

Imamat: The Divine Guidance to Lead People to the Righteous Path

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THERE IS ALWAYS AN IMAM -1

WE BELIEVE that as God has decreed to send His Apostles with divine Guidance, so also for any age or time, God Has appointed an Imam to look after the people, leading them to the righteous path, and to guard the divine Law against any deviation. Imam has to know clearly, the necessities of the ages, and lead the people to the true path of God. He invites and teaches the people to obey the prophets and to follow the LAW. If not so, man will fail to obtain the goal for which he is created i.e. prosperity and perfection. Then the LAW will be abandoned, and people have to wander! This is why we believe that after our prophet, in any age or time there has always been, and there will be, an Imam to teach and to lead.

* (IMAM primarily means: 'HE WHO IS FOREMOST' hence a religious leader, a MODEL, a PATTERN or one who leads the congregational prayer._ (the translator)

"O, You who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are truthful."

THE HOLY QURAN _ S9: 119

This verse of QURAN does not point a certain time or a distinct age. It rather unconditionally orders the people to be the followers of the truthful Imam.

All the famous commentators have taken the word:_ TRUTHFUL to mean an innocent Imam who is free of guilt and sin.

2- THE REALITY OF IMAMAT

WE BELIEVE that Imamat is not only the apparent rulership or leadership of a caliph, but rather a high spiritual or religious position. Besides ruling and governing the Islamic society, an Imam has the overall leadership of this mortal life of people as well as that of Hereafter. He guides the Soul and Mind of people, and guards against any deviation to occur in the LAW, meanwhile he drives at the targets assigned by the prophet.

This is the same high rank that God gave to ABRAHAM after passing the stages of prophethood and the steps of apostleship and many other exams. When ABRAHAM asked his Lord to assign the position of Imamat to some of his near kins, he was answered that this title or position will not be given to the oppressors or SINNER.

"And remember when ABRAHAM was tried by his Lord with certain commandments which he

fulfilled.

God said to him, "I will make you an Imam to the people." He said, "What about making Imams out of my offspring?" God answered, "No! My covenant is not within the reach of the oppressors."

THE HOLY QURAN _ S2: 124

It is evident that such a high moral and religious position cannot be abridged or lowered to the apparent rulership or leadership, or else the verse will not hand over a reasonable meaning or sense.

WE BELIEVE that all the Arch Prophets had the dignity and grade of Imamat through their prophethood. This is because whatever they decreed by their prophethood they put it to ACTION as an Imam. So was the great prophet of Islam, when at the beginning of his mission he conveyed the messages of God to His servants, and meanwhile he carried on his leadership teaching people and leading them to the path of truth.

WE BELIEVE that after the prophet Mohammad, his mission was continued by the innocent Imams who succeeded him from among his nearest kins and their offspring. By the definitions given above, to reach the high rank of an Imam, very difficult and heavy conditions are to be observed, such as piety to the level of innocence, having the highest level of knowledge of religion and the LAW, and also full acquaintance with the human needs in any age or time.

3- IMAM MUST BE INNOCENT

WE BELIEVE that an Imam should be free of guilt or SIN. As a matter of fact one who is not innocent, can not be trusted to teach the realities of the LAW and the tenets of a divine Religion. It is for his innocence that we hold an Imam's word or deed as a religious proof.

4- IMAM IS THE GUARDIAN OF THE LAW

WE BELIEVE that an Imam has to know all about the roots and branches, and the commandments of Islam. He has to know the full meanings and the EXEGESIS of QURAN, and that he takes his knowledge from the prophet or the previous Imam; and it is such a knowledge which is trustworthy among our people.(THE SHIITE)

4-IMAM MUST BE APPOINTED OPENLY AND CLEARLY BY THE PROPHET

WE BELIEVE that Imam who is the successor of the prophet must be clearly and openly appointed by the Messenger of God. Imam's appointment also is like that of the prophet and

has to be decided by God Himself.

This is because the distinction of piety at the level of innocence, and such that high level of knowledge needed to make some one an Imam, is at the power of God and His Apostle, and no one else. We therefore know not our Imams to be elected by the vote or choice of people.

5- THE SHIITE IMAMS ARE APPOINTED BY THE PROPHET HIMSELF

WE BELIEVE that the prophet of Islam appointed all the twelve Imams as his successor's one after the other. In SAHIH MUSLIM, (A FAMOUS SUNNI REFERENCE BOOK) We read:_ "In a place between Mecca and Medina which is named KHUMM GHADIR, the prophet made a speech for thousands of Muslim, through which he said, "I am near to leave you for good. I am N is the first one in which you may find leaving two heavy things among you after me:_ QUR light and guidance; and my nearest kins are the second. I advice you all not to forget God in relation to my Kins. not to forget God in relation to My Kins." The same tradition is also written in SAHIH TIRMIDHI, (ANOTHER FAMOUS SUNNI'S REFERENCE BOOK). The prophet added then:_ "If you grasp the two heavy thing that I leave among you; you will never go astray." The above mentioned incident is brought and found in so many famous Islamic books such as:_

SAHIH MUSLIM_ VOL.2 _ P.1873

SAHIH TIRMIDHI_ VOL.5 _ P.662

SUNAN DARMI_ VOL.2 _ P.432

KHASAES NESAIE P.20

MUSNAD AHMAD _ VOL.5 _ P.182

Therefore, No Muslim can deny this tradition which is related by successive witnesses and important writers. WE RELY also on another famous tradition which is narrated in the SAHIH MOSLIM and SAHIH TERMAZI, SAHIH ABIDAWOOD and other famous books that our prophet has said, "Islam will stand up to the resurrection day and until twelve Imams all of whom are from Quraish; rule over you as my successors." WE BELIEVE that there is no acceptable commentaries for such traditions as mentioned above except that belief which is found among our sect; the SHIITE.

6- IMAM ALI'S DESIGNATION BY THE PROPHET

WE BELIEVE that the prophet, in several occasions has introduced and designated Imam Ali as his successor by the decree of God, an instance of which was in the GHADIR KHUMM

somewhere near JOHFEH.

When the prophet was returning from his last pilgrimage (HAJJ) he made a speech for a great gathering of his companions and followers, saying:_ "Do I not have priority over your souls?" "Yes, of course" they all answered. "Then all of you know that," continued the prophet. The MASTER of whoever I am, Ali shall be his master.(This tradition is narrated by more than 110 companions of the prophet and by 84 men from their second generation, and it is written in 360 famous Islamic books).

Here we do not intend to go deep through reasoning to prove our ideas; we also do not intend to insist upon our assertion. We may only add here that such an important TRADITION is not something to be ignored easily, or changing what it means, as by taking the MASTER=MOWLA to mean a friend particularly when we see that the prophet has put so much stress and emphasis upon the word, so as to make it known to all!

Is this not the same case that; IBN ASIR has brought in his important history book saying:_ "At the beginning of his prophetic mission, the prophet was ordered by God:(QURAN _ S26: 214) to admonish his nearest kindred. He invited some forty men of them to a dinner, and by a miracle, he fed all of them from a single portion of food! He then made a speech and finally said to them: `which of you is willing to give me a truthful hand in this Divine Mission of mine, and become my brother and successor among all?'"(KAMIL IBN ASIR VOL.2 _ P.63) No one answered him there, except Imam Ali, who said, I will be your companion and minister: and the prophet pointed at Imam Ali and said, He is my brother and my successor among you. Thus we see the prophet to designate his VICEGERENT and Imam, from the beginning of his mission.

The same case also happened at the end of his mission when the prophet was at his death bed. He asked those who were round him to get him a pen AND paper to write an order which would prevent them from going astray. One of them rejected and refused to provide pen and paper and even accused the prophet of uttering delirious speech! To repeat again, we hereby only declare our belief in brief and a little reasoning.(SAHIH BOKHARI_PAR5_P.11 AND SAHIH MUSLIM_VOL.3_ P.125q)

7- EACH IMAM EMPHASIZES HIS SUCCSSOR

WE BELIEVE that each one of the twelve Imams are introduced and emphasized by the previous ones. The first of them was Imam Ali the son of ABUTALIB, who was succeeded by Imam Hassan his first son, and Imam Hussain the Master of the Martyrs his second son. The third Imam was Ali the son of Imam Hussain then it came to his son Muhammad al-Bagher_

He Appointed his son Jaafar, who was succeeded by Musa, then his son Ali Ibn Musa al Reza.

The ninth of them was Muhammad Al Taqi- then his son Ali al-Naqi. After him was his son Imam Hassan Askari who was the father of Al-Mahdi the twelfth and the last of all whom we believe to be already living. The idea of a SAVIOUR who has to come to fill the world with justice, when it has been full of oppressions is accepted almost by all the Muslims of different sects, and many of the SUNNI scholars and men of knowledge have cited that in their books.

A few years ago, in answer to A question about the existence of AL-MAHDI, the Islamic World Relations Society, issued a pamphlet to emphasize that of a surety he will come, and in that pamphlet many evidences and documents were presented to prove that. Many of the Muslims believe that Al-Mahdi will be born in future, but the SHIITES believe that he has already been born, and so far he has lived a long life, and by the decree of God, he shall appear one day to fill the world with justice.

8- NONE OF THE PROPHET'S COMPANION COULD EXCEL IMAM ALI

WE BELIEVE that none of the prophet's companions did, or could excel Imam Ali in any respect; and that Imam was at the highest religious position other than that of the prophet's. Of course we know it unlawful to mispresent the Imam by overstating him and by exaggerations. Those who prove for him the position of deity or something like that, are all heretics in our sight, as are those who undervalue him, and we are absolutely disgusted with their belief, although they might call themselves the SHIITE of Imam Ali and mingle their names with ours. The leading SHIITES and the orthodox have always rejected the two groups who overvalue or undervalue the Imam, and have called them, and taken them as heretics, for going to extremes.

9- THE PROPHET'S COMPANIONS AT THE COURT OF WISDOM AND HISTORY

WE BELIEVE that there were many great men of devotion and chastity among the companions of the prophet; but all of them were not so, because the HOLY QURAN declares many among them as being hypocrites!(1)

There were also men who broke their allegiance with the VICEGERENT OF GOD, after the prophet, and made wars and shed the blood of thousands of Muslims upon the soil.

.- (THE VERSES IN: Sq _ S29 and S63 WHICH IS CALLED THE HYPOCRITES)

In other word, how can we judge that both of the two parties who made the battles of Siffin and Jamal were rightful and, on the righteous path? How can both of the two groups of combatants be honest and truthful?

Some bring forth the foot of religious researches and self exegesis on the ground by saying that:_ `Surely one of the two parties was wrong and oppressive, but as they were taking their decisions by their EXEGESIS, both parties were on righteousness in the sight of God! This we cannot accept easily.

How could one with his own exegesis and self comprehensions break his allegiance and loyalty to the VICEGERENT OF GOD, who is entitled to obedience, and create such fearful wars between Muslims, grouping them and shedding streams of their blood. with the justification that his exegesis and self researches have decreed him to do so!? What else then can not be justified by such personal comprehensions and self commentaries? Let us be more frank, that every one, even the nearest companions of the prophet are held in pledge of their deeds and are responsible for what they have done and have to answer for it:_

"The most honoured of you in Allah's sight, is he who is the most virtuous (chaste) of you."

THE HOLY QURAN _ S49: 13

The above holy verse is true for all even for the nearest companions of the prophet. We therefore have to judge them by their deeds, and we should have a reasonable definition for them all. Those who were truthful at the presence of the Apostle, at his absence too, did their best to guard the religion and to observe his commandments. They remained faithful to their covenant and respected their promises.

On the other hand, those among his companions who were hypocrites and vexed him, did the same after him. Whatever they did, was against Islam and Muslims.

"You shall find no believer in Allah and the last judgement to love those who oppose Allah and His Apostle, even though they be their father, their sons, their brothers, or their nearest kindred. Allah has inscribed the faith in their hearts and Has strengthened them with a SPIRIT OF HIS, God will admit them to the GARDENS OF BLISS, beneath which streams flow, wherein they shall live for ever. They are the PARTY OF ALLAH, and Allah's party shall achieve felicity."

THE HOLY QURAN _ S58: 22

We believe that those who harmed the prophet in his presence or absence do not worth admire. Of course we must not forget that some of the companions of the prophet showed the utmost truthfulness and sincerity with the greatest self sacrifices and have been admired by God Himself and so were a group who followed them later:_

"The vanguard of Islam; the first of those who forsook their homes, and of those who gave them aid; and also those who followed them in good deeds:_ Well pleased is Allah with them and they with Allah. For them is prepared GARDENS OF BLISS, under which streams flow. They dwell therein for ever. That's the Supreme Felicity.

THE HOLY QURAN _ S9: 100 This was our belief in brief about the companions of our prophet.

10- IMAM TAKES HIS KNOWLEDGE FROM THE PROPHET

According to the order of our prophet:_ `To observe QURAN and HIS NEAREST KINS': and also to the innocence of the Imams, our jurisprudence of divine Law, is also based upon the words, deeds and consents; (doing something in front of them without having their objection) of the innocent Imams. The three factors, i.e. words, deeds, and consent of our Imams are accepted proofs for us. We have to note also that whatever an Imam says; it is a narration of the prophet through his fathers. This is to say what ever an Imam says it has been said by the prophet.

Imam Baqir told one of his students named Jabir:_ "That which we convey to you is what we have taken out of a treasure that belongs to our Prophet Muhammad." .(Jami al-Ahadith, VOL.1 _ P.18)

Through another tradition from Imam Jaafar Sadiq we read:_ "Some one asked him a question and the Imam answered him. The man began to dispute about the answer. Imam told him:

`The answer I gave you was that of the prophet and you have no right to dispute."

Another remarkable point to note is about the important books on collected traditions such as; KAAFI _ TAHZIB ESTEBSAR_ and MAN LA YAHZAROHOL FAGHIH, that we have and we use. Although these books are much trusted in our sight, but still it doesn't mean to us that whatever is written in them is true and acceptable by us.

Besides the above mentioned tradition books we also have the books of WHO IS WHO About personalities, (ALREJAL=THE MEN) Through such books we investigate about the personalities of the narrators of the tradition and also about their chains of documents and references so as to make sure if a tradition is true and correct. Therefore, however important and trustworthy a book might be, to accept a tradition from it has to convince us that it reads and is compatible with our standard, or else we shall reject it.

Some Islamic sects have their own collection of traditions (HADIS) which they know them to be correct. (SAHIH) The authors have named their book, `THE CORRECT=SAHIH and some men of importance might have admitted that these are CORRECT, but in our sight, that .tradition is correct which is reasonably proved to have been said by the prophet