

**Alhassanain (p) Network for Islamic Heritage and Thought**

# **The Connection between Imam Mahdi and Imam Husayn**

*This paper is the first part of a series of three papers on the subject, initially conceived as part of a series of lectures delivered by the author in London, at the Islamic Centre of England in Muharram 1433/November and December 2011, entitled, "Spiritual Struggle of Karbala."*

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**IN THE NAME OF ALLAH**

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## **The Connection between Imam Mahdi and Imam Husayn, Part 1**

This paper is the first part of a series of three papers on the subject, initially conceived as part of a series of lectures delivered by the author in London, at the Islamic Centre of England in Muharram 1433/November and December 2011, entitled, "Spiritual Struggle of Karbala."

### **Abstract**

Although there are similarities between all members of Ahlul Bayt and they are from the same light, there is a special link between Imam Husayn and Imam Mahdi. In this paper, verses from the Qur'an and hadiths of the Ahlul Bayt will be used to demonstrate this connection.

Indeed, Imam Mahdi is from the progeny of Imam Husayn who will rise on the Day of Ashura and will speak of his grandfather's oppression. Imam Husayn also spoke of Imam Mahdi avenging for him, and helping Imam Husayn is similar to helping Imam Mahdi. Moreover, one of the best deeds on the birth of Imam Mahdi is to recite Ziyarah of Imam Husayn, as renewing one's allegiance with Imam Husayn is renewing it with Imam Mahdi.

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Although there are many similarities between all members of Ahlul Bayt and they are from the same light, there is a special link and connection between Imam Husayn and Imam Mahdi. Below we will study some of the links and then we will try to explain the reason behind this exceptional connection.

1) In Chapter Israa, we read:

Do not kill the soul that Allah has made inviolable, except with due cause, and whoever is killed wrongfully, We have certainly given his heir an authority. But let him not commit any excess in killing, The one who is the guardian of one who is killed would be helped by Allah and would be victorious. (Quran 17:33)

The most obvious case for this verse is Imam Husayn as approved by several hadiths that introduce Imam Husayn as the first oppressed person. There are also hadiths from Imam Rida and other Imams that say that this verse is related to Imam Husayn and Imam Mahdi. For example, Imam Baqir said:

The one who is killed is Husayn and his guardian is Imam Mahdi. And Israaf is to kill someone other than his killers. "Truly he is helped." This world will not expire unless a man from the family of the Prophet would come. He will fill the earth with equity and justice as it has been filled with injustice and inequity. The demand of that guardian of that innocent life is establishment of justice all over the world.1

The blood of Imam Husayn will not receive its compensation if worldwide justice does not take place. Of course, all Imams after Imam Husayn were guardians. However, Imam Mahdi is special. He is the victorious whom will be helped by Allah.

2) More than three hundred hadiths stress on the fact that Imam Mahdi is the progeny of Imam Husayn. 180 of these are from the Prophet. Imam Husayn himself said:

There will be twelve people who are guided. The first Imam who is guided by Allah and does not need to be guided by people is Imam Ali, and the last one is the ninth generation of my progeny. He is the Imam that is will rise truthfully, and the one who gives life to earth after being dead. And Allah is going to make the right religion prevail [over] all other religions even if the pagans may not like it.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, the hadith emphasizes that Imam Mahdi is progeny of Imam Husayn.

3) According to hadiths, the day of the uprising of Imam Mahdi is the day of Ashura. There is a call in Month of Ramadan and then the uprising is on the day of Ashura. Imam Sadiq said:

There would be a call for him in the night of 23 but he will be raised on the day of Ashura in which Imam Husayn was killed.<sup>3</sup>

4) Imam Mahdi will stand between Rukn and Maqam next to the Ka'ba clearly making reference to Karbala in the beginning of his movement:

O people of the world, I am the uprising Imam. O people of the world, I am the avenger. O people of the world, my grandfather Husayn was killed while he was thirsty. O people of the world, my grandfather was left without dress. O people of the world, they damaged the body of my grandfather.

Also, Imam Husayn said to Imam Sajjad:

By Allah, my blood will keep boiling until Allah sends the Mahdi and kills seventy thousand of those disbelievers who are transgressors and hypocrites.<sup>4</sup>

When Hirawi asked Imam Rida to check a hadith from Imam Sadiq regarding Imam Mahdi killing some of the progeny of the killers of Imam Husayn, Imam Rida approved it. He then asked, 'How this can be explained with regards to the verse that says, 'No one carries the burden of another person (Qur'an 6:164)<sup>5</sup>.'<sup>6</sup> The Imam replied:<sup>7</sup>

Allah says the truth in all his sayings but these are those who are proud and satisfied with what their fathers did. When one is pleased with something, it is like the one who is doing it. If someone is killed in the east and another person in the west is happy with this killing, it is as if he is also involved.<sup>8</sup>

Regarding the above hadith, maybe the punishment is different but there is punishment and involvement. Thus, this is with the people who are happy with what has been done in Karbala. We will explain how the end of times (akhir ul-zaman) would be built around Husayn. One of the conflicting points of truth and falsehood would revolve around him.

5) There are hadiths that state the helper of Imam Husayn to be similar to helping Imam Mahdi. As mentioned by Imam Husayn during the night of Ashura

My grandfather said that, 'My son Husayn will be killed in Karbala while he is alone and thirsty and abandoned [In that lonely time] whoever helps Husayn has helped me and has helped his son, al-Hujjah.'

Thus, helping Husayn is similar to helping both the Prophet and Imam Mahdi. They have the same ideas and goals, and if you accept and try to achieve those goals, you are with them. Betraying one of them is like betraying all of them. If we wisely spread the message of Imam Husayn today, we are helping Imam Mahdi.

6) Imam Sadiq said that 4000 angels wanted to help Imam Husayn on the Day of Ashura, although the Imam did not accept. The angels went to get permission from Allah to take part without the Imam's permission, yet when they descended to the earth, the Imam was killed:

When they descended to the earth, the Imam was already killed. They have remained in Karbala. They are covered with dust and will cry for him until the resurrection. They are waiting for the coming of Imam Mahdi.

Imam Rida also said:

Four thousands angels descended to earth to help him. They found him killed. They will remain there until the coming of Imam Mahdi. Then they will help him. And their motto is Yaa latharaat al-Husayn!"<sup>9</sup>

Imam Sadiq also said:

The supporters of Imam Mahdi wish to be killed in the way of Allah and their motto is 'Ya lithaarat al-Husayn!' Whenever they move fear goes in front of them one month in advance."<sup>10</sup>

7) On the night of the 15th Sha'ban, the night of the birth of Imam Mahdi, one of the best deeds is to recite Ziyarah of Imam Husayn. Sheikh Abbas al-Qummi in his Mafatih ul-Jinan, says that there are many authentic hadiths regarding the rewards for those who visit Imam Husayn in the middle of Sha'ban; it is as if the visitor shook hands with the 124,000 prophets.

Renewing one's allegiance to Imam Husayn is renewing one's allegiance to Imam Mahdi. Without having love for Imam Husayn, you are not counted as a lover of Imam Mahdi.

8) The Night of Qadr is the night of Imam Mahdi. Every year on this night 'the spirit and the angels descend' (97:4) to the heart of Allah's proof - Imam Mahdi:

He sends the spirit to the one whom he is pleased with. (16 2)

This verse argues for Imamah: the Imams are the only people to whom the Allah would send the angels. In this night, Allah decides everything for the twelve months of the year and the spirit and the angels bring down the decisions to the heart of the Imam.

Moreover, on this night, one of the best deeds is to visit Imam Husayn. There is one of special recitation of ziyarat exclusively for the night of Qadr. This shows the strong the link between Imam Husayn and Imam Mahdi. And it is with this recitation that all the prophets shake hands with you as you are supporting a goal in which all the prophets strove for. Allah says,

"We sent aforetime our messengers with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of right and wrong), that men may stand forth in justice" (57 25).

Hundred twenty four thousand prophets worked to establish justice, and the people of the end of time, with the Imam's leadership, will achieve it. Hence, when one visits Imam Husayn and affirms his commitment to this

cause, all the prophets will shake hands with him. Of course, justice begins by establishing justice within oneself.

9) In Dua al-Nudba, there is also a link starting with all the prophets, Prophet Mohammad, the Ahlul-Bayt, and then we say:

Where is Hasan? Where is Husayn? Where are the sons of Husayn? Where is he who shall avenge the blood of the one killed in Karbala? Where is he who shall be aided against all who transgress against him or lie about him?

The one helped by Allah here refers to Imam Mahdi because Allah will help him as mentioned from the Qur'an. Again, here you can see special emphasis put on Imam Husayn in a dua about Imam Mahdi.

10) In Ziyarat Ashura we can also find the link between Imam Husayn and Imam Mahdi in one passage:

I ask Allah that He grant me the opportunity to seek your revenge with the victorious Imam from the family of Muhammad.

And also:

I ask Allah and that He grant me the ability to fight for justice and fair play with the rightly guided Imam, who surely will come and speak the truth, (and who is) from your progeny.

11) On the Day of Ashura, we are recommended to offer condolences to each other by saying:

May Allah make our reward and your reward great, for our grief for Husayn, peace be on him and may He place us and you from those who help his cause with His guardian, the guided Imam from the family of Muhammad, peace be on them.<sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

There is very clearly a special connection between Imam Husayn and Imam Mahdi. The event of Karbala and the advent of Imam Husayn are closely connected. Mourning for Imam Husayn and preparing for Imam Mahdi are connected.

In this part, eleven reasons that clearly illustrate this connection were discussed.

In the next part, we will try to offer an analysis of this connection and see how the event of Karbala can serve the universal mission of Imam Mahdi by being both a symbol for missing justice as well as a source of inspiration for establishing it.

## Notes

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 44, p. 218, chapter 28, no. 7
2. The last sentence in Imam's speech is from the Qur'an  
'It is He who has sent His Apostle with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may make it prevail over all religions, though the polytheists should be averse.'" (9 33; 61 9)
3. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 52, p. 290, Chapter 26, no. 29
4. Ibid., vol. 45, p. 299, Chapter 45, no. 10
5. Also Qur'an 17:15, 35:18, 39:7
6. What he was trying to say was that if a person has committed murder then his progeny have nothing to do with that and why should they carry his burden. What he did not understand was the correct meaning of dhurriyyah" used in the hadith. It does not mean progeny, rather ideological approvers of someone. When we say Aale Ziyad we mean the party of Ziyad because of the Qur'anic view.

One's progeny are those who fully follow him even if they are not his sons. And if one's son does not follow him then they are not his Dhurriyyah. This is what we understand from the story of Noah where Allah says, regarding his son, that 'Indeed He is not of your family'. On the other hand, Salman was counted as the Ahl al-Bayt while he was ethnically different from them let alone the blood line. In the story of Talut when his army reached the river, he told them whoever drinks from this river more than a little is not from me.

7. One of the beauties of the school of Ahlul Bayt is that they discussed with people over matters. They wanted to equip their followers with knowledge and arguments to help them discuss with others.

8. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 45, p. 295, Chapter 45, no. 1.
9. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 44, p. 285, Chapter 34, no. 23.
10. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 52, p. 307, Chapter 26, no. 81.
11. Al-Balad al-Amin, p. 268.



## **The Connection between Imam Mahdi and Imam Husayn, Part 2**

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### **Abstract**

No doubt all the Imams are connected to each other and reflect the same light.<sup>1</sup>

However, there is a special connection and affinity between Imam Husayn and Imam Mahdi, that is, Imam Husayn is very clearly connected to what will happen in the End of the Time (Akhir al-Zaman) when Imam Mahdi comes. Part I included verses from the Qur'an and hadiths to demonstrate this connection. This part explains why there is such a close connection between the two and why Imam Mahdi refers to Imam Husayn in his universal mission for establishing justice.

### **Imam Husayn as a central theme in Imam Mahdi's movement**

Imam Mahdi's universal mission will include Imam Husayn's case at the top of his agenda. Imam Mahdi is not only for the Middle East, Arabs, Iranians or people from subcontinents; he is going to lead humanity.

The question is why does the demand for the blood of Imam Husayn stand out in the agenda of a leader whose mission is universal?

If Imam Mahdi appeared today and asked for the revenge of both the killers of Husayn and those who approve of the murder, this discourse would not apply to a major part of the world.

Many people have nothing to do with this. How many people today are either pleased with or involved in killing Imam Husayn? Most do not even know about him, let alone be for or against him, and therefore they have not made any position in favour or against him.<sup>2</sup>

So what changes are going to happen in the world that would make Imam Mahdi's central reference to Imam Husayn's case relevant to the global community?<sup>3</sup>

Thus another question arises What should be done today for Imam Husayn to become well-known so that almost everyone would take a stand either in favour or against him? That type of world is the world which is near to the time of Imam Mahdi's advent. The following is my humble understanding. Before I say what my understanding is, we should see how important it is in Islam to have justice.

### **The Importance of Justice in Islam**

Justice is not a value or virtue equal in merit to other values or virtues. In Islam, especially in the school of Ahlul Bayt, justice is the most important value and the central virtue. Divine justice is a principle of our faith, but it does not just remain as a matter of theology or something that we should know and believe about God; rather divine justice is to be translated into personal and interpersonal justice.

According to the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt, justice is a condition for every important social position. A political, spiritual, or prayer leader<sup>4</sup> - especially the Friday prayer leader<sup>5</sup> - must be just and knowledgeable. Judges and witnesses in a court must also be just.

It should be noted that Muslim and many non-Muslim ethicists hold that there are values that are always good and there are values that may have exceptions. For example, kindness is a virtue although there are cases in which it is unwise to display it, such as a parent showing kindness when his or her child is eating something which is harmful to his health or is watching a game instead of revising for a test.

Constant kindness to children may result in spoiling them, thus harming their personalities. Though kindness is an admirable trait, it should be controlled, as with other good traits.<sup>6</sup>

However, there is one value that all our scholars believe that has no exception and that is justice. Injustice and oppression is never allowed.<sup>7</sup>

In Islam, justice must be established within and without. Other schools of thought restrict justice to interpersonal relations I have to be just with you, and you have to be just with me. The government has to be just. The leader has to be just. However, in Islam, it is both interpersonal and intrapersonal.

People are to be just from within, with respect to themselves. If a person commits a sin, he has been unjust to himself:

"He who violates the boundaries that Allah has drawn and goes beyond them has oppressed himself."<sup>8</sup>

And this is why we say "Our Lord, we have oppressed ourselves"<sup>9</sup>; or in Dua Kumayl referring to our sins we recite "I have done injustice to myself."

We do not have the right to be unjust even to ourselves whether it is harming our bodies, wasting our talents, or damaging our own reputation. And then we are to refrain from doing any injustice to others, with unbiased treatment

"...ill feeling for a people should never lead you to be unfair" (5:8).

For example, if the murderer of Imam Husayn were here today and put on trial, our responsibility is to be just with him, even if he is an enemy

"Be fair; that is nearer to Godwariness" (5: 8).

In Islam, piety and justice are inseparable with respect to ourselves, each other, and even with animals. Imam Ali, who earned his status as an icon of justice, says

If I am given seven continents and whatever is under their skies so that I would disobey Allah by taking the peal of wheat from the mouth of an ant I would not do it.<sup>10</sup>

When Allah speaks of the prophets' duties such as introducing religious practices such as praying and fasting, purifying people's hearts through character education and it comes to a universal value, Allah says that all the prophets have been sent to establish social justice

"Certainly, We have sent all the messengers with manifest truths and gave them book and scale (which means law) so that people establish justice." (57: 25)

As implied in the verse, messengers were not sent to miraculously establish justice; they were sent to guide people with specific instructions to establish justice. Allah does not want to establish justice by miracles; miracles are to establish trust in people so that they believe in the Prophets, but then the believers have to strive to establish justice. It will not work in the way the followers of Moses expected, when they told him

"Go ahead, you and your Lord, and fight. We will be sitting right here" (5: 24).

We have to get involved. The prophets were sent for people to rise and establish justice. This is the central position of justice.

### **Dignity**

Another fundamental value is dignity. Although many believe the right to live is the highest right human beings possess - and even though the right to life is important - the highest right that we truly have is the right for dignity. A person's dignity is more important than his physical life, since life has no value with constant humiliation, such as being caged up, treated like an animal, and merely accepting the food thrown to us. In this condition, the most important right is definitely not life. More important than just living is to be treated as a human being with honour and dignity.

Therefore, justice is to give people what they deserve, and on top of everything to give them their honour and dignity. This is the most important right. This is something that Allah has planned to be finally achieved. Without this, the world will not come to an end. Without having a day at least in which humanity can live with justice and dignity the world will not come to an end. That must happen in this world. The kingdom of Allah must be established in this world before seeing it in the hereafter.

### **The Role Model for Establishing Justice**

The one leader who will succeed in achieving a life of dignity for mankind is Imam Mahdi. Reiterating what was said before, rather than miraculously establishing it, we are responsible, otherwise we wouldn't be waiting. Though he will certainly be the leader, he will need helpers, people who are ready to establish justice.

These helpers will have first established justice in their own souls and hearts, then with their brothers and sisters within their community, then extend that justice to the larger social sphere, and finally to other living beings. Those who went out of their way to accomplish it can ask the Imam to include them in his movement, a movement that will establish worldwide justice.

When those who will strive for justice want to get inspiration and energy, when they want to realize that life has no value without justice and dignity, the best role model for them would be Imam Husayn. Those who want to help Imam Zaman and prepare for his appearance and then support him to achieve the justice that gives all people their honour and dignity cannot do this without remembering Imam Husayn.

Imam Husayn has shown that although life is important, there is more to it than physical life. Concerning dignity, the Imam said the following part of a poem on the Day of Ashura:

Death is better than losing you honor

And losing your honor is better than going to hell.<sup>11</sup>

Yazid ordered the Imam to pay allegiance, and this could have saved the Imam's life and ensured him a decent living, that of security and the freedom to teach and worship. However, Yazid had one condition the Imam was to pay allegiance to Yazid, to which the Imam said

A person like me does not pay allegiance to someone like him.<sup>12</sup>

A person who dedicated his entire life to obeying Allah does not pay allegiance to Yazid, an openly immoral, unjust, and oppressive tyrant who was going to lead the society to adopt his ways. Imam Husayn believed that there is no value in one's life, even if one spends it worshipping Allah when one gives up one's dignity and honour by taking an oath of allegiance to a person like Yazid.

Far from us is disgrace. God does not accept this for us. The Messenger and the believers would not be pleased with that. And those pure laps (on which Husayn was brought up).<sup>13</sup>

### **Husayn, The Best Source of Inspiration**

Those who want to establish justice need Imam Husayn. No revolution or reform occurred in the Shi'a world unless they referred to Husayn. People and groups such as Mukhtar, the Tawwabun, the uprising of the people of Fakh and to the overthrowing the Umayyad Caliphate all referred to Imam Husayn. Even non-Muslim reformers who knew Imam Husayn learned from him. Gandhi is quoted as saying, "I learnt from Husayn how to achieve victory while being oppressed."

The question arises Why is it that other reformers do not use Imam Husayn as their source of inspiration? Because they do not know him. It is our fault that a few non-Shi'as and non-Muslims know Husayn only by chance because there exists no systematic introduction of Imam Husayn's movement to all people.

Many of us prefer to revel in our gatherings and do things we enjoy and keep him for us. Many of us think or at least act as if we have some kind of monopoly over Imam Husayn. And we are not serious in saying that we want to promote Imam Husayn. That is the last thing in our list. We first want to enjoy our mourning gathering in the way we are brought up with and we do not care much whether outsiders understand or not, whether it makes sense to them or not.<sup>14</sup>

Imam Husayn is always a source of inspiration for anyone who is concerned about justice. Husayn would be chosen over other role models as one who sacrificed the most for dignity and justice. If Husayn is not revered, it is because he is unknown. If you know who Husayn was and what he did, it is impossible to take anyone other than him as an exemplar of genuine struggle for establishing justice and dignity. Who sacrificed for justice and dignity more than Imam Husayn?<sup>15</sup>

For this reason, when Imam Mahdi wants to call for establishment of justice, he will refer to Husayn. This makes it clear what he wants and to what extent he is ready to sacrifice.

### **The Requirement**

At this point, the following question arises What needs to happen for Imam Mahdi to start his universal movement by referring to Imam Husayn? When can he stand between Rukn and Maqam of Ka'ba to say, "I am calling for the blood of Husayn to be compensated?"

This will only happen when Imam Husayn becomes the central point of reference in the world, when everyone knows about him, when the conflict between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, and good and bad people will take form around Imam Husayn. In other words, the movement will start only when people of the world will be polarized around Husayn.

There will be many non-Muslims whom due to their good-naturedness will take the side of Imam Husayn. There are many people in the west who will be among the best supporters of Imam Mahdi. Imam Mahdi would give everyone his right and would treat everyone with dignity; all people of good will would benefit, since Imam Mahdi will be establishing nothing but justice.

### **Sharing the Real Husayn with everyone**

For Imam Mahdi's movement to start, Imam Husayn must become known to everyone. Everyone must develop an idea about him either loving Husayn for his stand for justice and dignity, or disliking Husayn as a result of being unjust to oneself and desiring to humiliate humanity. Those who commit injustice or usurp or violate rights of people will not be in favour of Imam Husayn.

When will this idea of people being either in favour or against Imam Husayn occur?

Not until the Imam is known to everyone. And it is not just a matter of publishing some books or booklets. We are to ensure that the true Husayn - not the Husayn that some of us currently show and represent - is exposed to press and eventually the people of the world. What is most important is to show the real Husayn in our actions, rather than in the form of propagation.

Imam Mahdi's mission to establish justice and equity is deeply connected to Imam Husayn's movement against injustice and humiliation by the oppressors. Before the advent of Imam Mahdi, almost everyone will know who Imam Husayn is and what he stood for; those who struggle for justice would refer to him as their role model, and those who fight against them would question Imam Husayn and his followers, and finally they would support and show their appreciation of what was committed by Yazid and his people and as a result associate themselves with the killing of Imam Husayn and his family members and companions.

In the next part, we will discuss how one can help Imam Husayn and through that help the Prophet and Imam Mahdi. What is the real challenge for us today is to see how can we help Imam Husayn and through that help Imam Mahdi as he himself quoted from the Prophet saying "Whoever helps Husayn has helped me."

### **Notes**

1. Of course, because of the kind of condition they were put in, Imams can give us different lessons.

This is why we have the peace treaty of Imam Hasan and then the uprising of Imam Husayn. This does not mean that Imam Husayn is braver than Imam Hasan. They were put

in different conditions and thus acted differently so that we have scenarios ready for all different conditions today. In addition to having the experience of twenty three years of life of Prophet Muhammad (s), the Shi'a the experience of leadership and guidance of the infallibles is extended up to 329 A.H, when major occultation of Imam Mahdi (a) started.

So we know what we should do in different conditions. We also have our scholars who specialize in understanding the teachings of the Prophet and his Ahlul Bayt and lead the community when they lack direct access to the infallible leadership.

2. Perhaps this is one way of understanding why Imam Mahdi does not come today.

3. It might be said that there are people today who seem to support Yazid. Either they praise Yazid today or, for example, they attack those who go for ziyarat of Imam Husayn. Thus, these are the people that are going to be the enemies of Imam Mahdi. However, I do not think this illustrates the entire picture. How important are these people? Although what these ignorant people who kill themselves to kill others do is wrong by any standard and in a sense they are supporters of Yazid and do like Yazid, this is not the main problem of the world today and these people are not the main forces of evil today. We must look at it in a way that can appeal to humanity.

4. Normally we do not find this in other schools of Islam. They believe they can follow the lead of someone they do not know in their prayers.

5. This is a distinction that many, if not all, scholars make. If you want to be the leader of a prayer it is enough if people believe that you are just, even if you are not sure about your justice or you do not believe that you are just. People can make the intention of congregational prayer and you make the intention of individual (furada) prayer. However, a Friday prayer leader must believe that he is just. If he does not find himself just then he cannot undertake the leadership.

6. Another example is about telling the truth. Sometimes maybe to tell the truth can cause serious problems and you have to hide the truth. And if not possible to do that sometimes you may be required to tell a lie. For example, if by telling the truth I put an innocent life into risk then I have to hide it or if it is not possible tell a lie.

Of course, this is to save an innocent life and not a criminal one who is going to see the justice. Or if two people like a husband and wife have problem with each other you should get involved to help and if it is only by telling lies that you can bring them together you can do so. For example, you can go to the husband and say your wife very much loves you and go to the wife and say something similar and bring them together.

Normally our jurists permit lying for reconciliation. This is different from what some people think and lie for everything and say it is allowed, because there was a *maslahah* or expediency involved. There must be something which in the sight of Allah is so important that it overrides the value of telling the truth, and these are very narrowly defined by jurists.

7. Sometimes people wonder why we pray to Allah not to treat us with His justice like the following supplication

O our lord, Treat us with your favour, and do not treat us with your justice.

This raises a question for them since they think this is an exception for justice while it is not. When we ask God not to treat us with His justice it does not mean that we want Him to treat us with injustice or be unjust to us. No one would want that. On the contrary, what is meant here is that we want something even more than justice. This is because justice has two levels. The first one is to give one exactly what one deserves and the second one is to give one what one deserves or more. In this phrase, the first meaning of justice has been used.

Thus, when we say do not treat us with justice it means that do not treat us as we deserve because we are worried that what we deserve is not good. Therefore, we ask for more than what we deserve. Notice that it would have only been injustice if we had asked for less. So it became clear that this phrase is not an exception for justice where injustice is allowed. You do not find any case in Islam in which injustice is allowed. You always have to be just.

8. Qur'an 6: 51. The Qur'an also says

"And they did not wrong Us, but they used to wrong (only) themselves." (7:160; 2: 57)

9. Qur'an 7:23.

10. Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon 224 and Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 40, p. 163, chapter 107, no.57.

11. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 44, p. 192, p. 196, vol. 45, p. 49 and p. 50 and vol. 75, p. 128.

12. Ibid., vol. 44, p. 324.

13. Al-Ihtijaj, vol. 2, p. 300.

14. Unfortunately, some of us have kept Imam Husayn in prison of our own community. We have not let the light of Imam Husayn go and reach everyone. When people want to know who Husayn was what can they do today? For example if you live in a neighbourhood and someone wants to know about Imam Husayn what would they do?

He would probably decide to go to the gathering of the lovers of Husayn and see what they do. Do you think our gatherings are in a way that if an outsider comes would benefit or would understand what Husayn ideas are?

Or if for example he wants to know what was Husayn's idea about family life, do you think by looking at our families they will realize what Husayn wants? If he wants to see how a child must respect his parents can he look at our children and find that out? If he wants to know how Imam Husayn was saying about kindness and mercy towards your neighbours, would he see that if he looks at the Shi'a neighbours?

When we don't show the values of Imam Husayn and we say we are lovers of Imam Husayn we confuse people about Imam Husayn. We don't let them to have access to the true and original Husayn. They look at him through us and, instead of being mirrors to reflect the light of Husayn, we misguide people. Of course, this is not about everyone but some.

15. For example, today people from all over the world respect Nelson Mandela because he struggled for a noble cause. He spent 27 years in prison calling for justice. We too have respect for him, but can we compare what he has done for justice and what Imam Husayn has done?

## **The Connection between Imam Mahdi and imam Husayn, Part 3**

This paper is the third part of a series of three papers on the subject, initially conceived as part of a series of lectures delivered by the author in London, at the Islamic Centre of England in Muharram 1433/November and December 2011, entitled, "Spiritual Struggle of Karbala."

### **Abstract**

The previous parts offered an explanation on the close connection between Imam Husayn and Imam Mahdi in hadiths and why Imam Mahdi refers much to Imam Husayn in his universal mission for establishment of justice while putting the demand for the blood of Imam Husayn at top of his agenda. This part offers guidelines as to how a person can help Imam Mahdi by being a good follower of Imam Husayn.

It will be argued that by showing the people the value of being a good follower of Imam Husayn, and in particular by showing complete commitment to observing and to establishing justice and other virtues, one can prove his love for Imam Husayn while simultaneously helping Imam Mahdi.

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In an address to his companions in the night of Ashura, Imam Husayn said:

My grandfather, the Messenger of God, said: 'My son, Husayn, will be killed in Karbala while he will be alone, single, thirsty, and without any helper. Whoever helps him has helped me and has helped his son, al-Hujjah (Imam Mahdi).'<sup>1</sup>

The following offers an explanation on how helping Imam Husayn is a) helping the Prophet in preserving Islam and b) helping Imam Mahdi in establishing universal justice. Thus, the crux of the paper focuses on how helping Imam Husayn can prepare us for helping Imam Mahdi.

### **How to help Imam Husayn and hence Imam Mahdi**

In one of the Ziyarats of Imam Husayn we recite:

Peace be to you, Oh son of the prophet. If I was not able to help you with my hands, if time has not let me be with you, then I am now coming to you with my help. Answering your call is my hearing, my heart, my sight, my body, my thoughts and my desires, all submissive to you, and to all Imams after you, those from your progeny who guide to Allah. So my help for you is ready.<sup>2</sup>

We are centuries away from Imam Husayn yet still we can join him and answer his call when he called out: "Is there any helper to help us?"

### **Reflecting on How we answer a Call**

What needs reflection is to see how your heart, your ear, your eye answers to a call. It seems clear that e.g. if I listen to that which prepares me to serve the cause of Husayn and act upon it, this would be my ear answering his call.

In the age that we live in, many problems come through ears and eyes, more than any other time. This is due to the fact that if in the past they had



to be careful about the voice coming from few meters around, today we can hear voices and sounds that come from thousands of miles away. If you look at the past, what do you think the challenge of a young person was when it comes to the listening and hearing?

The only challenge was that if he was in a meeting or gathering or place a sinful voice might be heard. However, in our age, we can be in a holy place and yet exposed to a haram voice through various devices. Furthermore, in the past, one could only listen to what was being said at that moment, though now voices are recorded and saved.

The amount of exposure to haram today is not comparable to the past. The same fact is true about our sight, thoughts, and desires.

A lover of Imam Husayn cannot have plans that disregard the beloved. Our desires and thoughts must be in line with helping Imam Husayn. We shall not think about useless matters let alone sinful ones. Our thoughts should be at Imam's service, thinking how we can help him, how we can bring more light to this world. Our concern must be how to promote values.

A lover is the one who wakes up in the morning and the first thing he remembers is his beloved. It may even happen that he is in the middle of a conversation yet his heart and mind is somewhere else with the beloved. When he goes to bed, he ends his day thinking about and remembering his beloved. Is Husayn's attraction and beauty less than a normal beloved? If we do not feel that irresistible attraction in Imam Husayn, the problem lies in the fact that we do not have proper knowledge (haqqa ma'rifatih) of him.

A point that should not be neglected is that our Imams do not draw our attention to themselves. They act as mirrors and draw our attention to Allah. They are so transparent that when you think of them you remember Allah. They orient us towards Him. In Ziyarat al-Jami'ah we recite: "He who seeks Allah, starts with you."

If someone wants to reach Allah in a very easy, fast, and convenient way it should be done through knowing and loving Prophet Muhammad and Ahlul-Bayt<sup>3</sup>.

### **Verbalizzzzing our readiness to the Imam**

We need to be able to honestly tell our Imam that we are ready for him, that he can count us, on all that we have, whether it is our talents, skills, and energy; and on our children and wealth.<sup>4</sup>

In Dua of 'Ahd we read:

O Allah, appoint me amongst his helpers, aides, and his protectors, those who hasten to fulfill his commands and obey his orders. Those who defend him and compete with each other to (fulfill) his will.

We ask Allah to include us among those who respond to Imam Mahdi, implement his commands, and do what he wills without hesitating or waiting for his request for it to be done.<sup>5</sup>

If we know that our Imam wants something, we should want to hasten and rush to fulfil what he wants from us, without waiting for him to ask us. It is sufficient to know what is to be done without waiting for the Imam's order. If you know your father is thirsty you will not wait for him to ask you for water; you would immediately quench his thirst. Furthermore, we would

want to compete with others to fulfil not only the Imam's commands, but also his will, before even expressing it.

What does our Imam want from us today?

A very important question arises here: How can we understand what our Imam wants from us today? This is something that we struggle with. I think we have many people in the world who are devoted to and work hard to spend everything they have for the sake of Allah and at the service of Ahlul Bayt and their cause, but sometimes you do not feel that they are always making proper decisions or are making rapid progress year by year towards ideals.

Many people have already done so many things to please Imam Mahdi but the problem is that they do not know exactly what to do and what he wants from us to do. They do not know what to prioritize to help our Imam.

There are the obvious duties that apply at all times: praying, fasting, hajj, taqleed, wearing hijab, eating halal food, and so forth. These are the responsibilities that from the time of the Prophet every Muslim must have done as we have in the hadith from Imam Sadiq:

What Muhammad announced permissible is permissible up to the Day of Judgment and what he said is prohibited will be so till the Day of Judgment.<sup>6</sup>

These are the things basic laws. What we need to understand is our time-specific social responsibilities, how to prepare our society and community for the coming of Imam Mahdi.

The following offers a few reflections on how to understand what the Imam expects from us.

To reflect on what he is going to do and prepare by moving in the same direction. In other words, we must consider what Imam Mahdi is going to establish, and then we should work towards it.<sup>7</sup>

When the Imam sees that we have made good progress and preparation, then he can join us in the same path. But we have to make the first few steps.

As we saw in previous parts, one of the aims of Imam Mahdi, which is the aim of all prophets and is the standing at the top of his agenda is justice. Right under justice come dignity and honour because these are the most important rights that every human being deserves. If you have minimum amount of justice you have to respect dignity of people.

Now, let us reflect on the following phrase from Dua al-Iftitah:

Oh Allah, we bring to you our yearning for an honourable government by which you give dignity to Islam and its people, and humiliate hypocrisy and the hypocrites, and include us among those who invite people unto Your obedience, and lead people towards Your path. Through such a government, give us honour in this life and the hereafter.

If a government is not honourable, it cannot give dignity and honour to its citizens. You can never expect honour to come to you from the people who do not have honour for themselves. There is a very beautiful hadith that suggests this idea: "If someone doesn't have any honour for himself, do not feel safe with respect to him."<sup>8</sup>

A noble person never uses foul language even towards animals. A person who has honour for himself never walks out nude.<sup>9</sup>

Covering up even a little is recommended in Islam which indicates that a person should always honour himself. And a person who honours himself will honour others. Similarly, an honourable government will honour its citizens. For this reason, we ask Allah in our duas for an honourable government that treats people with dignity.

One of the features of the government we ask Allah for is that it exposes the hypocrites. It is them with whom we have problem with, not honest disbelievers. It seems that the main problem is with nifaq and not with kufr.<sup>10</sup>

We ask that the hypocrites are exposed so that they lose their respect and influence. The best way to face a person who is hypocrite is to show his true face to people.

Having asked for that, we then ask Allah to include us among those who invite others toward His obedience. The idea here is that we should not be satisfied by just being pious; rather we should also be calling others towards His obedience and leading towards His path. If we merely aim to be pious is not enough and may actually result in being in a lower level and failing to be pious. In the following dua in the Qur'an we read:

Our Lord, Grant us comfort in our spouses and descendants, and make us leaders of the pious. (25:74)

We do not merely ask for piety. We ask to be the leader of the pious. This aim is for the purpose of being closer to Allah rather than for selfish reasons such as position or power.

Continuing with Dua al-Ifitah, we ask Allah to help us not only to obey Him, but to guide others to his obedience, by being equipped with piety and knowledge. We also ask Allah for honour in this life and the hereafter. We want to be proud to be Muslims.

We want people of the world to have so much understanding of Islam, and pleased with the performance of Muslims, that they have respect for Muslims. This will not happen by itself. We can only achieve this by working towards establishing this honour for ourselves and our community. Imam Mahdi wants us to be honourable.

Whether it be education, family ties, punctuality, organization, trustworthiness, and helping others, we need to be the best at it. If on the other hand, we are disorganised, dishonest, unkind, and unprincipled we cannot bring honour to ourselves. Hence we cannot expect Imam Mahdi to suddenly come and give us honour in this life and the hereafter.

Every step towards bringing honour to this community prepares for Imam Mahdi.

We should not see anything happening that would bring disrespect to our community.

In addition to establishing justice by not violating others' rights, not even doing injustice to animals, we need to bring honour to ourselves and treat others the same. We need to be a polite and respectful community, whether it be in the home, classroom, or workplace so that anyone who looks at us

says that this person must be a follower of Husayn. We need people to see the conduct of Imam Husayn in us.

Another important point for us is to act as a community. We cannot afford to be separated as we cannot help Imam Mahdi individually. We need to come together and form a solid group at his service. The Imam wants a strong community, not people who dislike or boycott each other:

O you who have faith! Be pious and be with the truthful people. (9:119)

In addition to believing and having piety, we should also be in the company of truthful people. This shows not only the importance of being truthful, but also the importance of being a community:

By Time! Indeed man is in loss, except those who have faith and do righteous deeds, and enjoin one another to [follow] the truth, and enjoin one another to patience. (103:1-3)

In addition to the importance Allah gives to time, we also realize that it is not enough for us to be believers and do righteous deeds. We need to come together and enjoin truthfulness and patience. If one was about to get angry or to give up, others should invite him to patience.

With this mutual help we can be saved. It is only when we are together that we can gain Allah's support.<sup>11</sup> Similar to the above verses, Allah says:

While being one of those who have faith and who enjoin one another to patience, and enjoin one another to compassion. (90:17)

We should invite each other to patience, mercifulness, and truthfulness; establish it among ourselves and then extend it to others to benefit from it. If we form such a community, Allah will bless this community with much support and will guide it so as to quickly achieve its aim.

Allah says in the Qur'an that if you are pious and careful of your duties towards Him, He will teach you (2:282) and give you a criterion by which you can distinguish between right and wrong (8:29). Therefore, we should attain communal piety for Allah to guide our community and direct it towards our goals.

## Conclusion

In this part, we studied how we can help Imam Mahdi by learning from the example of Imam Husayn and being a good follower of his. In particular, we studied why and how we should start establishing justice among us so that we can be used as instruments of establishing justice by Imam Mahdi.

An unjust person cannot be a helper of the Imam whose goal is establishing justice all over the world. We should establish justice among ourselves and then for others.

Justice is both for enemies and friends.

We are expected to be fair with respect to everyone. Then we studied that the right of people to be treated with honour and dignity as one of the important things you should observe as a just person. Again we need to achieve this honour for ourselves and then treat others with honour and respect.

We need also to form a united community in order to help Imam Mahdi.

## Notes

1. Ma'ail al-sibtayn, volume 1, page 208
2. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 98, page 209, chapter 18.
3. Of course, there are other prophets and holy people that we have respect and love for and they also can help us, but no one is as close to Allah as these people.
4. Sometimes some people cheat. They say all their belongings are for Imam Mahdi but still they resist to pay khums to Maraaji' saying that I will pay it only to Imam himself after he comes and asks for it. This is not honesty.  
If you are honest and free from greed you would realize that giving khums to the Marraji's in this time and age is like paying to Imam himself and for sure Imam Mahdi would not be pleased if people do not make their khums available for good causes under the supervision of the people who have piety and at the same time the greatest knowledge of the teachings of Imams and the needs of the community.
5. Note that this dua was taught by Imam Sadiq long before the occultation started. In Islam we are not restricted to time as discussed before. In Islam, you can go beyond time and space. Imam Sadiq says you should pray in this way for 40 days in order to be able to join Imam in his mission and even if you die before he comes you will be brought back by Allah and will be able to join him.  
6. Al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 58.
7. If you are waiting for a great teacher to come and educate you should prepare for his mission by bringing students together, making a classroom and other facilities ready for him and educating people as much as you could so that when he comes everything would be ready for him and he would focus on the things that no one else could do it and not just doing what you yourselves were supposed to do.  
Or if there is an epidemic disease and you are waiting for the greatest doctor to come you should prepare for his activities by cleaning and equipping the hospital, bringing together nurses and others who could help him together and register the patients and do examinations and initial treatments so that when he comes his time would not be wasted for you to get ready.
8. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 72, page 300, chapter 74, no. 11.
9. It is said that one of the scholars used to be fully dressed in his house all the time. Someone asked him why he did that while no one was there. He replied saying 'I am here.' He had such a respect for himself that he did not want to be without his dress of honour at any second.
10. The Qur'an tells us that the hypocrites are in the lowest level of the hell (4:145).
11. Imam Ali said: "Allah's hand (of protection) is with the community (jamaa'ah; a united group of people). You should beware of division because the one isolated from the group is (a prey) to Satan just as the one isolated from the flock of sheep is (a prey) to the wolf. (Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon number 127)

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