibilities is to make every effort with heart and soul to establish the strongest possible connection with Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), enduring hardships along this path. It should be noted that "Irtebaat" (connection) does not only refer to physical meetings or in dreams, rather, it means doing such actions due to which spiritual recognition, love, and mutual heartfelt connection manifest their effects. If we sincerely strive to establish a bond with the Imam, its effect will also be reflected from the Imam's side. If we introspect, we realize that we are so preoccupied with worldly matters and consider ourselves experts in everything that we either do not connect with the Imam, do so very occasionally, or remain heedless altogether. For instance, consider the meeting of Mohammad ibn Isa al-Bahraini on how Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) assisted the people of Bahrain and ensured that their connection with him was not lost. The people of Bahrain requested a three-day time from their ruler, perhaps hoping to obtain some solution. They then selected ten scholars from among the Bahraini scholars and from them, chose three to go into the desert to seek assistance from Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.). For two days, there was no response. On the third day, Mohammad ibn Isa went into the desert, barefoot and bareheaded, in the intense darkness of the night. He prayed, wept, and sought help from Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.). During the last part of the night, the connection was established, and Imam provided the solution. The story of Mohammad ibn Isa, the ruler of Bahrain, and his minister regarding the matter of pomegranate is recorded in various Shia books, including Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 52, chp. 24, pg. 178, published by Maktab al-Islamiyah, Tehran.

Reminder

The noteworthy aspect of this incident is that when the people of Bahrain were caught in the conspiracy of a prejudiced minister and governor, they turned in distress to the Imam of the Time (a.t.f.s.). They requested the ruler for a respite of three days and on the third day, Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) resolved their problem.

Shaikh Ahmad Kaafi, a renowned preacher and orator, whose recorded sermons are still available today, was the founder of the Imambargah Mahdiyah in Tehran. He passed away on July 21, 1978, and was laid to rest in the Khwajah Rabi cemetery in Mashhad. In narrating the story of Mohammad ibn Isa, he mentioned a very thought-provoking statement:

> *When Mohammad ibn Isa received the solution to his problem, he wept and said to the Imam: "My Master! You could have helped us on the very*

first day, why did you take three days?"

Imam (a.s.) replied:

"O Mohammad ibn Isa! Had you called me from the ruler's court saying: "Yaa Saahebaz Zamaan, Adrikni" (O Master of the Age, help me), I would have come to your aid at that very moment."

Attention

It is we who are heedless in seeking connection with Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) otherwise, Imam (a.t.f.s.) is always ready to assist us. In this very incident, Imam (a.t.f.s.) said:

"I am the Master of the Affair. Present your need to me."

Let us ponder on how often do we, in our times of ease or distress, truly turn to our Imam (a.t.f.s)? How strong is our bond with him?

Our forefathers felt the presence of their Imam within their societies. They would feel his presence, seek guidance from his luminous presence, and drink deeply from the fountains of divine knowledge through him. By the blessings of his existence, they would find solutions to their problems. But it is unfortunate that we do not open the paths of spiritual and heartfelt connection with our Imam. We are sinners like the brothers of Hazrat Yusuf (a.s.), even though we know well that Yusuf-e-Zahra (s.a.) is superior to all and has power over all things.

As the Holy Quran declares:

"They said: By Allah! now has Allah certainly chosen you over us, and we were certainly sinners."

(Surah Yusuf (12), verse 91)

What kind of excellence and superiority?

Allah has granted Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) such immense power and authority that he (a.t.f.s.) is aware of every moment and condition of our lives. It is for this reason that he (a.t.f.s.) wrote to Shaikh Mufid (a.r.):

"Indeed, we encompass your affairs with our knowledge, and nothing of your news is hidden from us."

(Kalematul Imam al-Mahdi, vol. 1, pg. 190)

Imams (a.s.) are Manifest Book (Kitaabul Mubeen) and their hearts are the vessels of Divine Will. In a lengthy narration, Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) said:

"Our hearts are the vessels of Allah's Will; when He wills, we will accordingly."

(Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 25, pg. 336)

In some narrations, this statement appears as:

"We are the vessels of the Divine Will."

This means that the Imam knows the Will of Allah and is fully content with His pleasure. Whatever Allah wills, the Imam also wills and acts upon the same.

Reminder

This superiority and excellence were granted by Allah to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), and the Imams (a.s.) have been given bestowed with authority over all things. The late Aayatullah Allamah Haaj Shaikh Ali Namaazi Shahrudi (a.r.) authored a book titled "Isbaatul Wilayat" (The Proof of Divine Authority), in which he recorded numerous incidents on the subject of "Wilayat-e-Takveeni" (the celestial authority)

of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and Imams (a.s.). Among these is the incident of Habaabah Waalibiyah, as follows:

> *"Habaabah came to Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) and inquired about the true signs of Imamat and Khilaafat. Imam (a.s.) pointed toward a stone and said, "Bring it to me." Habaabah brought and gave it to Ali (a.s.). He (a.s.) placed his seal upon it with his blessed ring, leaving a visible engraving.*
>
> *Imam (a.s.) then said: "Whosoever claims Imamat from the people, if he can do as I have done, rubbing his ring upon this same stone and leaving its imprint, he is indeed the true Imam."*
>
> *Habaabah lived long enough to witness and verify this divine sign of Imamat with Imam Hasan (a.s.), Imam Husain (a.s.), Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.) and all the way till the era of Imam Reza (a.s.).*
>
> *It is also worth noting that when she reached the presence of Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.), she was one hundred and thirteen years old. Imam (a.s.) pointed towards her with his blessed index finger, and Habaabah regained her youth."*
>
> (Isbaatul Wilayat, pg. 139-144)

Attention

In the same narration, Imam Reza (a.s.) gave glad tidings to Habaabah that during the time of my son, Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), you shall return to this world meaning, you shall experience Raj'at (return after death). What a profound example this is of maintaining connection with the Imam. We wish our connection with our Imam would be like hers, and that Imam continues to bless us with his grace.

Why?

A question arises in our minds that our revered scholars such as Shaikh Saduq (a.r.), Shaikh Mufid (a.r.), Sayyed ibn Tawoos (a.r.), Muqaddas Ardabeli (a.r.), Mirza Mahdi Isfahani (a.r.), Aayatullah Naaini (a.r.), Shaikh Ali Akbar Nahaavandi (a.r.), Sayyed Bahrul Uloom and others were the only ones endowed with true recognition, piety and deep love and devotion toward the Imam? Were they the only ones who constantly remembered him, called people toward him, wept for his occultation, recited the Holy Quran and did good deeds on his behalf that they were granted the honour of meeting him while others remain deprived of this immense grace? Certainly not! Besides the scholars, Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) has always maintained connection with the common people, continues to do so even today, and this connection will continue until his reappearance.

Let us reflect on how much do we truly love our Imam? How often do we place him in priority? Regretfully, it must be said that we, the Shias, are often divided among ourselves. Not only do we differ, but at times we even descend into enmity and resentment toward one another. Our hearts are not united whereas Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) has declared that the unity of hearts among believers is itself the condition his meeting and connection with us. In a Tauqee' addressed to Shaikh Mufid (a.r.), Imam (a.t.f.s.) writes:

> *"If our Shias (may Allah grant them Taufeeq in obeying Him) had fulfilled their promise with their hearts united,*

our blessed meeting would not have been delayed and the fortune of meeting us would have been granted to them soon. This fortune of meeting us is based on their true recognition about us."

(Kalematul Imam al-Mahdi, vol. 1, pg. 200)

If we ponder carefully over this Tauqee', we find that the conditions for meeting and connecting with Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) are clearly outlined:

1) Unity of hearts i.e. respect each other and remain united.
2) Remain steadfast in the covenant with Imam, the bond of love and Wilayat.
3) The honour of meeting is granted based on true recognition, though this recognition itself has levels.
4) Reason for delay in reappearance is due to the lack of unity among his followers.
5) Relieving the distress of the followers of Imam.

When Imam emphasizes the joining of hearts, it calls us to reflect that how can we please our Imam? Do we truly feel concerned for the troubles of our fellow believers? Do we ever strive to alleviate their suffering? Indeed, this compassion and service toward the faithful is one of the most beautiful and effective paths of closeness to the Imam. When a believer comes to us with his distress, seeking help, it is not a mere request but in fact, it is a divine test for the one who loves the Ahle Bait (a.s.). A believer should regard his brother's plea not as a burden, but as a mercy from Allah.

Hazrat Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) who is known as "Baabul Hawaaej" (the Gateway to the fulfilment of needs) should be invoked as an intercessor when praying for healing from illness and relief from hardship. Imam (a.s.) has said:

"When a person comes to you to fulfil a need, it is as if Allah has sent His Mercy to him through that person. If he accepts (to fulfil his need), then indeed he has accepted our Wilayat whose chain ultimately connects with the Wilayat of Allah."

(Al-Kaafi, Book of fulfilling a believer's need, h. 13; Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 71, pg. 312)

Reminder

We live in such an era that, let alone fellow believers, people no longer care even for the troubles of their own brothers, sisters, parents, and relatives. Will Imam (a.s.) establish connection with such a person? Such individual may still partake in the general Mercy of Allah, but he remains deprived of the special mercy that flows from the Imam.

Nevertheless, the path to establishing a true connection with Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) lies in cultivating noble character within ourselves, elevating our knowledge and recognition of him, serving in his cause, spreading his blessed name among the people, caring for the orphans of the family of Mohammad (s.a.w.a.) and above all, remaining united in heart and spirit. We must be vigilant that our flawed conduct does not distance us from our Imam or cause him grief. Imam (a.t.f.s.) himself declares:

"Nothing withholds us from them except those actions of theirs that we dislike and do not approve of. We do not expect such behaviour from them, Allah is surely the One who helps."

(Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 53, pg. 177)

Dear readers, we live in a society that is intimately connected to Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.), and his remembrance echoes in every individual. Yet, to firmly grasp the cord of this connection, every individual must strive to turn away from self-centeredness and move constantly toward devotion to Allah. When one inclines toward true devotion to Allah, the light of the recognition illuminates his heart. If it is so, each person will become aware of the hardships and concerns of others in the community. This is precisely what our Imam is telling us that if his followers remain connected and united with each other, then all the conditions for the hastening of reappearance will be fulfilled.

May Allah grant us the grace to become such devoted followers of our Imam that the glad tidings of Raj'at shall be proclaimed from the unseen realms.

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Namaaz-e-Shab, if our hearts truly break, if our souls cry out from their depths, and we understand the real meaning of "al-Afw" in the light of this incident, then imagine how pleased Allah would be, for He loves His servant dearly. He forgives all his pains and sins, granting him glad tidings in this world and in the Hereafter. And when such a person wakes after his dawn prayer and looks toward his garden, his heart whispers:

> *When the dawn reveals its radiance,*
> *the bud unfolds and unveils its treasure.*

I regain hope and optimism and my heart blossoms and says: "May Allah keep me and my family in His protection." For when we say "al-Afw, al-Afw, al-Afw" ("forgive me, forgive me, forgive me"), it feels as though there is a series of angels rising from the earth to the heavens and standing in the divine presence, saying: "This servant of Yours is remembering You with great anxiety. O Lord! Grant him the glad tidings of his life."

The standard of repentance, the measure of true remorse was set by Hurr (a.s.). When a person sets such standard for himself, he learns to remember Allah in times of calmness, and to fear Him in moments of zeal.

Our nation, our community, is deeply devoted to Imam Husain (a.s.). The Imambargahs are adorned, the teachings of the scholars and preachers are spreading everywhere. Above all, the teachings of the Holy Quran and the character of Ahle Bait (a.s.) are constantly presented before us. Every child of our community knows the Imam of his time. If we introspect, and place our hearts before our Imam as that sinner who came in the presence of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.), and say: "O my Imam, I have committed this sin, I have erred in this way, I have wronged others in this manner, can my sins be forgiven?" Then surely, our Imam (a.t.f.s.), who is a compassionate father (Waalidush Shafeeq), wishes that his followers be forgiven. He prays for them, and his supplications are always responded.

Let us always continue to express remorse for our sins, for this alone will become the cause of the Mercy of our Lord, and also the means of nearness in the presence of our Imam (a.t.f.s.). Let us all pray together that Allah, the Almighty forgives all our sins, overlooks our faults, and include us among the soldiers and companions of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.).

Aameen Yaa Rabbal Aalameen.

The sayings of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) during occultation

Dear readers, before we proceed to our main discussion, it is important to first clarify a few essential points, especially for our children and youth, so that the forthcoming discussion may be understood with greater ease and clarity.

Hazrat Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) has explained the concept of Ghaibat as follows:

> *"People shall see him, yet they will not recognize him."*

(Kamaaluddin, vol. 2, chp. 33, h. 46)

From this definition, one thing becomes clear that during the period of occultation, Imam (a.t.f.s.) is indeed among us. We see him but we do not recognize him. It is not as if he resides in some distant place such as the 'Jaziratul Khazra' (the Green Island). To further explain this reality, Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) stated that just as the brother of Prophet Yusuf (a.s.) saw him in the royal court but did not recognize him.

Scholars of ethics while explaining this statement, have said that the reason the brothers of Hazrat Yusuf (a.s.) failed to recognize him was due to their oppression and wrongdoing. Likewise, we too, due to our sins and wrongful deeds, cause the displeasure of our Imam. Thus, even though we may see him, we fail to recognize him.

Another tradition from Hazrat Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) further illuminates this truth:

> *"…He will pass among the people in the markets and sit on the carpets with them, yet people will not recognize him until Allah permits, and then He will make himself known to them..."*

(Kamaaluddin (Urdu), pg. 348, h. 21)

Dear readers, hopefully from the discussion so far, in the light of traditions, not only the concept of occultation would have become clear, but also the doubt should have been dispelled that during this period of occultation, Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) is indeed among us, and not in some distant or unknown place. Apart from the proofs mentioned above, there are hundreds of incidents from scholars, jurists, merchants, and ordinary people who had the privilege of meeting the Imam (a.t.f.s.). But most of them realized only after the meeting that they had found Yusuf-e-Zahra (s.a.) yet lost him again. This is proof that Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) is living among us. To associate the Imam with a specific place like an island or a valley does not change the meaning of his occultation. He is the Divine Proof (Hujjat) of Allah who transcends the limits of time and space. Therefore, his occultation and presence, both are like the sun behind the clouds, though concealed, it shines and gives light, present yet unseen, and unseen yet present.

This long period of occultation indeed indicates that the Imam is hidden, yet the testimonies of trustworthy individuals who have been blessed with the honour of meeting him, proves his presence. The only distinction is that during this occultation, access to his presence requires piety and

righteousness. Therefore, the occultation does not mean his absence. The Imam is among us, assisting us, listening to us. The difference is simply that our eyes do not possess the spiritual ability to see him.

During the period of minor occultation of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) which lasted for 69 years (from 260 A.H. to 329 A.H.), there were four special deputies (Nawwaab-e-Arba'a) who acted as intermediaries between the Imam and the people. They would take the questions of the people to the Imam and deliver his responses back to those who sought his guidance. The written responses that came from Imam (a.t.f.s.) were called Tauqee'aat (signed letters). The contents of Tauqee'aat can be found in many authentic books written about Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), such as:

- Behaarul Anwaar by Allamah Majlisi (a.r.)
- Ghaibat-e-No'maani by Mohammad ibn Ibrahim al-No'maani (a.r.)
- Ghaibat-e-Tusi by Shaikh Tusi (a.r.)
- Najmus Saaqib by Mirza Husain Noori (a.r.)
- Kamaaluddin by Shaikh Saduq (a.r.)

However, originals, photographs, or manuscripts of these Tauqee'aat are not accessible to us today. Scholars have explained that the political conditions of the time did not allow these documents to be collected or preserved openly. If the rulers had discovered that a follower of the Imam was corresponding with him, the matter could have led to severe persecution.

During this period, Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) issued several Tauqee'aat addressed to Shaikh Mufid (a.r.), whose greatness can be understood from the honorific titles used by the Imam (a.t.f.s.) such as "O Great and Noble Shaikh, my brother" and from the Rubaa'i (a short poetry of four lines) in which Imam (a.t.f.s.) expressed his grief in a deeply sorrowful tone on his death. It is also reported that Hazrat Fatema Zahra (s.a.) appeared in a dream to Shaikh Mufid (a.r.), entrusting him with the care of two children for guidance and upbringing. The next day, mother of Sayyed Razi (author of Nahjul Balagha) and Sayyed Murtaza, whose name was also Fatema, brought her two children and entrusted them to him for education and training. Shaikh Mufid (a.r.), being among the learned scholars of his time, accepted this noble responsibility.

Below, we will quote excerpts from one of these Tauqee'aat, as recorded in vol. 2 of the esteemed book 'Kamaaluddin' in the section pertaining to Tauqee'aat.

(1) We are fully aware of all your affairs, and nothing concerning you is hidden from us.

Dear readers, the reality is that if we were to truly believe in the sayings of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.), then not just most of them, but all our problems would have found resolution.

In today's advanced age, believing in such things has become even easier. People install CCTV cameras in their homes, connect them to their mobile phones, and can observe everything from anywhere. Likewise, individuals synchronize their mobile devices to remain constantly aware of the whereabouts of their loved ones. These technologies indeed serve as helpful tools. Yet, these devices have limitations. They can

inform us about external things and not their inner thoughts or emotions. But Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) is aware of both the outward and inward conditions of all his followers and of all the people. This reality is proven by hundreds of those historical incidents in which Imam (a.t.f.s.) has revealed hidden secrets.

We shall recount a few of these incidents below, considering it a blessing, so that the faith and certainty of the believers may increase.

(a) Imam al-Mahdi (a.t.f.s) appeared in the dream of a pious and righteous person and asked him about his friend. The man remained silent. Upon this, Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) informed him:

> *"I am very pleased with his deeds and character, but his backbiting of his brothers causes me great pain."*

When I read this incident, I reflected that perhaps Imam (a.t.f.s.) has sent this message to us as well.

(b) In the book 'Imam-e-Asr', following incident is recorded. A man travelled a long distance and entered the holy shrine of Imam Husain (a.s.) with the intention of Ziyaarat. Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) offered him water to drink and then made a deeply moving and a thought-provoking statement:

> *"Our followers do not feel even as much thirst for our reappearance as you just felt thirst for this water."*

Dear readers, this demonstrates that Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) is aware not only of people's outward needs, like thirst or hunger, but also of the inner spiritual thirst of the entire community.

(2) We do not neglect your protection and guardianship, nor do we ever forget you

Dear readers, let's take a moment to feel the depth of these words from the core of our hearts. These are words overflowing with affection and sincerity. It is the absolute truth without the slightest trace of exaggeration.

Our emerging out easily from great troubles, our safety from disasters, being blessed with countless blessings of Allah, especially those which we never truly deserved such as loving and caring parents, a righteous spouse, beautiful children, abundant and honourable sustenance, sound health, etc. – all of these are the result of the supplications of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) on our behalf. More than just supplications, Imam (a.t.f.s.) actively arranges the circumstances and means through which these blessings reach us and through which afflictions are turned away from us.

(3) Each one of you should perform such deeds that bring you closer to our love, and refrain from those actions that cause our displeasure and anger. Our reappearance will take place suddenly

The truth is that the scarcity of our virtuous deeds and the abundance of our sins have distanced us from Allah, His Messenger, and Imam (a.s.). Our ethical scholars have explained that our deeds are presented before Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) once or twice every week. Imam (a.t.f.s.) feels happy when he sees our good deeds, but when our sins appear before him, his blessed heart is

filled with grief.

We narrate the following incident in this regard:

Sayyed ibn Taawoos (a.r.) narrates in his book 'Deedaar-e-Noor' that that he once heard Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) holding the covering of the Holy Ka'bah and supplicating. He would mention the name of each of his followers, invoking blessings for their good deeds, saying: 'O Lord, increase him in reward.' And for each sin, he would weep while praying, saying: 'O Lord, his heart holds love for my forefathers; for the sake of this love, forgive his sins.'

Dear readers, let us ponder! Were we created to weep for Imam Husain (a.s.), for the martyrs and captives of Karbala, for the oppression of the infallible Imams (a.s.), and to avenge their sufferings alongside their last one from their progeny, or were we created to become the cause of grief for the heir of the Imams (a.s.), the heir of the Prophets (a.s.), and most of all, the heir of Imam Husain (a.s.)?

How can we bear to bring tears to the eyes of an Imam who loves us so deeply? Our hearts cannot endure such a thought. As the blessed night of Friday approaches, one feels an irresistible urge to fall before Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) and plead: "My Master! Forgive us."

Finally, dear readers, let us conclude by presenting an incident that reflects the saying of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) that *"Our reappearance will take place suddenly":*

One Friday, after Namaaz-e-Juma', a young man fell asleep. When he awoke, he found that his pillow was completely soaked. His mother, noticing this, asked in concern, "My son, what happened? Why has your pillow become so wet? Were you drooling in your sleep?"

The young man replied: "No, mother! I saw a dream that I hope Allah never actualises it." His mother insisted: *"Don't say that. Tell me what you saw."*

He said: I dreamt that the reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) had taken place. My brother and I reached the blessed tent of the Imam. The gatekeeper asked for our names and our father's name and then went inside to seek permission. My brother was called in by the Imam but when it came to me, I was told: "Your deeds are not counted among those who are with us." I began to weep bitterly, pleading for forgiveness, yet the Imam did not accept me.

Dear readers, may it never happen that we face the same fate as that weeping child. Come, let us raise our hands in supplication before Allah, the Almighty, praying for the reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) and pleading to make us among those whom Imam counts with his true followers.

In Ghaibat, lies a divine secret whose key is entrusted to the pious, the God-fearing, and the believers who hold exalted ranks. Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) communicates with such pure souls, and upon this foundation, even today, there exist collections of blessed Tauqee'aat that bear witness to both his occultation and his continued presence.

In the end, this is the message for all readers. Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) is both hidden and present and in both states, his message continues to flow eternally. Therefore, we should not be heedless about him. never be heedless of him. If his remembrance always stays alive in our hearts, then soon the veil of occultation will tun into the light of his presence.

Aameen. Yaa Rabbal Aalameen.

Proofs of Imamat of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)

Allah, the Almighty, in His last revealed book, the Holy Quran, declares:

> **"O you who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those vested with authority among you."**
>
> (Surah Nisa (4), verse 59)

In this great verse, there are three beliefs that point to the three fundamental principles of Islam. They are:

1) Obedience to Allah – Tauheed (Divine Unity)
2) Obedience to the Messenger – Nubuwwat (Prophethood)
3) Obedience to those vested with authority – Imamat (Divinely appointed leadership)

Each of these principles is supported by firm and unshakable proofs. Tauheed, the message conveyed by all the Prophets (a.s.), is the cornerstone of every religion and the foremost foundation of belief. Allah has instilled His recognition deep within the human nature, and through the signs in the universe (Aayaat-e-Aafaaqi) and within the self (Aayaat-e-Anfosi), as well as through reason and trials, He has drawn human attention towards Him.

Nubuwwat (Prophethood) means that Allah sent His representatives for the guidance of humankind. Allah made their truthfulness evident through various proofs viz. divine revelation, knowledge of the unseen, miracles (extraordinary powers and authority granted by Allah), their teachings, and the explicit designation (Nass) by the preceding Prophet (a.s.).

After the departure of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), Wilayat (Divine Guardianship) and Imamat (Divinely appointed Leadership) were destined to remain within his pure and sanctified progeny until the Day of Judgement. The belief in Imamat, particularly the Imamat of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), holds a significant position in both Shia and Sunni traditions. According to the Shia belief, his Imamat is an essential part of faith. He is the final link in the chain of the Imams (a.s.) from the progeny of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), the last Imam (a.t.f.s.). While other schools of thought differ in their interpretations, it is unanimously accepted that Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) will establish a divinely ordained government, that he (a.t.f.s.) shall be from the noble progeny of Ahle Bait (a.s.) and Hazrat Fatema Zahra (s.a.) and that Hazrat Isa (a.s.) will pray behind him. In this discussion, we shall present before the esteemed readers, the proofs and evidences of the Imamat and Wilayat of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.).

To prove any belief, generally two types of proofs or arguments are presented:

1) Textual or transmitted proof (Daleel-e-Naqli) – these are derived from the Holy Quran, Hadees, historical accounts, and the teachings of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the Imams (a.s.) that have reached us through reliable sources.
2) Rational arguments (Daleel-e-Aqli) –

these are arguments based on reason and intellect. Human wisdom affirms their validity as true and logical.

(1) Textual (Naqli) proofs

(a) Holy Quran

The first and foremost source is the word of Allah itself. The Holy Quran contains numerous verses that allude to the Imamat of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). We mention a few of them here:

(1) The opening verses of the Holy Quran are well known to every Muslim, where Allah, the Almighty, declares:

> **"Alif, Laam, Meem. This Book, there is no doubt in it, is a guide to those who guard (against evil), those who believe in the unseen…"**
>
> (Surah Baqarah (2), verses 1-3)

A narrator once asked Hazrat Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) regarding this verse, and Imam (a.s.) explained:

> *"The pious (Muttaqeen) are the Shias of Ali (a.s.) and the unseen (Ghaib) means is the Divine Proof (Hujjat) of Allah who is in occultation."*

Imam (a.s.) added that the proof of this is the following verse of Holy Quran:

> **"And they say: Why is not a sign sent to him from his Lord? Say: The unseen is only for Allah; therefore wait, surely, I too, with you, am of those who wait."**
>
> (Surah Yunus (10), verse 20; Behaarul Anwaar, vol, 51, pg. 52)

This blessed verse not only points toward the Imamat of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) but also commands the believers to await his reappearance.

(2) Zoraarah asked Hazrat Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) regarding the following verse:

> **"…And We bring these days to men by turns…"**
>
> (Surah Aal-e-Imran (3), verse 140)

Imam (a.s) explained:

> *"Since Allah created Adam (a.s.), both the rule of Allah and the rule of Shaitan have been in force, so where is the pure rule of Allah except for Imam Qaem (a.t.f.s.)?"*
>
> (Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 51, pg. 54)

The establishment of a divine government on the earth, which has been the purpose of all the Prophets and the Messengers (a.s.), will be accomplished through the blessed personality of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). Allah has kept him hidden to fulfil this divine purpose. This reality is brought forth in the following verse of Holy Quran.

(3) Allah says in the Holy Quran:

> **"Allah has promised to those of you who and do good that He will most certainly make them rulers in the earth as He made those 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, given them security in exchange; they shall serve Me, not associating aught with Me…"**
>
> (Surah Noor (24), verse 55)

Abu Baseer (a.r.) narrates from Hazrat Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.), in the interpretation of this verse, as follows:

> *"This verse was revealed for Imam Qaem (a.t.f.s.) and his companions."*
>
> (Ghaibat-e-No'maani, pg. 240)

(4) In the beginning, we mentioned the verse in which Allah commands obedience to

Himself, to His Messenger, and to those vested with authority:

> **"O you who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those vested with authority among you."**

(Surah Nisa (4), verse 59)

Jabir ibn Abdullah Ansari once asked Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.):

> *"O the Messenger of Allah, we know Allah and His Messenger, but who are these 'Ulul Amr' (those vested with authority) whose obedience Allah has made equal to your obedience?"*

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

> *"O Jabir! They are my successors and the Imams of the Muslims after me. The first among them is Ali ibn Abi Taalib, then Hasan, then Husain..."*
>
> *(Holy Prophet then mentioned the names of the twelve Imams, one after another, and finally said:)*
>
> *"...and then the one whose agnomen (Kuniyat) shall be my agnomen and whose name shall be my name. He shall be Allah's proof upon His earth. He shall disappear from the sight of his Shias, and none will remain firm on his Imamat except those whose hearts have been tested. During his occultation, people will benefit from him just as they benefit from the sun when it is hidden behind the clouds."*

(Kamaaluddin, vol. 1, pg. 253)

(b) Traditions (Hadees)

After the verses of Holy Quran, the sayings of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and Ahle Bait (a.s.) serve as binding proofs for us. In our authentic sources, we find numerous traditions wherein the Imamat of the progeny of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and particularly that of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) has been explicitly commanded.

The renowned scholar, Mohammad ibn Yaaqub al-Kulayni (a.r.), in his invaluable work 'al-Kaafi', has dedicated a special chapter on the necessity of the Divine Proof (Hujjat), entitled: "Indeed, the proof of Allah cannot be established upon His creation except through an Imam."

(1) Hazrat Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Reza (a.s.) said:

> *"Indeed, the proof of Allah cannot be established upon His creation except through an Imam, until he is recognized."*

(al-Kaafi, vol. 1, pg. 177)

(2) Furthermore, after presenting rational proofs on Divine Unity (Tauheed) and Prophethood (Nubuwwat) to a heretic (Zindeeq), Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) declared:

> *"Then it became clear to us that in every age and time, whatever proofs and evidences the Prophets and Messengers had brought, it showed that the earth of Allah can never remain devoid of a Divine Proof (Hujjat), the one who possesses the knowledge that testifies to the truthfulness and justice of that which the Messengers had conveyed."*

(al-Kaafi, vol. 1, pg. 168)

(3) Ameerul Momineen, Hazrat Ali ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.), also expressed this same truth in a supplication, saying:

> *"O Allah! Indeed, the earth can never be without a Proof (Qaem), whether he be manifest and renowned, or hidden and veiled due to fear, so that*

Your proofs and signs may never be rendered void."

(Kamaaluddin, vol. 1, pg. 289)

(c) Explicit divinely ordained designation (Nass)

Even before the creation of Prophet Adam (a.s.), Allah had declared to the angels that He was going to appoint a vicegerent (Khalifah) on the earth. After that, Allah gave glad tidings of the arrival of each Prophet (a.s.) to the people. The Prophets (a.s.) also adopted the same practice and pointed out the Prophet, Messenger or successor who would come after them. Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) himself, at multiple occasions, introduced the twelve Imams (a.s.) who would come after him.

(1) Allamah Majlisi (a.r.), in his monumental encyclopaedic work 'Behaarul Anwaar', narrates from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.):

"Mahdi is from among my descendants. His name is my name, and his agnomen (Kuniyat) is my agnomen. Among all people, he most closely resembles me in conduct and speech. He will go into occultation during which many nations will go astray. Then he shall reappear like a radiant star and fill the earth with justice and equity just as it had been filled with oppression and tyranny."

(Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 51, pg. 72)

(2) The same meaning is conveyed in a narration from Hazrat Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.).

The narrator asked Imam (a.s.) about the statement "Indeed, this earth will never be without a Divine Proof (Hujjat)".

Imam (a.s.) replied: "This is as certain as the broad daylight."

The narrator then asked: "O son of the Messenger of Allah, who is the Proof and Imam after you?"

Imam (a.s.) replied: "My son, Mohammad, is the Imam and the Proof after me. Whoever dies without recognizing him will die the death of ignorance (Jaahiliyyah)."

(Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 51, pg. 131)

(d) Knowledge of the unseen (Ilm-e-Ghaib)

Allah granted His Prophets and their successors the knowledge of the unseen to establish their truthfulness among people. They revealed this knowledge as and when required. For example, Hazrat Isa (a.s.) informed the Children of Israel (Bani Israel) about what they would store in their homes and what they would consume. Similarly, Holy Prophet Mohammad (s.a.w.a.) also foretold many future events. In the same manner, Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) made prophecies about many hidden and future occurrences.

The life of the great scholar Shaikh Saduq (a.r.) is indebted to the prayers of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). His father sent a letter to Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) through his deputy, Janab Husain ibn Ruh Nawbakhti (a.r.), asking him to pray for him so that Allah may grant him children.

A few days later, Imam Mahdi responded:

"You will not have children from this wife. I have prayed for you, and soon you will be granted two children from a woman of Dailam, who will become jurists (Faqih)."

As foretold by the Imam (a.t.f.s.), Shaikh Saduq's father married a woman from Dailam, and Allah blessed him with three children, two of whom became jurists and one a devout worshipper and ascetic.

(Al-Kharaaej, vol. 2, pg. 790)

(e) Miracles (Mo'jizaat)

In addition to knowledge of the unseen, Allah granted the Prophets, Messengers, and their successors (a.s.) miracles or extraordinary acts to establish their truthfulness. These are extraordinary powers or abilities impossible for ordinary people. For example, Hazrat Musa (a.s.) splitting the river of Nile, Hazrat Isa (a.s.) healing lepers and granting sight to the blind. Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) splitting the moon and causing stones to proclaim the declaration of faith on his blessed hand, etc. Similarly, many miracles have been attributed to Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), recorded in various works, including 'Madinatul Ma'ajiz', which details the miracles of the Holy Infallibles (a.s.).

A narration from Mohammad ibn Yusuf al-Shaashi states:

> *"I was afflicted with a fistula and had consulted several doctors, and spent considerably on medicines, yet remained uncured. I then wrote a letter requesting the Imam for his prayer. The reply came thus: "May Allah adorn you with the garment of health and keep you with us in this world and the Hereafter." Before the onset of Friday, I was completely cured, and the affected area had become spotless like the palm of a hand. I requested a physician, who was among our scholars, to examine it. He said: "We do not know any cure for this. This healing has not come from anyone but Allah."*

(Al-Irshaad, Shaikh Mufid (a.r.), vol. 2, pg. 335)

(2) Rational (Aqli) proofs

Rational proofs are those that appeal to the intellect. For example, the delicate and intricate system of the universe itself, which points toward a supreme and an omnipotent creator, the fact that Allah is free from every imperfection and deficiency, the Infallibility of Prophets and divine successors (a.s.), so that they may convey Allah's message without error or deviation, the impermissibility of preferring an inferior over a superior, etc. A few such arguments related to human guidance are presented below.

(a) Guidance of the creation

Allah's earth can never be without a divine guide, and there are numerous traditions in this regard.

A narrator once asked Imam Mohammad al-Baqir (a.s.) regarding the divine verse:

> **"You are only a warner, and (there is) a guide for every people."**

(Surah Ra'ad (13), verse 7)

Imam (a.s.) replied:

> *"The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) is the warner, and in every era, there is one divine guide from among us, who leads the people in accordance with what was revealed to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). After Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), Ali (a.s.) is the guide, and after him, one guide follows another from among his successors."*

(al-Kaafi, vol. 1, pg. 191)

(b) Allah's witness over His creation

In the same way, it is necessary that in every

era, there is a divine proof (Hujjat) appointed by Allah, who will bear witness to the deeds of the creation on the Day of Judgment.

Regarding the following verse:

> **"So how will it be, then, when We bring from every people a witness, and bring you as a witness against these?**

(Surah Nisa (4), verse 41)

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

> *"This verse was revealed specifically for the Imams in every era from the progeny of Mohammad (s.a.w.a.). They will be a witness over the people, and the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) will be a witness over them."*

In this era, Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is the witness over the deeds of the creation. Our deeds are continuously presented before him and there are numerous traditions in this regard. For detailed references, one may refer to Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 23, pg. 333-353.

(c) Safety of the earth and the religion of Islam

According to numerous traditions from our sources, it is impossible for the earth to remain safe and stable without the divine proof (Hujjat) of Allah.

> *A narrator once asked Hazrat Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.): "Can the earth remain without a divine proof (Hujjat)?"*
>
> *Imam (a.s.) replied: "If the earth were to remain without an Imam, it would sink."*

(al-Kaafi, vol. 1, pg. 179)

Likewise, the religion of Islam itself is alive in this world due to the presence of Holy Imams (a.s.). Both Shia and Sunni sources contain traditions stating that this religion will continue to prevail as long as there are twelve successors within it, and all of them will be from Quraysh.

It is narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said:

> *"The followers of this religion shall continue to triumph over their enemies until there are twelve successors… and all of them will be from Quraysh."*

(Ghaibat-e-No'maani, vol. 1, pg. 103)

(d) Preservation of Divine Knowledge i.e. Revelation

There is no doubt that the message of divine revelation (Waḥy) will remain until the Day of Judgement and did not cease after the passing of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Both Shia and Sunni scholars are unanimous that it is essential for a protector of divine revelation to exist in this world. The difference is that the Ahle Sunnah believe this onerous task rests upon the companions (Sahabah) whereas the Shias hold the Holy Imams (a.s.) to be the true custodians of revelation. It is important to bear in mind that, as stated in many traditions, the guardian of divine revelation can only be the one who possesses divinely granted knowledge (Ilm-e-Ladunni) and must be an infallible (Maa'soom). The revelation, that is with us in the form of Holy Quran, is a vast ocean, as Allah, the Almighty Himself declares:

> **"And were every tree that is in the earth (made into) pens and the sea (to supply it with ink), with seven**

continued on page no. 24....

The Last Era

Allah, the Almighty created this vast universe and placed it under a precise and orderly system — every element within it operates according to a defined law. The phrase “operates” is deliberate here, for it implies that there exists a moving force governing the motion of all things. In simpler terms, this force is time, whose influence pervades the entire cosmos and through which everything is understood and measured. Time exerts its effect upon the past, the present, and the future. It is with this understanding that we wish to draw the attention of our esteemed readers to the subject we have chosen “The Last Era” (Aakhiruz Zamaan). The word “Aakhir” signifies the final or ultimate moment, while “Zamaan” denotes time or era. Thus, “Aakhiruz Zamaan” refers to the final era of the world, and the conditions and effects that will appear during that period.

Indeed, this subject is so vast and has so many aspects that to encompass it fully within a few words is impossible. Therefore, we shall focus our discussion on Imam-e-Zamaana (a.t.f.s.) and matters related to him, and attempt to present a brief yet meaningful outline of the subject.

This world is transient, ages have passed, centuries have rolled by, and time continues its relentless course. With the passing of each era, the world sinks deeper into deception, often under the guise of “progress” and “evolution.” Layer upon layer of oppression has settled upon humanity, and there remains scarcely a corner of the earth untouched by turmoil and corruption. In the light of traditions, we shall now present a few glimpses that portray the conditions of that final age.

After all, what is it in the last era that the previous Imams (a.s.) have spoken about so extensively, and that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) himself warned us to be prepared for? We shall first discuss the prophecies concerning the last era and then speak about the preservation of faith during such challenging circumstances.

Today, we live in an era where people consider themselves “advanced” and pride on their superiority, each striving to outdo the other.

Hazrat Imam Husain ibn Ali (a.s.) said:

> *“The event that you await shall not occur until some among you disown and distance themselves from others, until you disrespect each other, accuse one another of disbelief, and invoke curses upon each other.”*
>
> *The narrator asked: “In such a time, where will goodness be found?”*
>
> *Imam (a.s) replied, “All goodness, in that age, will lie in the rise of the Qaem from the progeny of Mohammad (s.a.w.a.), who shall put an end to all such things.”*

(Ghaibat-e-No’maani, chp. 12, h. 9)

The message of this tradition closely mirrors the mindset and realities of our present era with only one difference that those tendencies have been condemned. It must be clarified that this is a general discussion about the last era, a time whose impact encompasses every living being. Yet, even amid this tumultuous and stormy environment, the true believers remain

steadfast, their hearts turned toward the saviour of humanity. They know well that no matter how fierce the storm of satanic deception becomes, the ark of Nuh (a.s.) is a refuge from all such storms. A nation whose deepest sorrow and devotion are connected to Imam Husain (a.s.) can never get entangled in the worries and desires of the world.

The traditions pertaining the last era explain the realities of our age clearly. In another tradition, it is stated:

> *"A time will come upon the people when there will be no left who has not consumed interest (Riba); and if someone does not consume it directly, he will surely be affected by its dust."*

(Mustadrakul Wasaael, vol. 13, pg. 333)

We mention these traditions so that we may look at them on one hand, and on the other, reflect upon the conditions of our own time. To determine who among us deals in usury is nearly impossible. Yet, anyone who reads this tradition can easily discern for themselves where they stand. At the same time, there are the believers and the true awaiters (Muntazireen) who live in contentment (Qana'at). Such a state of chaos arises only when contentment fades and greed (Hirs) make way into our lives. It is then that people lose hope in the grace of their Lord and begin to resent the lives of others. But the one who is truly awaiting never allows the pressure of the times to shake his trust, no matter how pressing the need, he continues to thank Allah for a life of simplicity and restraint, a life untainted by extravagance and sustained by gratitude.

In another tradition, Imam Mohammad al-Baqir (a.s.) said:

> *"O Shias of Aal-e-Mohammad (s.a.w.a.)! You shall surely be tested just as kohl is applied to the eye to cleanse and refine it. The one who applies it knows when he applies it but does not know when it comes out. Likewise, a person will be a follower of our faith in the morning, yet by evening he would have departed from it. Another will be upon our faith in the evening, but before dawn, he would have turned away from it."*

(Ghaibat-e-No'maani, chp. 12, h. 12)

The traditions mentioned earlier did not specify who all will be subjected to the trials of the last era but in this tradition, clearly points to the believers.

It is striking to note that within the span of a single day a person is changing from faith to disbelief. Yet, such a downfall is not possible unless one becomes heedless of his faith because heedlessness blinds a person to the forces acting upon his faith. Even amidst such perilous times, our Imams (a.s.) have helped us and, through supplications (Duas), have taught us how to safeguard our faith during difficult times. Dua is weapon of a believer, a weapon that can deliver him from every kind of hardship. Among the supplications emphasized for the last era is a brief yet profoundly effective supplication, recommended to be recited frequently for steadfastness in faith. It is known as "Dua-e-Ghareeq" (The supplication of the drowning one) which is as follows:

> *"O Allah! O the Most Beneficent! O the Most Merciful! O the Transformer of the hearts! Keep my heart firm upon Your religion."*

As mentioned, it is only those who are heedless of their faith will lose it or those who show negligence in matters of belief. Otherwise, every true believer can safeguard himself through this powerful supplication. Since, at the very outset, we stated that this profound topic cannot be fully encompassed

within a few pages, we will continue to present brief glimpses. Let us now bring our discussion toward its conclusion by citing one final tradition from the revered book 'Mikyaalul Makaarim'.

We have been clearly informed about the signs that will precede the blessed reappearance of Imam (a.t.f.s.) however, it must be understood that the reappearance itself is not dependent upon these signs. The reappearance is entirely subject to the divine will of Allah and He, the Almighty, is not bound by any condition. Therefore, we should be prepared for the reappearance of Imam (a.t.f.s.) and not just wait for the signs to unfold.

It is narrated from Hazrat Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) that when he once addressed the people, saying:

> *"O people! Ask me whatever you wish before I depart from among you."*
>
> *Sa'sah bin Sawhaan stood up from his place and said:*
>
> *"O Ameerul Momineen! When will the Dajjaal appear?"*

Imam (a.s.) replied:

> *"Sit down, for Allah has heard you and is aware of your intention. By Allah! the one who asked this question is no wiser than the question itself, yet these are indeed signs. If you wish, I shall inform you of them."*

Sa'sah said, "Yes, O Master."

> *Then Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) said:*
>
> *Remember these signs; when people will abandon Namaaz, betray trusts, consider lying permissible, consume interest, take bribes, consult women, sever family ties instead of maintaining them, become slaves to desires and lust, regard shedding blood as easy, knowledge and justice will weaken, oppression becomes a source of pride, rulers become corrupt, ministers become tyrannical, governors become treacherous, those who recite the Quran become sinful, false testimony will be given, adultery, sin, and slander will become widespread, the Quran and Masjid will be treated as ornaments, their minarets will be raised high, wicked people will be respected, crowds of people will gather in rows in prayers while their hearts will full of hatred, and betrayal of promises will be common. The promised time will approach. Due to worldly greed, women will participate in business alongside their husbands. The voice of the irreligious will be loud, and people will listen to them, while their protectors will be the worst of people. Taqaiyyah will be practiced with wicked people, the liars will be recognized as truthful, and traitors will be seen as trustworthy. Women will become singers. The last generation of this community will curse the first generation. Women will ride, women will make themselves resemble men, and men will make themselves resemble women. Eyewitnesses will testify falsely, witnesses will give testimony to favor someone, people will study jurisprudence for purposes other than Allah, worldly matters will be preferred over the Hereafter, and their hearts will be like those of wolves – foul than a corpse. In that era, the best dwelling will be Baitul Maqdis (Jerusalem), and a time shall come when people will long to reside there…."*

(Kamaaluddin, vol. 2, chp. 47, h. 1)

If we carefully reflect upon all these matters, we will realize that many of these signs have already manifested before our very eyes. Just think! In the last era, distinguishing between the way of life of a believer and that of a non-believer has become exceedingly difficult. Evil has spread so vastly that goodness seems to have vanished from sight altogether. When virtue itself is hidden, how can one discern between right and wrong? As we now live in the last era, our sole purpose of life is to help the son of Hazrat Fatema Zahra (s.a.), to safeguard our faith so that we may be granted the honour of serving him.

There is a Persian couplet that beautifully captures a timeless truth, it means:

> *"Let not the times change you; rather, you must rise above the times and shape them yourself."*

Human inclinations tend to shift with the changing tides of the era. In these days, oppression and injustice prevail, the supporters of truth are few, the remembrance of Allah is becoming rare, and the ways of Shaitaan are spreading far and wide. The weak are being subdued by the powerful. Amid such darkness, the words of Hazrat Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) shine as a beacon of guidance. He (a.s.) says:

> *"When that time comes, remain confined to your homes until the pure and purified Imam in occultation, reappears."*

In another tradition, he (a.s.) advised:

> *"Restrain your tongues and remain within your homes, for no calamity shall befall that is specific to you."*

(Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 52, pg. 139)

We cannot claim with certainty that this is indeed the last era, yet it is undeniable that adversaries of Imamat continue to wield their pens in hostility. They interpret the signs of the awaited time which were meant to deepen our understanding of true awaiting as mere preludes to worldly rule and kingship, presenting the sacred system of divine leadership as a political construct. They strive in vain to overshadow the blessed chain of Imamat which continued from Sayyedul Wasiyyeen, Imam Ali (a.s.).

But it is a miracle that our community deeply understands the chain of Imamat. Our present Imam (a.t.f.s.) is the inheritor of the legacy of our eleven Imams (a.s.). The occultation does not negate his presence. He exists in a way like the sun hidden behind the clouds, which does not deprive the world of its light.

As time advances, its every whisper calls upon us to tread carefully and steadfastly upon the path of guidance. Our Imam is our guardian, our protector. Our hearts and minds remain ever inclined toward his luminous being, for he alone is the fountain of divine grace and mercy. Each morning, the faithful turn their ears toward the Masjid and Imambargah, yearning for the echo of this blessed call:

> *"O Allah, show me the radiant countenance of my Imam."*

O my Imam, grant me the honour of your vision. You are the shining sun of guidance, and your face radiates such beauty, such light, such awe, such majesty, such grace, and such mercy that it protects our community from decline and elevates it toward heights.

Today, the eyes of the believers weep morning and evening in anticipation of their Imam. Every injustice, every calamity, deepens the sorrow of his absence. Sometimes their grief finds expression

through the Dua-e-Nudbah, sometimes through supplications in the form of heartfelt petitions (Areeza) reaching his sacred presence. This era is indeed one of hardships, but the greatest trial for the believers is the physical distance from their Imam. Yet, just as the presence of the sun behind dark clouds comforts the heart, the hidden existence of the Imam reassures the believers. Each morning and evening passes with supplications, seeking help and refuge in his presence.

In such times, the right path is to remain steadfastly attached to the Imam, strengthen faith every moment through Dua-e-Ghareeq, pray for his reappearance, and prepare ourselves and our generations to assist him. God willing, a day will come when his reappearance will fill this universe with justice, free from oppression and tyranny. The eyes will reflect the light of Hazrat Fatema Zahra's (a.s.) progeny, and the faithful will perfect their faith under the final ray of the sun of Imamat.

....continued from page no. 19

> **more seas to increase it, the words of Allah would not come to an end…"**
>
> (Surah Luqmaan (31), verse 27)

For one who is fallible, not only it is impossible for him to safeguard the words of Allah, but even to fully comprehend them from every aspect.

History bears witness to many incidents where those lacking divine guidance attempted to interpret the Holy Quran according to their limited understanding, and as a result, fell into abyss of misguidance. A well-known example is that of a man during the time of Hazrat Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.). This man had committed theft and then, spent the stolen wealth in the way of Allah. Astonishingly, he sought to justify his sinful act through verses of Holy Quran. If one does not turn to an Infallible Imam, the Holy Quran which was revealed for guidance, can become a cause of misguidance.

As recorded in 'Sharh Usool al-Kaafi' by Mulla Saalih Maazandarani (a.r.):

> *"The Holy Quran has an apparent (Zaahir) meaning and a hidden (Baatin) meaning; and the hidden meaning itself has further depths hidden within. It has been said that every verse possesses sixty thousand meanings, and what lies concealed beyond these is even greater. All this knowledge resides with Ahle Bait (a.s.)."*
>
> (Sharh al-Kaafi, al-Usool wal Rawzah, vol. 2, p. 254)

The denial of the Imamat of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is tantamount to denying the Imamat of the other eleven Imams (a.s.). Belief in his Imamat is one of the fundamental pillars of faith and religion. On the Day of Resurrection, every person will be resurrected with the Imam of his time, and each one will be called by the name of that Imam whose Imamat and Wilayat he had accepted in the world. It therefore becomes our duty not only to express gratitude for this immense divine blessing, but also to constantly pray that Allah, the Almighty, keeps us steadfast on this belief, hastens the reappearance of the Master of the Age (a.t.f.s.) and include us among his devoted servants and helpers.

Aameen, Yaa Rabbal Aalameen.

Virtues of the month of Shabaan

We all know that Shabaan al-Moazzam is the great month that is associated with Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a). He (s.a.w.a.) would fast during this month and link the fasts of this month to the fasts of the month of Ramzaan. Regarding this, Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said:

> *"Shabaan is my month, and whoever fasts even a single day in this month, paradise becomes obligatory for him."*

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) narrates that when the crescent of Shabaan appeared, Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.) would gather all his companions and say:

> *"O my companions! Do you know which month this is? This is the month of Shabaan, and the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) used to say: 'Shabaan is my month.' So, for the love of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the nearness to Allah, observe fast in this month. By Allah, in whose control is the life of Ali ibn al-Husain (a.s.), I heard from my revered father, Husain ibn Ali (a.s.), who said: 'I heard from my honourable father, Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) that whoever fasts in Shabaan out of love for Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and to seek nearness to Allah, Allah will grant him nearness, honour him on the Day of Resurrection, and paradise will become obligatory for him."*

Shaikh narrates from Safwaan Jammaal that Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

> *"Encourage your near ones to fast in the month of Shabaan." I asked: "May I be sacrificed for you. Is there any special virtue in this?" He (a.s.) replied: "Yes! When the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) would sight the crescent of Shabaan, a caller would announce by his command: 'O people of Madinah! I am the representative of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) and he (s.a.w.a.) says: 'Shabaan is my month. May Allah have mercy on one who supports me in this month, meaning by fasting."*

The acts (Aa'maal) for this great and noble month are of two types: Common acts (Aa'maal-e-Mushtaraka) and Specific acts (Aa'maal-e-Makhsoosah)

Common acts (Aa'maal-e-Mushtaraka)

(1) Recite seventy times daily:

"Astaghferullaha wa As'alohut Tauba"

"I seek forgiveness from Allah and I ask Him for repentance."

(2) Recite seventy times daily:

"Astaghferullahallazi Laa Ilaaha illa Howar Rahmaanur Rahim Al-Hayyul Qayyum wa Atoobo Ilayhe"

"I seek forgiveness from Allah, there is no God except Him, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer, and I turn towards Him in repentance."

From the narrations, it is evident that the best act in this month is seeking forgiveness and reciting it seventy times in Shabaan is equivalent to reciting it seventy thousand times in other months.

(3) Give charity (Sadaqah), even if it is only half a date. With this, Allah will make the hellfire forbidden on the body of the giver.

(4) Throughout the entire month of Shabaan, recite one thousand times:

"Laa ilaaha illAllah, Laa Na'bodo illa iyyaaho, Mukhliseena lahud Deen wa lav karehal Mushrekoon"

"There is no god except Allah; we worship none but Him. We are sincere to Him in our religion, even though the polytheists may dislike it."

(5) On every Thursday of the month of Shabaan, perform two units (Rak'at) of prayer, and in each Rak'at, recite Surah al-Hamd once and Surah Tauheed one hundred times. After completing the prayer, recite Salawaat hundred times.

(6) On every day of Shabaan at the time of Zawaal (noon) and on the night of the fifteenth of Shabaan, recite the Salawaat narrated from Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.).

Virtues of third Shabaan

This is a very blessed day. The Shaikh, in his Misbaah, writes that on this day Imam Husain ibn Ali (a.s.) was born. Moreover, Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) sent a letter through his representative, Janab Qasim ibn alaa Hamadaani, stating:

"On Thursday, the third of Shabaan, Imam Husain (a.s.) was born. Therefore, observe a fast on this day."

The night of fifteenth Shabaan

This is an extremely blessed night. Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) narrated that when Imam Mohammad al-Baqir (a.s.) was asked about the merits of this night, he (a.s.) said:

"After the Night of Qadr, this night surpasses all other nights in excellence. On this night, Allah bestows His Grace and Mercy upon His servants and forgives them out of His kindness. Strive to attain closeness to Allah during this night. For this is the night in which Allah, the Almighty, has sworn by Himself that He will not let any supplicant return empty-handed unless he prays for something sinful. This is the night which Allah has designated for us, the same way He designated the Shab-e-Qadr for Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Therefore, engage abundantly in supplication and praise of your Lord. The greatest blessing of this night is the birth of the Master of the Age, Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) in the year 255 A.H."

Recommended acts of this night

(1) Perform Ghusl (ritual bath), which is means of lightening the sins.

(2) Stay awake and spend the night in prayers, supplications, and seeking forgiveness, as Imam Sajjad (a.s.) used to do. It is narrated that the heart of one who stays awake on this night will not be dead on the Day of Judgment.

(3) Ziyaarat of Imam Husain (a.s.), which is among the best acts of this night and a cause for the forgiveness of sins. One who desires to shake hands with 124,000 Prophets should perform the Ziyarat of Imam Husain (a.s.) on this night. The least form of Ziyarat is to go to the rooftop, look right and left, and raise your head toward the sky and say:

"As-Salaamo Yaa Abaa Abdillah.

As-Salaamo Alaika wa Rahmatullahe wa Barakaatohu"

"Peace be upon you, O Aba Abdillah! Peace be upon you, and the mercy of Allah and His blessings."

Whoever performs this Ziyarat, wherever he may be, will receive the reward of Hajj and Umrah.

(4) Recite the supplication, which has been narrated by Shaikh Tusi (a.r.) and Sayyed ibn Taawoos (a.r.), and which serves as the Ziyarat of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.). The translation of this supplication is as follows:

"O Allah! By the right of this night of ours and the one born in it, and by Your Proof and the Promise associated with it, whose virtues You have constantly increased until Your word was perfected in truth and justice, and none can alter Your words, nor can anyone hinder Your signs. Your light is radiant, Your radiance gleams brightly, and Your luminous banner gleams in the darkness of the night. He is Your servant who is hidden from the eyes and veiled from sight. Exalted is his birth, and noble is his lineage. The angels are for him, and Allah is his Helper and Supporter. When the time appointed for his rise arrives, the angels shall be his aides. He is the Sword of Allah that never misses, the Light that never extinguishes, and the man of awareness who never goes astray. He is the axis of time, the guardian of the sanctity of every era, Wali al-Amr (Divinely appointed authority) upon whom the angels descend in Shab-e-Qadr. They are the possessors of the Gathering and Resurrection, the interpreters of Divine revelation, and the guardians of His command and prohibition.

O Allah! Send Your Mercy upon the last of them and their Qaem, the one kept hidden from the worlds. O Allah! Keep us alive till his rising and place us among his helpers. Join our destiny with his destiny and record us among his aides and sincere devotees. Grant us life in his just and peaceful government so that we may attain the honour of his companionship, fulfil his rights, and remain safe from every evil.

O Most Merciful of the merciful! All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the worlds. And blessings be upon our Master Mohammad (s.a.w.a.), the Seal of the Prophets and Messengers, and upon his truthful and pure Ahle Bait (a.s.), his eloquent progeny, and the curse of Allah be upon all the oppressors. O Allah! Judge between us and them, for You are the best judge."

Rational, Textual and Historical Proofs of the Birth of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)

Birth of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) - The twelfth Imam of the Shias, the noble son of Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.), illuminated the world with his blessed birth on a Friday morning on the 15th of Shabaan, 255 A.H. (869 A.D.). Although there exists some disagreement in the year with some of them mentioning as 254 A.H. while some as 256 A.H. But this difference is natural, as his birth took place in secrecy.

(Dars Naama-e-Asr-e-Ghaibat, pg. 27)

Rational Proofs

Allah, the Almighty, created the human being as the noblest of all creations and granted him superiority over all other creatures. Humanity was granted this honour because Allah blessed it with intellect (Aql), which is the best means of understanding realities and a guide in distinguishing between truth and falsehood. It is the requirement of this human faculty that, in order to reach the purpose for which he was created, a person needs an infallible guide and leader who will direct him toward the straight path.

Furthermore, Allah has placed within every created being the means necessary for it to attain its perfection. It is therefore inconceivable that man, the most perfect of creation, would be left without guidance or deprived of the means of spiritual and moral perfection while he lives in this material world.

Birth of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) in the light of Shia narrations

(1) The narration of Janab Hakimah Khaaton (a.r.):

Janab Hakimah Khaaton, who was the daughter of Imam Mohammad al-Jawad (a.s.) and the paternal aunt of Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) narrates that Abu Mohammad Imam Hasan ibn Ali al-Askari (a.s.) sent me a message through one of his servants, inviting me to come to him.

> *He (a.s.) said: "O my aunt! Please break your fast with us tonight, for this is the night of 15th of Shabaan, and tonight, Allah, the Almighty, will send His Proof (Hujjat) upon the earth". I asked: "From which mother will he be born?" Imam (a.s.) replied: "From Narjis." I said: "May my life be sacrificed for you! I do not see any signs of pregnancy in her." Imam (a.s.) said: "What I have told you is exactly what will take place."*
>
> *So, I went to Janab Narjis (s.a.) and greeted her. She came forward to take off my shoes. She greeted me saying: "How are you, O my lady?" I replied: "No, rather you are the leader of me and my family." But she modestly refused my words and said: "My aunt, what are you saying?" I said to her: "My dear daughter, tonight Allah will grant you a son who will be the master of both worlds." Upon hearing this, Janab Narjis (s.a.) lowered her head out of modesty. (Taarikh-e-Asr-e-Ghaibat, pg. 30)*
>
> *Afterwards, I performed the 'Isha' prayer and lay down to rest. At midnight, I woke up to offer the night prayer (Tahajjud) and recited my supplications. Then I went to sleep again and woke up shortly thereafter. I saw that Narjis too woke up for the night prayer and completed it. I went out of my room to check on the time of dawn and saw that the first light of dawn (Fajr) had already appeared.*
>
> *At that moment, a thought crossed my mind as to why is there still no sign of the birth of the Divine Proof (Hujjat)? A feeling of doubt was about to arise in my heart when suddenly Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) called out to me from his chamber: "O my aunt, don't be in haste. The time of the birth of the promised one is near." I then began reciting Surah Sajdah and Surah Yaaseen (and according to other narrations, Surah Qadr). Soon after, Narjis (s.a.) awoke in a state of restlessness. I hurried to her and*

asked: "Do you feel anything?" She replied: "Yes." I said to her: "Invoke the name of Allah on your tongue. This is the very matter I had spoken of before. Do not be anxious and stay calm."

At that moment, a veil of light was drawn between her and me. I saw that Narjis was holding a newborn child in her lap whose blessed head was in prostration, and he was engaged in the remembrance of Allah. I took the newborn into my arms and found him completely pure and immaculate. Imam (a.s.) called out: "O my aunt, bring my son to me." I carried the infant to the Imam. He took him lovingly into his arms, recited the Azaan in his right ear and the Iqaamah in his left ear, and then said: "O my son, speak!"

At once, the newborn with his blessed tongue recited the Kalemah:

"I bear witness that there is no god except Allah, the One, without partner and that my grandfather Mohammad is the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) and that my father is Ameerul Momineen (a.s.)."

Similarly, he (a.t.f.s.) testified the Imamat of all the other Imams (a.s.). On the seventh day after the blessed birth, when I went to the house of Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.), he (a.s.) called for his son and lifting him up, said: "O my son, speak to me." Then the newborn recited the fifth verse of Surah Qasas:

"And We wish to bestow Our favour upon those who have been made weak on the earth, and make them leaders, and make them the inheritors (of the earth)."

(Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 51, pg. 13)

(2) The second narration – Forty individuals honoured to see the Imam (a.s.).

One day, forty individuals from among the Shias came into the presence of Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) and requested to see Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). Imam (a.s.) went inside his chamber and soon returned, carrying a young child in his arms radiant like the full moon, bearing a face that perfectly resembled his father.

Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) then said to them: "After me, this son of mine will be my successor among you. Obey him and do not become divided concerning him lest you be destroyed and your religion perish. Know that you will not see him again until a long period of time passes. During that period, obey his representative (Naaeb) Usmaan ibn Saeed."

(Khurshid-e Maghrib, pg. 23)

(3) Janab Abu Sahl Ismail al-Naubakhti, one of the highly esteemed companions of Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) and a prominent scholar of the Shias, who also trained many other scholars. He visited Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) during the final days of his life and, was honoured to see Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.).

(Khurshid-e Maghrib, pg. 23)

Statements of the scholars regarding the birth of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)

(1) The great scholar Shaikh Kulayni (a.r.) writes:

"He (Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)) was born on the fifteenth of Shabaan in the year 255 A.H."

(2) Mas'oodi, Shaikh Saduq, Shaikh Mufid, Sayyed Murtaza and Shaikh Tusi (a.r.) have also mentioned this in their books.

(3) Allamah Tabatabai (a.r.) writes:

"Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), who is the son of the eleventh Imam (a.s.), and who bears the same name as the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), was born in the city of Samarrah in the year 255 or 256 A.H."

Those who met Imam (a.t.f.s.) during minor occultation

Numerous traditions have been narrated in Shia sources that mention about the meetings with Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) during the period of minor occultation. Abdullah ibn Jafar al-Himyari asked Mohammad ibn Usmaan al-Amri whether he has seen "Master of the Affair" (Saahebul Amr)? He replied: "Yes, and the last time I saw him was in Baitullah (the Holy Ka'bah)."

(Bar-rasi-e-Tatbeeqi-e-Mahdaviyat, pg. 220)

A few others who were blessed to see Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.):

- Ibrahim ibn Idris (al-Kaafi, Shaikh Kulayni (a.r.), vol. 1, pg. 331)
- Mohammad ibn Usmaan (al-Ghaibah, Shaikh Tusi (a.r.), pg. 226)
- Ibrahim ibn Mohammad al-Tabrizi (al-Ghaibah, Shaikh Tusi (a.r.), pg. 226)
- Ahmad ibn Ishaaq ibn Sa'd Ashʿari (Kamaaluddin, Shaikh Saduq (a.r.), vol. 2, pg. 384)
- Ibrahim ibn Abdoh Neshapuri (al-Kaafi, Shaikh Kulayni (a.r.), vol. 1, pg. 331)

Appointment of the four special deputies (Nawwaab-e-Arba')

When one reflects upon the four special deputies of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) during the minor occultation, it appeared that outwardly they were ordinary men. How is it possible that such ordinary individuals became the central authority for all the Shias including even the great scholars of that era unless they were appointed by the Hidden Imam himself? How could Shias present their needs to them, and how could they serve as intermediaries between the Shias and their Imam?"

Issuance of Tauqee'aat (Letters of Imam (a.t.f.s.))

Many written communications (Tauqee'aat) were issued from Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) to his Shias. These letters have been transmitted continuously from that day until today, and no one has doubted them. This serves as clear evidence of the existence of Imam (a.t.f.s.) and his birth.

The virtues and blessings of the month of Shabaan become clear because this month is associated with Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and he (s.a.w.a.) himself said: "Shabaan is my month." There lies a hidden secret in it. As time passes, people will narrate this tradition in various ways, in which he (s.a.w.a.) said: "My first is Mohammad, my middle is Mohammad, my last is Mohammad, and the last Mohammad will be born in this month." Thus, a spiritual link is established between Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) in this month. Therefore, in this month, one should pay special attention and strive for love and recognition of Imam (a.t.f.s.). Let our hearts be filled with the love and remembrance of that Imam through whom every particle of the earth receives its blessings.

AL QAEM AL MUNTAZAR, JAN 2026 TO JUN 2026, VOL. XXVIII, ISSUE NO. 1, RNI NO. 70068/98



Holy Prophet Hazrat Mohammad al-Mustafa (s.a.w.a.) said:

Glad tidings to the one who finds the era of Qaem of my Ahle Bait, follows him before his reappearance (during the period of occultation), acknowledges his Imamat and that of the Imams before him, and dissociates himself in presence of Allah, the Almighty, from their enemies. These are my companions and the most honoured ones among my nation.

(Kamaaluddin, vol. 1, pg. 287)

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Printed, Published and Edited by Syed Mohammed Akbar Rizvi on behalf of Association of Imam Mahdi (A.S.), Published from 97/C, Bazar Road, Bandra (W), Mumbai 400050, and Printed at Gazelle Enterprise Offset Printing & Packaging, 504/A-Sussex Industrial Estate, D.K. Cross Road, Byculla, Mumbai 400 027 (M.S.)