Imamat

Husein Fakhari

Islamic Researcher

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Abstract: *The present article is dealing with the issues related to necessity of presence of Imams. After talking about this necessity, Imams are introduced and in the following issues related to obeying imams, Tawasul and Tamasuk, their knowledge about unseen, Willayah and rulership, kindness towards them and ziyarah have been mentioned.*

Key words: *Prophecy, Khatamiyat, successorship, Caliphate*

Necessity of Presence of Imams

He was a young adult but Imam Sadiq respected him more than his other companions. He sat him next to himself and said, tell me what did you say to that elite who was denying imamat… " I told him", Hisham said, " do you have hands, feet, eyes, ears and nose? He said, yes. I asked, what about heart? He said, yes. Then I asked, what does your

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heart do for your body members? I said, all members of our body can do their responsibilities by the help of heart. I said, what if our heart stops working? The other members of our body continue working? He said, “No”. He continued, “God in your body does not leave your organs without a guide, how come He may leave the world without a leader? Imam is the heart of creation. Without him creation is sustained…” he could not answer, and surrendered to this reason. Imam admitted his method in debate.

All responsibilities of a prophet such as leadership, rulership, invitation to religion, advertising and guiding, training, explaining Quran, except receiving revelation of God, are delegated to imams. Prophet is appointed by God, similarly imam is appointed by God. Piety, knowledge, power, bravery, and other moral virtues, are manifested in him. As far as this religion is the last religion and the prophet of Islam is the last Prophet sent by God, the duty of leading people is given to imams; this mission of them is lasted till the last day of the world. Imamat is the cause of saving religion from distortion and its freshness which is able to answer all needs and questions no matter when or where they are brought up.

Imamat is so important that when in Ghadir khum imam was announced by Prophet to a group of one hundred and twenty thousand pilgrims returning from Haj, this verse has been revealed that God stated, “ today, I make your religion perfect and I complete my blessing to you.” أليوم أكملت لكم دينكم و اتممت عليكم نعمتى...

This public announcement was so significant that when the order of God was received by Prophet to announce imam, (يا ايها الرسول بلّغ ما انزل اليك من ربّك), the holy Prophet said immediately, the value of this announcement is equal to the value of the whole prophethood; and if this announcement is not done, it is as if there was no prophethood. و إن لم تفعل فما بلّغت رسالته

This key principle is also cited by the holy Prophet about the necessity of knowing imam for the people of all times, “if any one dies while he ddoes not know imam of his time, perished as a person of ignorance time.” من مات و لم يعرف امام زمانه،مات ميتة جاهلية (i.e. anyone who does not know imam of his time is

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not a muslim.” Who is this imam whose familiarity is equal to being a muslim? Who is this imam whose acquaintance has such a great importance? It is obvious that he is someone equal to Prophet whose familiarity and friendship guarantee being a true holder of Islam religion. Otherwise, that person is lost but he does not know. This person should be innocent if it is supposed following him stands next to following God and Prophet اطیعوا الله و اطیعواالرسول و اولی الامر منکم. The reference of “ اولی الامر” in this holy verse is only imam because following him is similar to following God and the holy Prophet and no human being can reach this level of magnanimity unless innocent imam.

Characteristics and virtues of imams

I went to Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Rida in Marw and I gave a report of what people believe in terms of imamat. He gave a comprehensive sermon about imamat by referring to the holy verses of Quran and then added, “Do this people who assume can choose an innocent imam for themselves recognize the position and grandeur of imamat and imam position’s among nation to be qualified to choose imam? Truly, imamat has a vast domain, elevated position, a profound depth higher than what people can understand by their minds or can comprehend it by their own idea or choose an imam willingly? Imamat is a position that Abraham was given after becoming a Prophet. It means in the first step Abraham became a Prophet, in second step he was honored to be the friend of God (خلت) and in the third step God appointed him as an imam. God says, “truly 'I have appointed you as a leader for the nation..” Abraham happily said, “Will this leadership also continue through my descendants?” God said, “the harmdoers shall not receive it.” This verse shows that no tyrant will be appointed as Imam until the Day of Doom.

Imam continued, “imamat is having the rein of religion, muslim life and dignity at your hands; imamat is the pure foundation of islam and its fruitful branch. Through imamat prayer, zakat, Haj and Jahad are exercised correctly; ahkam and laws are obeyed, borders will be secured, imam announces Hallals and harams set by God, carries out what God’s orders, he defends the religion of God, he invites people to the path of God by advice and reasoning; imam rises like a sun in the world, he is there

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in the horizon like sun where people can not reach him, imam is like a luminous moon, a bright lamp, a shining light and a shining star in the darkness of nights, deserted deserts, and seas whirlpool, imam is refreshing water for thirsts and a leader of rightness and a savior from destruction.

Imam Rida continued enthusiastically, "imam is like fire on a hill for the ones struck by hypothermia and a rope in darkness anyone lets it go will perish. Imam is a rainy clouds, a heavy rain, a shining sunlight, and a sky over heads and a land spread under us, a overflowing well, and a garden, imam is a helpful trustee, a kind father and a compassionate brother, a shelter for the servants of God at the time of fear and misfortunes, imam is trustee of God among His creations and a proof of Him for His servants, and His caliph in His world, a caller to God and defender of rights of God.

Imam is the one who is pure of any sins and impeccably faultless, he enjoys special knowledge, patience and wisdom, he is foundation of religion, dignity of muslims, cause of hypocrites rage, and destruction; imam is unique in his time, no one is equal to him, no scholar is as knowledgeable as him, he has no similar, nor equal, he is given this level by God…

And to choose imam, he said, " who is the one who can acquire complete recognition of Imam and then choose him? Impossible, impossible!" wisdom and memories are puzzled about it and eyes short sighted; great people are unable, men of knowledge are astonished, patients impatient, wise ones puzzled, poets dumb, and men of eloquence are speechless, they are unable to explain a virtues of him or define part of his position, all are confessing their inabilities. How could they picture his reality and understand his truth? How could anyone stand in his stance and meet the needs he does? No, how? From where? He is like a star shining, far reaching by finders and beyond description of describers? How could a human have such a choice?...[1]

Introducing imams

According to Quran, when God appointed Abraham as an imam and told him I appoint you as an imam for people إنّى جاعلك للناس اماماً, he asked God this imamat was given to his descendants. God accepted this but by a condition.

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And it was this imamat is not given to tyrants. According to imam Rida in that famous tradition, “ imamat was in the descendant of Abraham until it reached Prophet Muhammad, and he announced giving it to imam Ali in various occations like Ghadir Khum, and then to his offspring. Imamat is the position of infallibles and inheritance of them; imamat is caliphat on behalf of God, the holy Prophet, and imam Ali and the inheritance of Hasan and Husayn and his children till twelve imam, Imam Mahdi (a.s.)

The position of imamat is the position of holy guidance and being a channel to receive blessings of God for people and leading nation. Caliphat as a being a ruler is just a part of that which if does not fulfill, their spiritual position of being imam which is eternal is not doubted. Knowing this imam is obligatory and according to the saying of the holy Prophet anyone who does not know imam of his time, is going to die as an ignorant person living in the era of ignorance. Name and characteristics of these twelve imams have been set since the beginning on behalf of God and announced by Prophet. One of these documents is louh of Fatemah.

Imam Sadiq said, once my father asked jabber ibn Abdullah Ansari (the famous companion) to say talk about the Louh he has seen in the hands of Zahra and what was written in that louh. Jabir said, one day when the holy Prophet was alive I visited your mother Fatemah to expressed my congradulations for the birth of Husayn. I saw a green Louh in her hands that I think was emerald, in that Louh it was white shining written letters. I told her, may my mother and father be sacrifice for you! [it is an expression to show deep love?] What is this louh? Fatemah said, this is what God has given as a gift to His prophet. In this Louh names of my father, my husband, my children and imams from my children are all cited.

My father gave it away to me, then whenever I take a look at it, I feel happy.” Your mother gave it to me to see it. I read what was written in it and I copied it. Jabir brought a sheet made from thin skin, opened it and let my father see it. My father told Jaber, oh Jaber! Look at what is with you and I read it by my heart. Jabber looked at it and my father read it all from his heart. I

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swear by God! There was not even a letter different from what was what he said and what was written. when he finished, Jabir said, I take God as my witness that you read whatever I had seen in sahifah kept by Fatemah.

The text of this louh and the hadith are included in authentic books such as kafi and Kamaluddin and is of the most beautiful and strongest texts about imamat. The names of the twelve stars of imamat with their characteristics are written in this eternal charter who are: ‘Ali, Hasan, Husayn, ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn, Muhammad ibn ‘Ali, Jafar ibn Muhammad, Musa ibn Jafar, Ali ibn Musa, Muhammad ibn Ali, Ali ibn Muhammad, Hasan ibn Ali, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan. Regarding the twelves imam we read this in this tradition,

“Then (after him, i.e. Hasan ibn Ali) I will complete my proof by his son who is the blessing for world dwellers. You see might and perfection of Moses, Light and majesty of Jesus, and patience of Jacob all in him… they are truly my proof on the earth. By them I dispel any blind dark seduction or earthquake. By them hidden and subtle movements of enemies are revealed, chains of captivity are taken away by them. God’s blessings and peace be on them! They are truly guided ones.”

Obeying imams

He said, why do you say it is a must to accept all orders of the holy Prophet and infallible imams? I answered, be fair! Isn’t it nonsense to claim we accept the one sent by God but don’t want to listen to him? Don’t you regard the order of Prophet to be equal to the order of God? Shouldn’t we regard the words and judgments of this messenger of God as a must-to-obey? Yes, God in Quran points out to this and counts a complete obedience as a condition for truth of belief: “ فَلاَ وَرَبِّكَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لاَ يَجِدُواْ فِيَ أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَرَجاً مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُواْ تَسْلِيماً” I swear by your God that these are not counted as faithfuls unless they choose you as a judge at the time of arguments and disputes and do not complain to whatever you judge. They should be surrendered to you from the depth of their heart.

He said, does obeying imam is as obligatory as obeying Prophet? I answered, yes. Obeying imam is equal to obeying God and Prophet. Our proof is this verse: أَيُّها الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطيعُوا اللّهَ وَأَطيعُوا الرَّسُول وَأُولى الأمرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنازَعْتُمْ فِى شَىْ ءٍ

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فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَ الرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَ الْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ which means oh faithfuls! Obey God and obey Prophet and Ulul-amr (who are imams. Because it is only Imam who enjoys infallibility level مقام عصمت and following him is like following God and Prophet otherwise it is obvious that human beings who are not immune from sins and mistakes and tyrants shouldn't be followed. And if you disagree on something, get consultation from God and Prophet if you believe in God and resurrection day. It is clear that is you get consultation from the book of God and the Prophet, they will tell you you should obey ulul-amr who are innocent. Jabir when asked Prophet about ulul-amr received this answer, the meaning of ulul-amr are 'Ali, Hasan, Husayn, 'Ali ibn al-Husayn,…. to Mahdi (a.s.)…

He said, sometimes imams took various approaches and we do not know which way we should take. I replied, you ask an interesting point. Luckily the holy Prophet predicted this and suggested a solution. He said, what's that? I answered, he said, al-Hasan and al-Husayn are imams. No matter to start a revolution, or stay at home and don't do anything. This shows that imam should be our role model in movement or peace.

Therefore, various approaches of imams should not confuse muslims and these differences are resulted from differences at their time and different duties God assigned them in various time. The duty of us is to follow imam's orders.

He said, what is our duty in this specific period of Imam's hidden life? I said, we are living at the time of imamat of imam Mahdi (a.s.). at this time which is the time of tyrants, when faithfuls are faced with difficulties, hardship and multitude enemies like their imam (كثرة عدونا و قلة عددنا و تظاهر الزمان علينا) we should follow imam's special orders mentioned in traditions suitable to our time to be able to save our faith… in this time of hardship.

Recourse and resort

Moving his hands and legs aimlessly in water, no ray of hope left, his power all gone, every where water, he was about to die, to sink… suddenly his eyes, out of sight, saw a rope… grasped it, took hold of it fast, pull himself up, got closed to the surface of water, and again saw the blue sky above. He was saved miraculously; the rope was thrown to

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water from a lifeboat watching around. When he saw the sun again, it was as if someone inspired his heart that in the wild sea of life whenever you are lost in the waves of events and problems, there is a save rope you can grasp and rescue. The one whose name is imam. That is the holy rope and lifeboat, that is the rope which is included in this tradition, "واعتصموا بحبل الله"" that is "عروة الوثقى" which is the strong rope which we should resort. و من استمسك بالعروة الوثقى لا انفصام لها)..

اعتصام و تمسك I'tesam and Tamassok (i.e. resort and revoke) are two Quranic words meaning holding, grasping and connecting. Who deserve that people connect them and assist them? this rope of God عروة الوثقى is the same as ulul-amr whose obedience is the same as obedience of God and Prophet obligatory. They are imams joining them is the only way of salvation. To resort them, we should refer them in all aspects in terms of scientific guidance, getting closer to God, and even solving dead-ends and problems. This rope if it was not useful, God would not set it. It is our need because we are triggered by storms and whirlpool during our life…

They say, why don't we revoke God directly? I say, revoke and resort to God is exactly the same as revoking God. Because God, Himself, sets this rope to help us promote. God He Himself can lead us directly but Prophet and imam are sent to us, they are like us, from the same bone and body, we can connect them easier. They are ladders to God, a bridge between God and human beings; they are interpreters of God's message. They are rope of God. They put whatever they had in middle to get us to real prosperity.

He said, where, how, and when to resort? I answer, " wherever, whenever, by the simplest ways: in your seclusion, talk to them, in your heart feel them, tell them your secrets, ask for help from them, listen to them, follow them, take their advice, never leave them, imams are all rope of God, resorting them is a saving tool for us, but imams of each time is closer to the people of that time, and more helpful, because people of his time are his servants, he is responsible for them, he is committed to help and guide them.

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Aware of Unseen

Being aware of unseen affairs is called ilm gheib علم غیب. And of course unseen is something proportional. Which means a subject can be unseen for someone but seen for others. According to Quranic teachings, science of unseen belongs to God Who surrounds all worlds لا یعلم الغیب الّا هو. He informs any one He likes to the extent that He likes, like in the story of Solomon, Asif Barkhiya, his assistance by having a part of this knowledge could move the seat of Belgheys at a wink from a far away land. Prophets and imams due to their mission enjoy knowledge of unseen.

According to Quran, عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلَىٰ غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًاإِلَّا مَنِ ارْتَضَىٰ مِن رَّسُولٍ, therefore Prophet and imams and some pious people have the knowledge of unseen. The extent of this knowledge is different in different people and the most significant part is given to Prophet. Infallible imams whenever necessary were informed of the unseen. Imam Sadiq said in this regard, whenever an imam wishes to know something, God teaches him."

Knowing about Unseen for infallible imams is a sign of their honesty and truthfulness to help people realize them from liars. For this reason, God gives His knowledge of Unseen as much as He wants: يعْلَمُ مَا بَينَ أَيدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلاَ يحِيطُونَ بِشَىءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلاَّ بِمَا شَاء).

Quran narrated from Jesus who said, "I inform you of what you eat and save in your homes, truly in it there is a lesson for you if you are faithful." In Quran also we read about the Prophet, "these are of unseen news we are revealing to you. Before this, neither did you know nor your tribe. تِلْک مِنْ أَنْباءِ الْغَيبِ نُوحيها إِلَيک ما كنْتَ تَعْلَمُها أَنْتَ وَ لا قَوْمُک مِنْ قَبْلِ هذا)..

How imams were informed of unseen knowledge? From various ways: first, from Prophet for example the knowledge which gives to Imam Ali in the last hours of his life. According to traditions, in that time, he received knowledge which was equal to a thousand of gates of knowledge and to each gate a thousand other gates were opened. This science included knowing about past, future, death, sorrows and judgments.

This science rests in the realm of transferring knowledge, given to next imam by the previous imam. Another way is by the book of Jame'e and that is

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the book written by Ali collecting whatever Prophet told to him; it was about news and necessary things for imam, which was given to imams subsequently. Third, through the book of Jefr which according to some traditions is the inheritance of infallible imams and this knowledge is the knowledge of infallibles. Fourth from Moshaf Fatemeh and that includes angels' talks with her. In it the news about future till the resurrection day exist. Hazrat Zahra narrated them to Ali and he wrote them down. In a tradition, from imam Sadiq we read that Moshaf by Fatemeh includes news of future. The last way is through inspiration and traditions. It is narrated from Hasan ibn Yahya Madaeni quoting from imam Sadiq who said, when imam is asked a question, he answered by which knowledge? He answered, sometimes it is inspired to him, and sometimes he hears from an angel and sometimes both.

Examples of this news of unseen can be found in Nahjul Balagheh, like the news about destruction of Kufa, the attack of Abdul malik Marvan to Kufa, bloodshed caused by Hajjaj ibn Yusef Thaghafi, the news about future of Basra, rulership of four corrupt rulers from Marvan, attack of Mongolians, or for example when imam Mahdi who was a child said the content of letters written to his father and took there by Saad ibn Abdullah Qumi and a group of people.

Wilayat and rulership

He said, what is the need of human beings, laws or executors? I said, both! Couldn't we, human beings, decide about what to do and how to do if we use our common sense and get consultation? I said, human beings are not only in the need of law, if they were, by receiving laws through prophets, they became needless and the responsibility of leaders would have been finished here. But it is not like this. After receiving the law the need to an executor of it is felt.; the need of a sovereignty that implements this divine order. Implimentation of the rules are faced thousands of challenges. To solve them, leadership is needed; a leadership immune from mistakes, corruption and deviation to be able to execute true justice. The name of this leadership is willayah granted to divine commanders by God.

He said: that is, only the divine rulers have the right to rule? I said: the best

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and most impeccable sovereignty is the sovereignty heading by the Prophet and Imams, because they are not interested in bribes or corruption, not tended to make mistake or alteration, nor to discriminate, oppress and abuse power. They also have knowledge. They enjoy knowledge which shows them the challenges of law enforcement and by their vast knowledge, take into account all the tiniest things to prevent the loss of rights of even one person. He said: this is ideal, but possible? I said, "The point is this. If human beings accept their willayah, then it is possible, but if not, it is impossible!" He said: "Has God explicitly given this guardianship to the Prophet and Imam?" I said: "Yes, in the Qur'an," He said:

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ

"Your guide is only Allah, His Messenger, and the believers; those who establish the prayer, pay their obligatory charity, and bow down (in worship)."(5:55)

He asked, "Who is the third category in the verse?" I said, "most of the commentators have said that it refers to Ali (as) who gave his ring to the poor in pray while bowing, then this verse was revealed." Interestingly, this verse begins with the word " **إِنَّمَا** " that is, the word wich makes limitations. It means exclusively your guardian and their guardian are these people ...

He said: "What is the exact meaning of the word **ولاية**?" Some people say it only means friendship. I said: this is not so, because friendship is not exclusive to these three groups and includes all believers, but it has the meaning of guardianship and leadership and sovereignty that is unique for God and the divine leaders (the Prophet and Imams) who both are innocent and also have science of Unseen. Here the issue is guardianship, leadership and sovereignty, in order to organize communities. He said that they are not present at all times. I answered: they are, and the earth will never be without a proof of God. They are ulel-Amr whom we should obey.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ...

He said: "What should be done in the absence of Imam, like now?" I said: the reason for the imam's absence is that the wrongdoers are against his rulership.

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First of all, it is necessary to do everything that end this period, and to do so, Imam Mahdi (p.b.u.h.) said that we should pray and prepare ourself, then the grounding in any way possible through repelling the defects and deviations and improving the atmosphere and condition the individually or in groups, and giving up to the rule of divine law and jurisprudence. He said, “Does willayah only mean rulership? I answered, No, the rulership is one of the aspects of the willayah, and not all of it. The willayah is the guardianship and leadership of the people, as well as the Takwini, the Tashri’i, and the spiritual willayah and also the priority willayah which is knowing them having more rights to us rather than we. If the rulership is not realized, the rest of it remains, and today, we are under the authority of imam Mahdi (PBUH), and we must prove the acceptance of his willayah in the heart and action ....

Friendship مودت and kindness

If we were supposed to thank the holy Prophet for the great blessings of guidance given to us through the Prophet (PBUH), how should we have thanked? Did not the Prophet himself show us the way? He did and he has said: "As a wage and reward, I do not want anything from you but affection and kindness to my close relatives (which means Ahlul-Bayt)" قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَى (42:23) These are the same ones from whom Allah has removed all evil and made clean and pure (إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا)(33:33) . These are the ones who were in Mubahelah along with the Prophet, those who created that wonder against the Christians of the Najran, those for whom Hadith Kasa was revealed, a divine group that Zahra is its center: she and her father and Her husband and her children from Hasan and Husayn to Mahdi (peace be upon him). Love of them is the reward for Prophethood; Be nice to them is the joy of the Prophet's heart ...

Basically, this love is the genuine religion (هل الدين الا الحب); Allah is the guardian of believers, but the guardian of disbelievers are tyrants (devils) (2:257). In the line of God's authority and guardianship, there are the guardianship of Prophet and Imams which are asserted in the verse five of surah Ma’idah. The holy Prophet also (PBUH) said, “Keep my respect by

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respecting my progeny and my family. Everyone who does so will be saved by God. God's curse to those who hurt me by annoying them (احفظونی فی عترتی و ذریتی، فمن حفظنی فیهم حفظه الله، اَلا لعنة الله علی مَن آذانی فیهم.) Imam Hasan, in his speech after the martyrdom of his father, addressed people and said, "I am from the family to them Gabriel was descended; I am from the family from them God has removed all evils, and I am from the family whom Allah has made loving them obligatory. He continued, "***Say: 'For this I ask of you no wage except the love of the (Prophet's) relatives. We will add good to whosoever gains a good deed,***" (42:23) "A ***good deed***" is to be our friends. Imam Husayn (peace be upon him) also said: "The affinity which Allah has mentioned it as something so great, and obligated all to observe, and set it as a reward of prophethood is for us Ahl al-Bayt ..."

If, according to the verse of friendship, the friendship with the Ahlul-Bayt (as) is equal to the reward of the Prophethood, its opposite, i.e. enmity with them, will be counted as denying and ungratefulness towards the Prophethood. Therefore, Ahlul Bayt and Imams are the criterion of religion, Friendship with them, and the enmity towards their enemies are the genuine religion. This is تولی and تبری which are considered as the pillars of religion. This is the rational principle that if someone claims to be your friend, he must leave your enemies and avoid them; not only in his heart but also in his action. He is not sincere if he does something you really hate. The same is true regarding Ahl al-Bayt and Imams (as): friendship with their friends and enmity with their enemies.

As we have seen friendship مودت, Tawalla تولی and Tabarraتبری have Quranic roots, and faith is not realized without these principles. We adorn our sayings with two illuminated Hadiths. Imam Sadiq (as) said: "Whoever obeys God's obligations and avoids doubtfuls محرمات), respect wilayah of Ahlul-Bayt of the Prophet (PBUH), and not to join enemies of God, in the Resurrection day, enter Paradise from each of the eight doors of the Paradise that He desires!" Imam Kadhim (peace be upon him) also said, "Blessed are our Shiites who in the time of the absence of our Mahdi (aj) grasp our strings and remain steadfast in

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loving us and hating our enemies. They are from us, and we are from them.

Pilgrimage (Ziyarat) and intercession (Shafa'at)

When you are interested in a person, you love to spend your time with him, visit him, and if he is deceased, you go to his grave and talk to him and buy him flowers, and remember him. This is the concept of pilgrimage and is of the most beautiful manifestation of love and affection which is also compatible with human nature. When we are obliged to love Ahul Bayt as a reward for the mission of the Prophet, their pilgrimage, which is the symbol of this friendship, will also be necessary. Therefore, this pilgrimage is a kind of worship through which man approaches God, because he puts God's order into practice as God orders this friendship. The pilgrimage is a school, constructing our personality, because you, by getting closer to infallibles and friends of God stand in their side and renew your treaty. You can ask their help for your promotion in front of God. By asking their intercession and by resorting to them make yourself closer to God as God says,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَابْتَغُوا إِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيلَةَ وَجَاهِدُوا فِي سَبِيلِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

"Believers, have fear of Allah and seek the means by which you come to Him. Struggle in His Way in order that you are prosperous." (5:35)

When we want to do Ziyarah, first we salute them. This has its root in Quran, as we read in the divine verses: ***"Peace and salutation to Noah among the nations!" (37:79); "Peace and salutation to Abraham!"*** (37:109); ***"Peace and salutation to Moses and Aaron!"*** (37:120); ***"Peace and salutation to Ale-Yasin" (37:130)*** …

After salutation, the fundamentals of religion and then requests are mentioned which are another manifestation of their love and companionship. A pilgrim no matter paying his pilgrimage from a far or in close, should put aside materialistic obssessions and pays attention to God with all his heart; feel sweetness of this attention and love and attracts these infallibles' attention toward himself. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "Everyone who comes to pay pilgrimage to my grave, I am obligated to give him my intercession. Everyone who come for Hajj and visits my grave for

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pilgrimage, is like the one who visited me during my lifetime." Imam Rida said: "My pilgrimage in the court of God will equal a thousand Hajj if it is done by knowledge. Also, the pilgrimage of Imam Husayn especially the pilgrimage of Arba'in, is considered as one of the fifth signs of faith.

But the position of intercession, which means helping and seeking support from a person who can support, has been given to the infallibles and even some faithfuls. The truth of intercession is that human beings ask the intercessor, Due to his closeness to God, pray for him and request God on behalf of him. Some verses like "***Who is he that shall intercede with Him except by His permission!"*** (2:255) ; ***"who have no power of intercession, except those who have taken a covenant with the Merciful"*** (19:87); show that first, intercession is possible, second, God should let, third, it is a treaty between God and infallibles…

In fact by Ziyarat, we ask infallibles for their intercession to put us under their supporting shelter. When the brothers of Josef are hopeful that their father will intercede for them so as God forgives their sins and Jacob accepted this intercession, why should not we be hopeful that Imam Mahdi (p.b.u.h.) intercede for us and enters us among his companions…

[1] Usul Kafi, Kitab al-Hujah, 2/117, Kamal al-Din/675, 'Uyun Akhbar 2/195, Ma'ani al-Akhbar/96

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