

Flowers Of The Garden Cried, 'O Manifestation Of The Beautiful'

This world is an amazing place. Innumerable miracles are ensconced in its particles. Countless bounties rain on it, day and night. Numerous lights illuminate the forehead of its horizon. Myriad fragrances inhabit its air. Limitless birds with mind-boggling melody sing the praise of its nature. How beautiful is the universe! Notwithstanding its encompassing subtlety, it carries on its delicate shoulders, the massive burden of mountains and peaks. It sings beautiful poems to calm the restless and relentlessly attacking waves of the oceans and high seas. It does not neglect to irrigate the vast jungles and tropical forests. Animals living in boundless deserts and limitless wastelands are conveyed their sustenance with unfailing regularity and travelers in these domains reach their destinations with the help of the indefatigable and industrious camel, also called as the ship of the desert. Beasts residing in sub-zero temperatures are provided warmth to prevent their blood from freezing. Tribes sweltering in tropical forests are supplied soothing shadows of date-gardens. Green valleys grant the joys of spring. Rivers wading their way through mountains and gorges offer scenes of immeasurable joy and decorate nature with endless beauty.

How beautiful is this world! When man stepped into this amazingly picturesque world, he was stunned by the changing seasons and stupendous beauty. Sprinkled colors knocked him off his feet. Mankind multiplied, grew into tribes and nations, spreading to different nooks and corners of the world. Various cultures appeared. Customs and rituals were coined. Thereafter, this exquisite world was divided into countries and kingdoms. Mines of treasures were dug out. Dangerous weapons like swords, arrows and guns were fabricated.

As mankind spread throughout the world, stories of bloodshed came into being. Rivers of human blood flowed on this very beautiful earth. Man's oppression on his fellow beings increased by the day. The strong exploited the weak. Allah the Almighty had created the earth and adorned it with his innumerable bounties. He - the High-had announced, "I was a Hidden Treasure. I intend to be known and hence created man!" The angels had protested vehemently, "Are you going to create and send to your beautiful world one who will spread mischief and shed blood in it?" "I know what you know not" was the divine reply. The angels accepted the divine decree and even bowed in prostration in front of man on His command. The Satan rebelled. Intoxicated with arrogance and inflated with an air of superiority, he asked respite from Allah the High as a compensation for his thousands of years of worship and efforts to deviate the progeny of Hazrat Adam (a.s.) except 'His purified servants'. Allah - the Just- granted him respite for a specific period. The Satanic trap spread from the East to the West. Mankind became victim of Satanic ambush and ensnarement. Human blood became cheaper than water. Satan propped up puppets at regular intervals who even went to the extent of claiming divinity. From His side, Allah raised a series of Prophets (a.s.) and Messengers (a.s.) for the guidance of mankind.

Satan put in maximum effort to deviate Allah's righteous slaves. Lust for power and domination; inflammation of carnal desires; the greed for owning large tracts of real estate and land; were some of the entrapments used by him. When none of the above failed to lure the victim, he used the strength and power of his puppets to oppress the innocents. The earth was

bathed with the blood of Allah's righteous servants to such an extent that every particle of the universe wept bitterly due to the gigantic calamity inflicted on human life.

But Allah the High had His Own ways to prove His point. For instance, the huge blazing fire lit by Namrood was turned into a cool breeze, thereby testifying the Prophethood of Hazrat Ibraheem (a.s.). The river Nile was carved into two to save Hazrat Moosa (a.s.) and his followers from the tyrannical clutches of the despot Pharaoh. Prophet Eesaa (a.s.) was raised to the heavens to rescue him from the grip of blood-thirsty Jews hell-bent on putting him to death.

The series of despotic rule and ruthless rulers continued till a person sat on the throne of Damascus, Syria, who was tyranny personified. The world had never ever witness again such a merciless dictator. His name: Yazeed – the son of Moaviyah. On the other hand, the son of Islam, the supporter of religion, along with his most trusted and loyal companions and the inheritance of all the Prophets (a.s.) and Messengers (a.s.) stood up to challenge the apparently undisputed despot. The rebellion in Madinah was a tight slap on the face of Syria. Yazeed was rattled. Karbala happened. Its map was all over the large canvas of history. A huge army of 130,000 cowards and so-called Muslims came to crush a group of 72 loyalists. This incident was one of the great manifestations of Allah's absolute power that illuminates till date the entire universe. Every reasonable person sinks in amazement vis-à-vis the awe inspired by this small bunch of Allah's humble servants that the Satanic Yazeed had to pour out contingents after contingents in Karbala to avoid defeat!!! It should be borne in mind that this lot of 72 included a six-month old Ali Asghar and youngsters like Qasem, Awn and Muhammad, who were barely in their teens. These truly brave and courageous soldiers fought against an army of 1,30,000. The stories of cowardice and spinelessness of Yazeed the Satan's forces echoed in the nooks and corners of the world. The martyrdom of Allah's soldiers mangled the wrist of oppression and tyranny forever. This was indeed a decisive war. Despite their unmentionable numbers, the followers of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) stood their ground and became the symbols of steadfastness. Each soldier from the army of truth came out and fought like a valiant lion, including the six-month old Ali Asghar, whose martyrdom left the world in a shock and stupor of disbelief. Finally, when the grandson of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the beloved of Ali (a.s.) and Fatemah Zahra (s.a.) ventured into the battlefield, his heart was being blown to smithereens due to the scorching heat and unquenched thirst. Yet, his sword - the Zulfiqaar - sounded the death-knell for the forces of falsehood.

Ultimately, the symbol of truth-Husain Ibn Ali (a.s.) – attained martyrdom in a state of prostration in front of his Lord. Signs of divine wrath appeared in the universe. Black winds, solar eclipse, stars in broad daylight, inhabitants of the skies wept, the river Euphrates rose to unprecedented heights, mountains cleaved, skies turned red, angels trembled, stones and trees wept blood, and so on and so forth.

Allah – the Almighty – had granted such beauty and grandeur to this world. But mankind, on the instigation of Satan -their sworn enemy - converted it into a mourning widow to the extent that it started gasping for breath. The young beautiful bride was now converted into a wrinkled old lady on the verge of breathing her last. It was at this stage that the incident of Karbala and the patience of Imam Husain (a.s.) infused a new life in it. The beauty of earth, with Imam Husain's (a.s.) patience, gave the message of a fresh life. Its cheeks turned rosy again. Husain's

(a.s.) immeasurable patience gave a new invitation to human intellect and reason to act. Islamic realities gave a new mode to the principles of Awaiting. Without avenging the blood of Husain (a.s.) and the innocents, manifestation of divine justice was impossible. Hence, it was essential to wait for that determined time. Allah's voice was heard in the verses of the Holy Qur'an

"Surely, Allah enlivens the earth after its death." He - the High - also prophesied, "And We intend that those of Our servants who have been rendered weak in the earth, We shall make them the Imams and We shall make them the heirs."

The divine voice calling for retribution and awaiting sent shivers down the spines of the oppressors and despots. Now, the weakened servants of Allah - with the help of awaiting and retribution and in the shadows of a universal government - are painting the world with beautiful colors once again. The reins of this universal government are in the hands of the son of Imam Husain (a.s.) and the apple of Fatema's (s.a.) eye, whose mastership was announced by none lesser than the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) himself in Ghadeer-e-Khumm and who was born in 255 A.H.

It seems that since his birth, a new life has been infused in the spirit of awaiting. The believers are anticipating his arrival and awaiting his reappearance with springs of divine grace. Sad faces are now cheerful. When the fervor for action was assisted with divine grace, all obstacles on the right path were removed. The garden of autumn was doomed for destruction. Satanic forces – with their blood-sucking demons - have already turned towards the West in all their brazenness, sans shame or modesty. Shocking news of inhuman, murderous, barbaric and carnal deeds emanate on a regular basis from the West, the pseudo-pioneers and false claimants of the civilized world. Sometimes, we hear of nude beaches where wearing of clothes is absolutely prohibited and even a punishable offence, while on other occasions, human intellect is insulted by those adorning the highest chairs of justice and jurisprudence – granted to them by the Satan - when they declare the legality of gay and lesbian marriages. Men are being admitted in hospitals for change of sex surgeries and even going to the extent of becoming pregnant!!! Now, this corrupt and depraved Western world is on the verge of raining fire on its largely poor and underdeveloped Eastern counterpart.

On the other hand, an announcer is calling out from a pure land, "O Servants of Allah! Don't bother. Be calm. Don't lose your religion at any cost." This voice is of Husain's (a.s.) patience, which is warning us as well as comforting us that certainly Allah will fulfill His promise and the night of sins and vices shall pass away. The morn - with all its beauty-is nigh. The weakened servants of Allah will inherit the earth and their leader, the one who will avenge Husain's (a.s.) blood and who is presently occult and will soon reappear. He will fill the earth with justice and equity after it would have been fraught with injustice and inequity. Only after his reappearance will the interpretation and actualization of the verse,

"Surely, Allah enlivens the earth after its death" take place.

Today, the world is replete with oppression and injustice. Only the divine order is awaited and the reappearance of the Qaem (a.t.f.s.) is near.

When he (a.t.f.s.) reappears, the beauty of the world will be restored. Rather, it will become even more beautiful and gorgeous. While this world will emanate fragrance, the hearts of the

SHABAAN 1430 A.H.

believers will fall in love with their Lord. How we wish that we witness those times when the Yusuf of Zahra (a.s.) will bring back to earth its amazing beauty and with each step that he treads will resonate the sound of divine hymns. The reappearance will mark the advent of such noble souls that the rivers will sing in response to their footsteps. : The beauty and embellishments of the world after reappearance is beyond human intellect, thought and imagination. Yes, the only question that strikes man is, "When the world will become so beautiful on his arrival, what will be the state of his handsomeness and beauty?!"

The desire to see those beautiful times and the handsome personality of Imam-e-Zamanaa (a.t.f.s.) well up the eyes, tears roll out, the throat chokes and the tongue invokes, "O Allah! Accept just one drop of tear falling from my eye and grant me the honour of his visitation!!"

Salutations be on him who is His Proof upon His creatures and His guardian upon all the inhabitants of the earth!

Where Is The Enlivener Of The Signs Of Religion And Its People

The above phrase and sentences similar to it form a part of the prayer of Dua-e-Nudbah which we generally recite on Friday mornings. They illuminate our hearts with the remembrance of Imam (a.s.). The sentence itself is very beautiful and meaningful though it is a request. It poses the question 'Where is he?' in the impatience of one who is awaiting (intezaar). The recitor is restive, is concerned and weeping on the separation from the Imam (a.s.).

These beautiful sentences of supplication make the teachings of religion alive again. The phrases of dua reflect the concern of days passing without the realization of the Promise and this makes the recitor gloomy.

It is impossible to articulate the sentence in its entirety; rather we attempt a short summary for the readers.

It is a fact that the Almighty God has revealed the Holy Qur'an and sent His Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as a guide and salvation for mankind. The mantle of guidance was passed on to the pure Progeny (a.s.) after the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Attachment to their holy persona was a guarantee of salvation against all deviation and corruption.

But the 'Ummah' not only erred in protecting the religion but blatantly changed and altered it for their selfish material means and ends.

So, on one hand, there was Ali Ibne Abi Taalib (a.s.) who arranged the Holy Qur'an according to the will of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and did not leave his house till he had completed the tabulation of the Majestic Qur'an according to the teachings and testament of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

Then, he (a.s.) presented the completed work before the government of the time, which, due to its expediency, did not consider the Holy Qur'an tabulated and categorized by the 'Door of the City of Knowledge'.

On the other hand, the fountainhead of religious teachings and Divine recognitions were the sayings of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) had explained the Islamic Laws through his words and deeds during the entire span of 23 years of his Prophethood. Again due to its expediencies, the government of the time placed a ban on the narration of these traditions. Therefore, the traditions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) remained confined to the memories of the individual companions, which in due course were entombed in those hearts forever.

Correspondingly, the Ahle Bait (a.s.), who were the protectors and the teachers of the religion, were placed under perpetual house arrest. The people whom Allah and His Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had gifted all the sciences of religion and Divine recognition and made them the center of all teachings, were effectively sidelined. Varied restrictions were imposed upon them.

However, in times of difficulty when they had no solution, they consulted the Ahle Bait (a.s.) out of sheer necessity.

Please consider the following:

The problems in human existence are never limited. Man faces newer challenges every day. Similarly, the teachings of Islam are not limited to some laws but cover the entire gamut of life. There is no facet of life wherein Islam law is not present.

As there were restrictions imposed upon the centers of Islamic knowledge and learning, people started acting upon their likes and dislikes in the matters of daily consideration. People started using their limited knowledge for clarifying the Holy Qur'an.

It is pertinent to note that most of these individuals had spent the bulk of their lives in disbelief and polytheism. They had spent a long time in ignorant beliefs and rituals and these had become a part of their lifestyle. When man becomes habitual to something, he does not pay attention to its immorality. So, it was impossible for them not to be affected by these old practices.

Since these people were extremely pious in the eyes of the people and were adorned with the title of companionship, the populace accepted all of their words as religion. The resultant effect was the incorporation of mortal views and ideas in the elucidation and explanation of religion. This change was a gradual process and hence nobody realized it. A time came when these things were accepted as part of religion.

So, the answer to the question, 'Does the teachings of the religion of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) require a revival?' is abundantly obvious. .

Now, is there anyone who can give it a fresh lease of life? It is apparent, that every person searches the answer to the question 'Why has the original effect of this pure faith diminished?' Allama Iqbal has in his poetry lamented this sad state of affairs... why is this happening?

The answer is thus. The effect was in the Islam brought by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) voiced by his infallible speech and presented to the people devoid of any change. The purity in Islam presented it tremendous effect.

The religion that we practice today, maybe in part Divine and in part the exegesis of human thought. If the religion was the same pure Islam brought by Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), then there would never be such variance in ideology. These very differences indicate the lack of purity and the prevalence of amalgamation. For, the proof of the Divinity of Qur'an:

'Do they not then meditate on the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy'

(Surah Nisaa (4): Verse 82)

It is an undisputable fact that there has been adulteration in religion, but where and to what extent is still not identified. A parameter or test is required for judging what is untainted and what is mixed.

The Almighty has, in every era, kept an Infallible Imam (a.s.) as a check for what is true and what is false. The governments kept them under constant imprisonment or under guard so that they were beyond the reach of the commonality.

When Allah grants permission for the reappearance of Hazrat Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), this standard for truth and falsehood will become clear. He is infallible and possesses the true revealed religion as expounded by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). He is the inheritor of the Glorious Qur'an. When he reappears and presents Islam, the people will exclaim, 'This is a new Islam, a different religion. The reason for it is that people would be habituated to the religion adulterated with human thoughts. The faith explained by Imam (a.t.f.s.) will appear different in concurrence. Islam will not be new; rather, it would be cleansed of all additives.

Deviation in Views

One of the problems faced by Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) is the ideological deviation of the people. It is very difficult for a person to forgo an idea that he has instilled, nurtured and has fought for its establishment and survival. This conundrum will not be faced by the polytheists who will adopt the alluring ideals of Islam with promptness. They cannot support their corrupt thoughts through Qur'an and traditions.

Nay, these will be Muslim scholars who have nurtured such ideas in their minds struggled for their establishment, invited people towards them and argued in their favour with Qur'an and traditions. These very scholars will provide tremendous opposition to Imam (a.t.f.s.).

Such people are of three types.

- 1) The materialistic scholars
- 2) The wealthy
- 3) The aristocrats of pseudo-Islamic governments.

These are the very people whose deviant ideals and notions would hold no value after the reappearance.

Imam Sadeq (a.s.) has elucidated this fact thus:

"When our Qaem (a.t.f.s.) appears, he will receive more tribulations from the ignorant people and more severe than what the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had received from the ignorant people of paganism." I said: "How is that?" He said: "The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) came to people while they worshiped sculptured stone and wood whereas when al-Qaem (a.t.f.s.) comes to people, they will protest against him by interpreting the Book of Allah according to their fancies."

(Al-Ghaybah of Al-Numani Pg. 297)

It is apparent that the entire argument will ensue due to the incomplete and misconstrued knowledge of the people. To submit in front of the Imam (a.t.f.s.) is to surrender all their created personality and imagined position before him. It is never easy to give up worldly wealth and power.

But, that era would be totally different. The people of that time would not have permission of dissension and discord and the people declining to leave their corrupt notions would have to face strict punishment.

An important supplication which sheds light on the above mentioned topics is the salawat of Abul Hasan Zarraab Isfahani. This salawat had been taught to him by Imam Asr (a.t.f.s.) himself

in Makkah. Sayyed Ibne Taoos (a.r.) comments about the Salawat: 'Even if one were unable to perform the remaining exhortations after the Asr prayers on Friday, one should not abandon recitation of this salawat, for Allah has made us aware of its wondrous importance'. This salawat is extremely important with regards to concepts. Some of the wordings of the salawat are thus:

O Allah! Put back, through him in original form, that which has been uprooted from Thy religion, put in order again through him the confusion created in Thy Book. Make clear, through him, the distortions made in Thy commandments. So that Thy religion regains its true spirit, on his hands, blooming and full of tenderness, progressive, up to date, liberated, saviour, without doubts and uncertainties, without suspicions and obscurities, there being no falsehood lingering around him, nor any subversive activities in his presence.

Envisioning the changing face of true religion, the Holy Imams (a.s.), much before the Occultation of Imam Wali Asr (a.t.f.s.) (Who is the enlivener of the signs of religion) taught us supplications for recitation. They exhorted the recitation of supplications and have gifted numerous entreaties.

An important prayer in this respect is the supplication taught by Imam Reza (a.s.) to his companion Yunus Ibn Abd al-Rahman. This supplication has been noted in the a'mal of Friday. It has also found mention in the rituals of the Cellar (Sardaab). Shaikh Abbas Qummi (a.r.) has referred to it in the chapter of the Ziyarat of Imam Asr (a.t.f.s.). It is a supplication for the safety of Imam (a.t.f.s.). It carries great meaning in its phrases, is a cause for the benevolence of Imam (a.t.f.s.) and has great effect.

The part of the prayer concerning our topic is thus:

(O Allah)! Honour the believers through him. Enliven the traditions of the Prophets through him. Give the laws of the Messengers, a new lease of life until the religion has (itself) returned to life. (A religion) which is new, fresh, pure, absolutely correct devoid of mistake or innovation.

Reflection upon the phrases makes it clear that religion in its present form is not uncontaminated and pure. Intentionally or unintentionally, influences which are not part of religion have been introduced into it.

Also, the real standard for truth and falsehood is veiled from our vision. General contact with him is unachievable. Hence, differentiation between pure and adulterated has become very difficult. Yes, when he reappears on Allah's command, presents true Islam and explains the exegesis of the Majestic Qur'an, we can then judge what type of faith we had possessed.

The fortunate of that time would leave the ideologies, abandon their old traditions and submit to him completely. We should always pray for achieving such submission. Otherwise, the example of the Jews is evident for us who waited for the coming of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) but turned into his bitter opponents after his appointment and that opposition continues till the present day.

Completion (Perfection) of Intellects

After his reappearance, not only will Islam shine in its pristine glory but the intellects will also be perfected due to Allah's munificence.

SHABAAN 1430 A.H.

It has been reported from Imam Muhammad Baqer (a.s.):

When our Qaem (a.t.f.s.) appears, he will place his hand upon the heads of people, then the intellects would unify due to it and their wisdoms would be perfected.

When the intellects are perfected, the reality of the world would be clear and evident for them. The completion of wisdom is the perfection of morals. The purified souls will accept readily when the religion of Islam would be presented in its perfect form. The pure and chaste Islam will spread universally.

People of that time will accept Islam voluntarily and not due to force (due to their unambiguous recognition of Divine religion).

Appearance of Imam (a.t.f.s.) will herald the implementation of the teachings of Islam. Prayers will gain a new flavour; supplications to Allah will be with His true recognition and without the shadow of polytheism.

May Allah (High and Mighty Be He) hasten the reappearance of my master Hujjat Ibn alHasan al-Askari (a.t.f.s.) and include us from among his supporters and companions and make us understand the reality of religion.

Aameen!

Fulfillment of Divine Promise

Allah is Beneficent and Merciful upon His servants. None can surpass Him in His love and compassion. The love of a mother - inspite of its intensity and enormity - cannot match the mercy of Allah. When the love of a mother cannot see her child in any kind of difficulty, then how can it be expected that the infinite love of Allah for His servants will see them in the fire of Hell?

Highest Creation

Allah has referred to humans as the "best of creations". He has honoured thus making them superior to all His creations. Allah has made human beings extremely balanced and equitable and has made provisions to fulfill the smallest of their needs. On one hand, Allah has granted man with the infinite power of "freedom of choice" while on the other hand He has also bestowed man with the great bounty of "intellect" so that man can exercise his freedom reasonably. If He has given man the spark of "carnal desires" then He has also blessed man with "complete guidance". If there is Iblees - the Satan -to incite the desires and ignite the flames of animal instincts, then He also sent a series of Prophets (a.s.) and Imams (a.s.) for the guidance of mankind.

Since Allah is aware of the inner thoughts and nature of man, He made a complete and precise system for the guidance of man. The first person He sent in this world was His Prophet. So that no one would have any excuse and say "If there was a guide for us, we would have been on the right path." The one who chooses to tread the path of falsehood would not have any argument against Allah. The person would be solely responsible for his own destruction.

Freedom of Choice

Allah has created man free. Freedom and choice make sense only when two (or more) options are available, the path of goodness and the path of evil. If only one path is available, it is illogical to say "You are free to choose as you like". The Holy Qur'an has presented this point in a lucid manner:

"And We showed him both the ways"

(Surah Balad: Verse 10)

Or at another place it says,

"Surely, We have showed him the path. Now he can be thankful or he can deny (our bounties)"

(Surah Dahr: Verse 3)

No doubt, Allah has given freedom to man. But He has also declared that He is Just. Thus, He will reward His good servants and punish the oppressors. Hence, He has made this world as a place of examination and the Hereafter as a place of accounting. So, no doubt man is free, but this freedom is conditional. Man will have to undergo trials & tribulations in this world and there is no escape from it.

Examination

Thus, if there are bounties & freedom of choice, then there is examination too. On the basis of his actions, either man acquires a lofty status or falls in the pit of humiliation and disgrace. Allah honoured Satan due to his excessive worship. He gave him the privilege to be among the angels. Satan was made of fire while the angels were made of light. Thus, Allah raised the position of Satan. However, the time of examination arrived. Allah commanded all His angels to prostrate before His creation which He had made from clay. The angels bowed in prostration straight away. Due to their worship, they were perfect servants of Allah and were truly obedient to all His commands. For them, the command of Allah was more important than the creature made of clay before which they had to bow. Due to their spontaneous act of obedience they were successful in their examination. Thus, Allah raised their rank and included them among His proximate angels. However, Satan - who was made of fire while the creature was made of clay - saw the external qualities and refused to submit before the command of Allah. Allah threw him out from the gathering of angels and forsook him on the lowly earth. The Holy Qur'an narrates the rebellion and crude language of Satan in the presence of Almighty Allah, when he was removed from Paradise.

'He said, "O iblees! What excuse do you have for not bowing down?" He said, "I'm not such that I should bow down in front of a mortal whom You have made from black mud and given him shape" He said, "Then get out from here. Surely you are 'rajeem' and surely upon you is a curse till the day of Judgment." He said, "My Lord! Give me respite till the time when they shall be raised" He said, "Surely you are from the ones who is reprieved till the known time." He said, "My Lord! Since You have made life evil for me, I will adorn for them the life on the earth & I will most certainly cause all of them to deviate. Except the one ones who are pure" He said, "This is the right path with Me. Surely you don't have authority over My servants except those who follow you from the misguided ones"

(Surah Hijr: Verses 32 - 42)

A similar conversation between Allah & Satan is mentioned in Surah Suad wherein Satan says to Allah

"My Lord, I swear by You! Most certainly I will deviate Your servants".

(Surah Suad: 82)

The Satanic conspiracy

These verses amply demonstrate that Satan desires to deviate everyone and make them his companions in hell.

"Deviation" means to go away from Allah, to wander away from the religion of Allah, to forsake the 'friends' of Allah and to abandon the divinely appointed Imams (a.s.). It implies non-adherence to divine laws and considering the permitted as prohibited and vice-versa. In short, all those things that deprive man of Allah's guidance and mercy can be termed as "deviation". Deviation entails the non-establishment of divine government in this world, preoccupation of Allah's creatures in oppression - instead of righteousness - and opposing divine commands. It is the involvement in polytheism instead of Divine Unity, denial instead of submission and hypocrisy in place of sincere belief.

Swearing on divinity itself, the accursed Satan has firmly decided to misguide all men. He aims to spread deviation in every corner of the earth. Such is the scheme of the Satan.

Precedent set by Allah

Allah too made a comprehensive arrangement for man's guidance. Regarding the Holy Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.a.), the Holy Qur'an declares:

"Say: O people! Surely I am the Apostle of Allah to you all"

(Surah A'raaf : Verse 158)

"This Qur'an has been revealed to me that with it I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches"

(Surah An'aam : Verse 19)

"And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds"

(Surah Anbiya : Verse 107)

"He it is Who sent His Apostle with guidance and the religion of truth, that He might cause it to prevail over all religions, though the polytheists may be averse."

(Surah Taubah : Verse 33)

Likewise, there are many more verses. Hence, while Satan wishes to deviate one and all, Allah desires to establish the preeminence of the religion of Islam throughout the world. The difference is that Satan is using legitimate & illegitimate means to achieve his aim. Killing, plundering, falsehood, accusations, and slander -he is indeed capable of anything. The Divine representatives, on the other hand, do not trespass the boundaries of the shariah for achieving their divine goals. They are steadfastly attached to the divine commandments for attaining their objectives. They always maintain the highest standards of morals and ethics in all their dealings.

The Triumph of Truth

Another evident and manifest difference between the divine representatives and the army of Satan is that despite all problems and calamities, the divine representatives are calm and unruffled while Satan and his allies are always agitated and restless. This difference is emphatically highlighted in the following Qur'anic declaration:

"And the final end is for the pious"

(Surah A'raaf : Verse 128)

Thus, finally success will be for those who are pious and virtuous. The outcome of the age old battle of guidance and deviation will result in the evident victory of guidance.

Apparently the Satan has got an upper hand until now and is manipulating the people. This is because the Divine Representatives have always invited the people towards religion with freedom of choice. They desire that the true religion should be accepted by all by exercising

their own free-will and preference without the involvement of any force or compulsion. It is extremely difficult for an individual to tread the path of guidance voluntarily and to overlook his likes and dislikes for the sake of Allah. But if man were to realise the importance & enormity of this act, he would certainly consider these difficulties as blessings.

There is No Compulsion

The world is a collection of causes and effects. Everything runs its course like a seed which gradually blossoms into a tree. Barring exceptions, the world is not governed by miracles. Allah could have forcibly made everyone tread the path of guidance and none would ever be deviated. But Allah has destined that man should traverse the path of guidance as well as deviation by his own intent..

Satan adopted the path of rebellion right from the beginning. If he would have felt any remorse for his action and sought forgiveness, it was possible that the merciful Lord would have excused him. He abandoned the approach of seeking forgiveness and embraced the path of rebellion and conflict. He created problems for divine representatives right from the beginning. He ignited the fire of jealousy in the heart of Qabeel - provoking him to kill Habel. He continued his rebellious approach inciting Firaun, Hamaan, Namrud, Qarun, Abu Lahab, Abu Jahl, Akramah, Abu Sufyan, Bani Umayyah, Bani Abbasand so on. All of them had a common agenda: "Extinguish the light of Allah". If the sun of guidance were to set, the darkness of misguidance would spread. The enemies of guidance would then get a free hand to multiply their deviations.

They killed the divine representatives. Finally, the chain of divine Prophets (a.s.) concluded in the most beloved and illustrious persona of the Holy Prophet of Islam, Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.w.a.).

Satan tried his level best to extinguish this illustrious light of guidance in Makkah itself. All the tribes jointly schemed to assassinate the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). However, Allah foiled all their plans. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was saved from the devious disbelievers who had besieged him. He (s.a.w.a.) had barely settled in Madinah when he was confronted with a series of battles. This sequence continued till the very end of his earthly life.

Facing opposition from the polytheists and the Jews as well as tackling the scheming hypocrites in his own community, Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) bravely established the divine religion of Islam and finally conveyed the divine message by declaring the mastership (Wilayat) and absolute leadership (Imamat) of Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) after him (s.a.w.a.) at Ghadeer-e-Khumm. This declaration marked the completion of his efforts in the propagation of guidance. In this manner, he (s.a.w.a) concluded his messengership and established Ali (a.s.) as his successor. The verse of "completion of religion" in the Holy Qur'an is a living testimony to the fact that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) completed his responsibility of conveying Allah's message to the people. The announcement of the mastership of Hazrat Ali (a.s.), in addition to completing the religion also became a guarantee for its protection till the day of Judgment.

This announcement crushed the hopes of Satan and all the enemies of Allah and His religion. This was more severe than the announcement of Prophethood as then they had hoped that with the conclusion of Holy Prophet's (s.a.w.a.) life even his message will be gradually

forgotten. The proclamation of Ali's (a.s.) leadership dashed all their hopes. They were impatient and waiting for the death of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Intentionally, they ignored the clear and forceful instructions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) for joining the army of Usama. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had informed Ali (a.s.) about a fresh set of conspiracies that would begin after his (s.a.w.a.) death. Ali (a.s.) was well aware of the series of oppression to follow the demise of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). The hidden hatred would manifest itself. It was however crucial to make the people submit to guidance with their own free-will. Hence, forcing himself upon them was totally ruled out. The people, ignoring the clear instructions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), embraced the world and its adornments that were offered to them by the accursed Satan. For the sake of these material benefits they martyred Allah's divine proofs one after another.

Safeguarding the Divine Religion

For the purpose of continuing divine guidance till the Day of Judgment, Allah appointed twelve guides after the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). The first is Ameerul Momineen Ali (a.s.) and the last Hazrat Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). The enemies of Allah and his religion never allowed anyone of them to live freely. Allah had appointed the twelve Imams (a.s.) but these worldly worshippers and enemies of divine light martyred eleven of them. The Day of Judgment was still to arrive. Hence, Allah protected the last guiding sun from His enemies by placing him in Occultation.

Allah does not desire force and compulsion in any matter. Also it is not His practice to use miracles every time. Hence, it was necessary to protect the divine guide and to exhaust the evil strategies of enemies and at the same time gradually prepare the people to support the Universal Government.

This idea can also be elaborated as follows:

1. Allah revealed the religion of Islam for the guidance and success of mankind.
2. He appointed Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as His messenger and declared his (s.a.w.a.) prophethood as Universal and Final.
3. The deputation of Prophets (a.s.) and the promulgation of divine laws were with the aim of establishing justice throughout the world so that none is oppressed. A person should not oppress his own self by adhering to satanic ideologies or others by subjugating them to tyranny and injustice.
4. Allah - in His Infinite Wisdom - has made Hazrat Hujjat Ibn al-Hasan al-Askari (a.t.f.s.) responsible for the establishment of complete justice and equity throughout the world and for the eradication of all forms of injustice. Hence, we find traditions mentioning about him (a.t.f.s.) thus: "He will fill the earth with equity and justice as it would be fraught with oppression and tyranny."
5. Allah desires that the people should voluntarily prepare the grounds for the establishment of an Islamic government and He does not want to compel them for this.
6. In the last 1400 years, Allah sent guides for the prosperity of mankind. All of them were alike in their excellences, knowledge and understanding. They were the evident chiefs of the entire

creation. However, the people did not value them and failed to give them their due respect. Had that been the case, Ali (a.s.) would not have been forced by his army to recall Maalik Ashtar when they were on the threshold of victory. Had the people given them (a.s.) their due respect, Ali (a.s.) would not have been deprived of his divine right to caliphate. Had they honoured the Imams (a.s.), Imam Hasan (a.s.) would not be coerced into signing a treaty with Muawiyah, nor a scoundrel like Yazeed would ever become the Caliph and Imam Husain (a.s.) martyred mercilessly. The tyrant Haroon Rashid would never have arrested Imam Musa Kazim (a.s.) nor Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) and Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) been exiled from Madinah and forced to "live under house arrest. No one would have had the guts to destroy the holy shrines of Jannatul Baqi & Saamarraa. Thus, had the people accepted the authority of these arks of salvation, true guides, protectors of divine religion, pointers to the straight path and the equivalent of the Holy Qur'an, and had they accorded them the status and respect due to them, the oppressors would never have dared to execute them. But alas!

7. Allah in the light of His divine wisdom decreed the number of guides after the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) to be only twelve. But the ungrateful people did not value their presence and martyred eleven of them.

8. The promise which Allah had made to His beloved Prophet (s.a.w.a.) that He would make his religion supreme over all others in the world was still not fulfilled.

9. Hence, the present scenario is:

a. Either this last Imam (a.s.) should also be made apparent so that the people kill him as they had done with the previous eleven imams (a.s.), OR

b. The system of this world should be changed for the sake of this last Proof. Then, if the people attack him with the sword it would cause him no harm. If he is poisoned, it would be futile. If arrows are shot towards him they will be in vain. Such a change in the universal system would render the free-will of the people ineffective and compulsion is against the practice of Allah, OR

c. This last proof should be taken out of this world. Then there would be utter chaos in the entire system of the world as the presence of a Divine Proof on the face of the earth is a must for its continued existence, OR

d. This Proof is allowed to exist on this very earth. The Divine system will be protected. The Proof lives in Occultation without being recognized by the people. He continues to stay among the people and meet them but his identity would remain concealed. This arrangement should continue till the people out of their own free-will are ready to accept his commands. This arrangement is called "Occultation" Khwaja Nasir Al-Tusi (r.a.) in his book 'Tairidul Eteqaad' mentions this reality in a very beautiful manner as follows:

"His existence is Allah's bounty, his sovereignty is another grace and his Occultation is due to us"

- Hence, Occultation of Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) was a need of the time. Since, Allah's knowledge is all encompassing; He knew that a sudden Occultation would make the people go astray from the path of true religion. On account of His infinite mercy and to prepare the grounds for Occultation, every Imam (a.s.) – right from Holy Prophet. (s.a.w.a.) till Imam Mahdi (a.s.) - has spoken about this great event (of Occultation). Allah decreed the mention of

Occultation along with the Imam of the last Proof. This would ensure the acceptance of Occultation by the believers. Therefore, traditions mention abundantly about his (a.s.) Imam of the last Proof as well as Occultation and even the conditions during Occultation.

These traditions also specify the two types of Occultation:

1. The Minor Occultation and
2. The Major Occultation.

The Minor Occultation is remembered as '**Ghaibat-e-Sughra**' and the Major Occultation is called '**Ghaibat-e-Kubra**'.

The characteristic of the minor Occultation is that though the common people could not have direct access to the Imam (a.s.), some special deputies were appointed by Imam (a.s.) who were mediators between Imam (a.s.) and the people. The period of the minor Occultation was for 69 years, from 260 A.H. till 329 A.H.

The Major Occultation started in 329 A.H. when the last special deputy Ali Ibn Muhammad Seymouri (r.a.) expired, which continues till today.

We sincerely pray that our good deeds contribute to the reduction in the length of the Major Occultation and our beloved Imam (a.t.f.s.) reappears.

In this Major Occultation though Imam (a.t.f.s.) is hidden from our eyes but he does not neglect us. He protects us despite our deficiencies in fulfilling his rights.

Imam (a.t.f.s.) has not forsaken us in this major Occultation. He (a.t.f.s.) has entrusted us to the religious scholars of the religion of Ahle Bait (a.s.). Finally, it is important to mention that:

Ultimately a day will definitely come when the Major Occultation will conclude. The descendent of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) will reappear. Brave and sincere companions will assist him in establishing the government of Allah on this earth. The flag of Tauheed will flutter everywhere and "Polytheism" will be decimated. Tyranny will be routed. Truth and justice will be widespread. None will have to bear even an iota of oppression.

Islam will triumph over all other religions and ideologies. Centuries of efforts of Satan and his companions will come to naught. All his schemes will fail. Truth will be victorious, and the Islam of Ghadeer will prevail. Satan will finally be executed. People will then realize the true Divine promise.

"In the hope of that enlightened day whose dawn is near, tell the heart- don't fear"

Though there were a number of representatives of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) in the minor Occultation, only four of them were privileged with a special status. These were the most reliable and trustworthy in the eyes of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.). They are referred to as the "Nuwwaab-e-Arba'a" : - The Four Special Representatives.

The Major Occultation began after the demise of the fourth representative Ali Ibn Muhammad Seymouri (r.a.). In the Major Occultation, Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) does not have any special representative. In this period, Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) has delegated this responsibility to the respected and learned "Fuqaha" and "Mujtahids". Thus, today it is our responsibility to respect and honor these "Fuqaha" and "Mujtahids".

SHABAAN 1430 A.H.

May Allah grant us the grace to be included among the sincere servants of Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.)!

May He send His infinite blessings on the Holy Ahle Bait (a.s.) as only He can send!

May He enumerate us among the slaves of the holy Ahle Bait (a.s.)!

May He grant us the opportunity of preparing the ground for the early reappearance of Qaem e Ale Muhammad (a.t.f.s.)!

Exegesis Of Ziyarate Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) On The Day Of Friday

(Continued from the previous issue of AlQaem Al-Muntazar, special issue Shabaan, 1429)

"Salutations be upon you O the Ship of Deliverance"

From the aspect of Arabic syntax, the phrase "O the Ship of Deliverance" (**Ya Safinatan Najaah**) is compound addressee (Munaadaa-e-Murakkab). The word "Ship" (Safinah) is therefore Mansoob. And since the word "Deliverance" (**Najaah**) is Muzaafun Ilaih it is Majroor. In this phrase, our discussion will mostly be concerned with these two words of "**Safinah**" and "**Najaah**"...

Safinah means a boat, an ark or a ship and is derived from the word safn which means to uproot a thing or skim its surface. Since a ship parts the surface of the water, it is called safinah. This is the elucidation of Raagheb Isfahani and the same has been endorsed in "Aqrab al-Mawaared". This expression has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an four times.

Najaah means deliverance or liberation from a thing. From the grammatical aspect, this word had been used in the Holy Qur'an in the forms of Sulaasi Mujarrad and Baab-elfaal and Baab-e-Taf'eel. This word itself is the infinitive of Baab-e-Taf'eel.

Let us now discuss the meanings conveyed by Safinatun Najah (Ark of Deliverance.)

A. The Pure Ahle Bait (a.s.) are the Ark of Deliverance

In a famous saying, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) confirms:

"The example of my Ahlebait (a.s.) is like Noah's Ark. One who boards it will be saved and one who forsakes it will be drowned."

Scholars of all muslim sects have recorded this tradition and are unanimous about its reliability and authenticity. The following scholars from Ahle Sunnat have narrated this tradition in their books:

- i. Shaikh al-Islam Hammuee (or Hamveeni) in the first chapter of his book "Faraaed al-Simtain".
- ii. Khateeb Khaarazmi in his "Manaaqib" p.252.
- iii. Haakem Neshapuri in "Mustadrak al Saheehain" Vol 3,p.151.
- iv. Khateeb Baghdadi in "Tareekh-e-Baghdadi", Vol 12,p.91.
- v. Mohibuddin Tabari in "Riyaz al-Nazarah" Imam Shaafei in "Rashfatus Sadi" on page 24 has cited some poetic verses which convey the following meaning:

"When I saw the people drowning in the ocean of misguidance and ignorance, I took the name of the Almighty Allah and boarded the ark of deliverance which is the family of the last Prophet (s.a.w.a.)"

For more details, esteemed readers may refer to "Kitab-e-Ghadeer" of Allamah Amini (r.a.), "Al Muedda" of Allamah Najmuddin Askari (r.a.) and "Ehqaqul Haqq" of Shaheede-Saalis Qazi Nurullah Shushtari (r.a.),vol 9.p.270-292.

The abovementioned tradition clarifies that all the 12 successors which comprise the Holy Prophet's (s.a.w.a.) family are the ark of deliverance. One who fastens unto them will be successful. One who forsakes them will drown in the turbulent oceans of misguidance, rebellion, ignorance and irreligiousness.

Ibn Abbas narrates that they were sitting in the Prophet's mosque with Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) after returning from the last Hajj. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said;

"Know that Allah has obliged the religious ones by guiding them through me and I obliged the religious ones by guiding them to Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.). Ali (a.s.) is my cousin and the father of my progeny. One who follows him will achieve deliverance and the one who turns away from him will be misguided."
(Kitab ul Fazaal, Kita bur Rawziyah, Pg 146-147.)

B. What is meant by boarding the Ark of Deliverance?

Let us address this question to the City of Knowledge which is personified in the personality of the Last Divine Prophet (s.a.w.a.). He (s.a.w.a.) has said; "One who desires to board the ship of deliverance should submit to the mastership and leadership of Ali (a.s.) after me, bear enmity with his enemies and after him should follow all the guides in his progeny."

Here the meaning of boarding the ship of deliverance is explained thus:

- i. Accepting the leadership and mastership of Ameerul Momineen Ali (a.s.) and the other Imams (a.s.) from the Ahle Bait (a.s.)
- ii. To hate their enemies
- iii. Try to emulate the Imams (a.s.) as much as possible
- iv. To be disciplined in following divine rules and laws. How is it possible that a man claims to be a lover of Ahle Bait (a.s.) but follows their enemies in his actions?!!

Esteemed readers are requested to carefully study the incident of Prophet Nuh (a.s.) to understand the similarities between the nation of Prophet Nuh (a.s.) and us (the nation of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)) in this regard.

Let us also compare the compatibility of our actions and character with that of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and his Progeny (a.s.). This should be a sufficient indicator to know whether we have really boarded the ark of deliverance?

"Salutations be upon you O the spring of life"

Ayn refers to eye or spring. Raagheb Isfahani in 'Al-Mufradaat' mentions that ayn originally refers to eye and incidentally to spring due to its similarities with the eye. Just as tears flow from the eye, water sprouts from the spring. Here, the word ayn is used in the meaning of spring.

Hayaat refers to life. In Arabic literature, like Najaah, even Haayat is the infinitive of Baab-e-Tafeel and means existence itself. Real life in Arabic is termed as Hayavan as is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an:

"And as for the next abode, that most surely is the (real) life"

(Surah Ankabut: Verse 64)

Common usage has reduced the term to the meaning of regular life.

However, Allamah Majlisi (a.r.) mentions: "There are two aspects to a man's life: the physical life which depends upon his animate soul and the eternal life which depends upon his belief, knowledge and spiritual perfections. This eternal life is the cause of eternal bliss. In His Divine Book, Allah - the Almighty-has mentioned the disbelievers as dead, while the believers who have apparently left this mortal world as alive due to the perfection of their belief in this world. The Holy Qur'an says:

"And do not speak of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead; nay, (they are) alive, but you do not perceive."

(Surah Baqarah: Verse 154)

At another place it is mentioned: "We will most certainly make him live a happy life"

(Surah Nahl: Verse 97)

And the disbelievers while alive have been declared dead in the following verse:

"(O Prophet) Surely you do not make the dead to hear"

(Surah Nami: Verse 80)

The rights of parents are considered very important as they have a crucial role in the training and upbringing of their children in this mortal life. Their upbringing provides strength to human life. (Human existence is unimaginable without parents as they are the apparent cause of his life)

In the same context, the right of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the infallible Imams (a.s.) on human existence is from both the aspects (physical as well as the spiritual). They are the real cause of all physical creation. It is due to them that the creatures enjoy the pleasure of existence and receive sustenance. It is due to them that the clouds rain water and calamities are averted. They are the real cause of all other causes. With regards to the eternal and spiritual life, it is they who are its greatest example. It is due to the guidance of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the purified Imams (a.s.) that other people are guided. Others extract enlightenment from their light. It is through their ocean of knowledge that Allah-grants a pure life to the people which in turn guides them to perpetuity."

(Behaar-ul-Anwaar, Vol 36, Pg 13)

"Salutations be upon you and may Allah bless you and your chaste and pure progeny"

The word Salla is from Salava. From the grammatical aspect it is the first scale of conjugation of Baab-e-Tafeel (i.e. - singular, masculine and in the third person). It means 'He blessed'. Often, this first scale of conjugation of past tense is also used in prayer. For example, when we say 'Rahemahullaho' we mean 'May Allah shower his blessings upon him' although Rahema is the first scale of conjugation in past tense which means that "he was merciful. Similarly the reciter of Ziyarat through these words is conveying a prayer for blessings upon al-Imam al-Hujjat (a.t.f.s.) and is also praying to Allah to shower His mercies on all the members of the Ahle Bait (a.s.).

Like the word Salla the word salawat is also from Salava. This word salawat is commonly used in our religious gatherings. The purified Ahle Bait (a.s.) are such personalities upon whom Allah, His angels and other holy personalities also send salutations as is mentioned in the following Qur'anic verse:

"Surely Allah and His angels bless the Prophet; O you who believe! call for (Divine) blessings on him and salute him with a (becoming) salutation"

Over here it is possible that a question arises in some suspecting minds that in this verse, blessings and salutations are sent only upon the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and there is no mention of the Ahle Bait (a.s.). The reply to this question is found in the book 'Sahih Bukhari' which is considered to be the most reliable book by the Ahle Sunnat. The following tradition has been recounted in the book:

Once the Holy Prophet (salutations be upon him) was asked: "O Messenger of Allah! How shall we send salutation upon you?" He *replied*, "*You say: Salutations be upon him and his progeny*"

This tradition clarifies that without saluting his progeny the salutation upon the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) is not complete. But may Allah curse bias and prejudice! Though Bukhari has narrated the tradition, a second look at it will betray the fact that at the beginning of this tradition, while mentioning the name of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.), he just mentions 'salutations be upon him' and completely ignores sending salutations on his progeny. A clear evidence of embezzling the rights of the Holy Progeny (a.s.)!!!

The merits of sending salutations upon the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and his progeny (a.s.) are so much that this brief article cannot do justice to them. We will therefore suffice by narrating just one tradition. Those desirous of details may refer to other books. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) says:

"O Ali, do you know what I heard from the angels about you when I went on Me'raj? I heard that they are getting their wishes fulfilled by supplicating through you. They are acquiring nearness to the Almighty on the basis of your love. They were considering salutations upon me and you as the best form of worship. They were reciting the following supplication: O Lord! Purify us through the blessings upon the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and his pure progeny"

(Tafsir e Imam Hasan Askari(a.s.), Pg 30-32, Behaar-ul Anwaar, Vol 41,Pg 19.1.12)

Thus, blessings upon the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and his pure progeny are a source of increasing purity even in the infallible angels. We as sinners, who are entirely immersed in sins, are more in need of sending salutations upon them.

Some people consider it below their dignity to send salutations in a loud voice in religious gatherings. The traditions instruct us that we should recite salutations loudly as this act dissolves hypocrisy from our hearts.

(Al-Kaafi Vol 2,Pg 493)

The words taiyyebeen and tahereen have also been employed in this phrase of the Ziyarat, indicating the immense purity of Ahle Bait (a.s.). The family of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) comprises of such holy personalities who are absolutely pure right from the stage of their luminous existence and will always continue to be so. Their purity has been announced in the

Holy Qur'an in the verse of purification (Ayat-e- Tatheer) (Al- Kaafi Vol 2,Pg 493). Not only are these personalities themselves pure, but are the very source of purity.

Some people are of the view that Ahle Bait (a.s.) were purified only after the revelation of the verse of purification. Such suggestions are not just baseless but also prejudiced. It's like saying that Allah became great only after the declaration of Takbir by the Muslims!

May Allah grant us the good fortune of benefiting from this Ziyarat in this world as well as the hereafter. May we be enumerated among the helpers and supporters of Allah's Proof, the son of Hazrat-e-Zahra (s.a.).

Reappearance and the Perfection of Knowledge and Understanding

Unlike other creatures, the desire and inclination towards development and perfection found in human beings is what sets them apart. For this very reason, man is termed as "the best of the creatures". Allah sent heavenly Books and Messengers (a.s.) to guide humans in their endeavour to achieve excellence and attain knowledge and perfection.

We can find various means for human perfection and advancement. There exist wise and steadfast guides who help men in their efforts to scale the heights of virtuousness. History of mankind bears witness to the fact that ignorance regarding the proper means of progress and improvement or hatred and animosity towards the same has prevented civilisations from attaining perfection. Not only did man turn away his face from this source, but also put an end to it, as and when it acted as a hindrance to achieve his personal and selfish aims. The Prophets (a.s.) invited them towards perfection under the shade of divine teachings. They called them towards worshipping One God, establishing equity and justice, preserving others' rights and allowing others to live in peace and comfort. However they were falsified, exiled and killed in the most callous manner. The sacred head of Hazrat Zakariyyah (a.s.) was cut as under by a sharp saw while Hazrat Yahya (a.s.) was killed mercilessly. In a few days of Hazrat Musa (a.s.)'s absence, the tribe of Bani Israel was about to kill Hazrat Haroon (a.s.). The Jews were bent on crucifying and slaying Hazrat Eesaa (a.s.). Similarly the last of the Prophets, Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) had to bear untold hardships during his propagation of Islam and no sooner did he leave for his heavenly abode, his progeny (a.s.) was oppressed and deprived of their right. This tyranny continued till Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) was severely wounded by Ibn Muljim (I.a.) in Masjid-e-Kufa. Moreover Imam Hasan (a.s.) & Imam Husain (a.s.) and other eleven Imams (a.s.) were also martyred. However Allah, due to his infinite mercy and to continue the mission of Prophets (a.s.) i.e. of human perfection, put the responsibility of guidance of human beings on the shoulders of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) but in order to protect His Proof from the evil plans and devious designs of the enemies, Allah kept him away from them. However, sincere & righteous servants were always honored with meeting him, and even getting their problems solved by him (a.t.f.s.). Allah has promised that His earth shall be inherited by those of His servants who have been rendered weak. His promise is binding and shall most certainly be fulfilled. He declares in the Holy Qur'an, Chapter 3: Verse 183

'A day will come when every creature of the heavens and the earth shall submit before Allah either willing or unwillingly'.

This promise shall be proved true when the last Hujjat (a.t.f.s.) rises and tyranny and oppression disappear from this world. Then truth & equality shall be the order of the day.

The Peculiarities of the Era of Reappearance

During the era of reappearance, progress and development shall scale its zenith. Everybody seeks eradication of oppression & tyranny. The nations which are far from oppression and tyranny, where equity and justice is prevalent, where one can find peace security, fraternity, respect for each others' right, happiness and sound economic conditions are considered as developed nations. However, such nations exist only in theories and texts. But when the government of the last proof of Allah is established, the world shall undergo a radical change. Tyranny and injustice will be eradicated, the paths shall be peaceful, equity and justice shall be established, the earth will throw up its treasures and every right shall be restored to the one deserving it.

(Behaarul Anwaar Vol. 52, Pg. 338).

Poverty, penury and destitution shall be rooted out and the people will not find a needy person to whom they can offer their charity.

(Behaarul Anwaar Vol. 52, Pg. 320).

Peace and harmony will be such that wild beasts shall live in peaceful co-existence with domestic animals. An unaccompanied and weak lady, laden in ornaments will journey peacefully from the East to the West sans fear.

Development of Knowledge & Understanding

The development of knowledge and sciences that have taken place in the eras of the Prophets (a.s.) including that of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) can be summed up in a two letters. Whereas Imam Sadeq (a.s.) informs about the era of reappearance thus:

"Knowledge comprises of twenty seven alphabets. All the sciences brought by the Prophets (a.s.) consist of only two alphabets and the people of the world do not know anything beyond these two alphabets. But when our Qaem (a.t.f.s.) will rise, he will manifest the remaining twenty five alphabets and spread them amongst the people. And thus the knowledge of all the twenty seven alphabets will be spread."

(Behaarul Anwaar , Vol 52 Pg 336)

The above tradition makes it clear that knowledge shall take a quantum leap during the era of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). The world shall witness development twelve times quicker than that of the progress in the era of the Prophets (a.s.). All beneficial and constructive knowledge shall be apparent. In a short span of time, mankind shall cover twelve times the distance covered in preceding 1000 years. One cannot even imagine the massive growth, development and progress of science and technology in the era of reappearance when twenty five additional alphabets of knowledge shall be added to the already existing two alphabets.

Abu Basir (r.a.) narrates from Imam Sadeq (a.s.): "When all the affairs shall be handed to the owner of mastership Hazrat Mahdi (a.t.f.s), Allah shall elevate the lowly regions of earth and

shall bring down the elevated regions so that the world becomes as flat as palm of a hand. Is there anyone among you who has hair in his palm while he is unaware of it?"

This shows that the divine government during the era of reappearance shall closely monitor the conditions of the world. This will facilitate timely and effective response to worldly problems and curb any intentional or unintentional dispute.

The following tradition of Imam Sadeq (a.s.) hints upon another development in the era of reappearance: "Surely during the reappearance of our Qaem (a.t.f.s.) the earth shall be illuminated by the light of its Lord and the servants of Allah shall become needless of sunlight." That is, the problems of energy and power shall be resolved to such an extent that man shall no longer be in need of sunlight - the source of atomic, nuclear and all other energies.

The means of transport during the era of reappearance shall be so swift as to put the present ones to shame. Not only shall they traverse the earth but with the help of the divine government shall also penetrate space. Imam Baqer (a.s.) says:

A mount shall be prepared for the master of your affairs.

On asking about it he (a.s.) as replied:

It is a cloud with a thundering sound and cry. He (a.t.f.s.) shall mount it. Beware, he (a.t.f.s.) shall soon mount the cloud and cross the seven layers of the earth and the heavens."

Period of Reappearance and Completion of Wisdom

Allah shall make the gushing river of intellect and understanding to flow during the era of reappearance. As a result, mankind shall easily attain perfection. In this regard Imam Baqer (a.s.) says that:

"When our Qaem (a.s.) shall reappear, Allah shall place his (a.t.f.s.) hand (i.e. hand of Imam) on the heads of the servants and through him shall perfect their intellect and complete their cognition."

(Usool-e-Kaafi Vol 1 Pg 19; Behaarul Anwaar Vol 52 Pg 328)

Thus, under his guidance and with his blessing, the world shall achieve great milestones. Horizons of intellects and wisdom will expand. All negative and destructive ideas - the root cause of differences and disputes leading to social breakouts-shall be eliminated. Today, human being is deprived of real intellect and cognition. For this very reason, we find all worldly governments trying to spread education and awareness to eradicate disputes, corruption and violation of rights. However, these governments are themselves deprived of such knowledge and awareness and hence, their efforts are futile.

In the era of reappearance, people shall be trained with mature intellect, enlightened minds, foresight, an expansive heart and bravery. They shall, by the virtue of their spirituality, solve many problems confronting humanity and lay the foundation of a peaceful & clean world.

Regarding this Imam Muhammad Baqer (a.s.) says:

"When our Qaem shall reappear, he shall depute one person in every part of the world and tell him that your affair and responsibility is in your very hands. Whenever you face a crisis and are unable to decide, look at your palm and act on whatever is written on it."

The era shall be such that every nook and corner of the world shall be filled with knowledge and awareness.

Imam Sadeq (a.s.) says: "When our Qaem (a.t.f.s.) reappears, Allah will bestow such power to the eyes and ears of his Shias that there shall be no need of any messenger or medium between him and the people. The Imam shall converse with them and they shall be able to hear and see him while they are in their lands."

(Rauzatul Kaafi, Muntakhabul Asar Pg 483)

This is the secret behind the vast presence of knowledge and awareness in the era of reappearance.

Imam Sadeq (a.s.) explains: "Surely in the era of reappearance, the believer in the East shall be able to see his believing brother in the West. Similarly, a resident of the West shall see his brother in the East."

(Muntakhabul Asar Pg 483, Behaarul Anwaar Vol 52 Pg 392)

This tradition proves that such development will be the result of the perfection of knowledge. This progress is not limited to the functioning of government at a macro level but shall also be within the use of the common man at a micro level. The world will resemble a single family with nations as its members.

O Allah! We humbly beseech in your presence that you accept our services in the way of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) and grant perfection to creatures through his blessed reappearance. Enlist us among those who lay the foundation of Imam's (a.t.f.s.) government during his reappearance. Aameen.

Kitaab al-Ghaybah

By Shaikh al-Taa'efah, Abu Ja'far Muhammad Ibn Hasan al-Toosi (a.s.)

In this article, we introduce our readers to the famous book "Kitaab Al-Ghaybah" by the revered scholar 'Shaikh at-Taa'efah' Abu Ja'far Muhammad Ibn Hasan al-Tusi (a.r.).

The following are some of the titles conferred upon this great personality: "The Imam of the Imamah sect after the Infallible Imams (a.s.)"; "The Pillar of the Shi'ites" and "The Scholar of Fundamentals and Branches of Religion."

Some of our eminent scholars also praise him thus: The Learned, the Practitioner, the Way (sabeel), the Judicious, the Pure, the Noble, the Insightful, the Skilled in law, the Explainer, etc.

He has authored books on various aspects of Islamic sciences. He was celebrated as the standard in these sciences. His style and writings are an example for the Shias. Our scholars have benefited a lot from his writings and will continue to do so, Inshallah.

Kitaab al-Ghaybah is one of his more famous compilations. It is an excellent source for dispelling misgivings and doubts about the Occultation of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.).

The author himself notes that he has collected authentic traditions to answer different queries regarding Occultation.

Kitaab al-Ghaybah comprises of one preface and eight chapters.

A Note on the Chapter of Occultation

Sheikh Al-Tusi (r.a.) says that we use two ways to prove the Occultation of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.).

The first approach is the necessity of the presence of an infallible Imam (as people are not infallible and are prone to wrong judgement or personal benefit). So, in every era, they need a Guide and Leader to direct their affairs. An infallible leader has to be always present, irrespective of whether he is apparent and manifest or in Occultation and hidden.

However, a few people acknowledge such people who are very much fallible as the Masters (Saaheb al-Amr) and Prophet's (s.a.w.a.) successors. But, their actions and deeds have testified to their fallibility and thereby, their falsity. Hence, it is improper to acknowledge them as an Imam.

Therefore, sects such as the Kaisaniyyah, Naadusiyyah, Fathiyyah, Waqefiyyah, etc, who believe in the Occultation of such (fallible or dead) leaders are misguided.

We believe in the son of Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.), His Occultation and birth are validated (through proofs and traditions in the book). Following these proofs, there is further discussion on his birth and the causes of Occultation.

The second approach is that it is not necessary that the Occultation should be taken as a benchmark to prove the Imamate of Imam (a.t.f.s.). (Rather if the Imamate of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) is proved, then Occultation of Imam (a.s.) is consequently proven).

Therefore, if our opponents acknowledge our beliefs (i.e. there are only twelve successors to the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s.) is the son of eleventh Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) and is already born) and after accepting the Imamate of Imam (a.t.f.s.), the answer to the question of his Occultation, should be their own liability. While, if they do not accept the Imamate of Imam (a.t.f.s.), then their objection or question on the Occultation of Imam (a.t.f.s.) is not appropriate.

Whenever the proof of Imamate is demanded from us, we have proved through convincing arguments, at relevant junctures, that the presence of an infallible guide is necessary in all circumstances and in every era, in the midst of fallible people on whom religious responsibilities have been imposed. We've also proved that infallibility is one of the necessary conditions for being an Imam.

Following this preamble, we say that the Muslims are divided in a few groups on the belief of Imam's being.

The first believes that the Imam does not exist in midst of the people. But the evidences which we've offered counter and negate in every era their claims on the presence of an Imam.

The second acknowledges fallible humans as their Imams. This belief too is dismissed under our contention that infallibility is a must for an Imam. We can easily make out from their apparent state that they were transgressors and fallible. There's no need to prove something which is clearly known and obvious.

The third is that of the Kaisaniyyah, who subscribe to the leadership of Muhammad Ibn Hanafiyyah. Similarly, the Nusiyah say that Imam Ja'far Sadeq (a.s.) is still alive and he is the Imam of the last era. The Waaqefiyyah have not accepted any Imam after Imam Musa Kazim (a.s.) and believe that he is still alive.

Our arguments (the arguments in the book 'Kitaab al-Ghaybah') clearly bring out the baselessness of these beliefs.

Respected readers, we're introducing the book Kitaab al-Ghaybah so that the Shi'ites of Ahle Bait (a.s.) may derive the maximum benefit from the effort undertaken by our revered scholars, by referring to this book.

To make it interesting, we also present the initial arguments of this book, so as to encourage the inquisitive minds for further reference to evidences regarding Imamate.

In giving evidences of Occultation, we have chosen two ways by which the beliefs of the false sects are rejected outright.

Furthermore, these arguments depend on three things; the need and existence of an Imam, the infallibility of the imam and that the truth (haqq) will never ever abandon the Islamic Ummah.

We will now present these core principles briefly. These detailed accounts are present in books written on the evidences of Imamate. Here, we narrate only the evidences related to Occultation of the Imam of our time (a.t.f.s.).

Following are the topics found in this book:

1. The rational and traditional proofs of Imam-e-Zamana's (a.t.f.s.) birth. (Pg 153-166)
2. Incidents and narrations in which those who have met him (a.t.f.s.) are mentioned. (Pg 167-189)
3. The truth of Imam's (a.s.) Imamate in the Era of Occultation proved through miracles. (Pg 189-222)
4. The causes of the delay in Reappearance. (Pg 222-231)
5. The emissaries and representatives in the period of Occultation (Pages 231-279).

There are two kinds of emissaries discussed here: the honoured ones and the censurable ones. The honoured personalities are those who were appointed by Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) and the criticised ones are those who transgressed and appointed themselves as emissaries and representatives of Imam (a.s.).

6. Imam-e-Zamana's (a.t.f.s.) long-life. (Pg 283).
7. The signs of Reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) (Pg 289).
8. Imam-e-Zamana's (a.t.f.s.) qualities, position, stature and way of life (Pg 310-354).

Brief tracts from Kitab al-Ghaybah

On the eve of his martyrdom, Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) asked Ameerul Momeneen Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.):

O Abul Hasan, bring a pen and a paper.

Then he (s.a.w.a.) dictated his will, in which he said:

O Ali, after me there'll be twelve Imams... you are the first among them and Allah has named you Ali al-Murtaza, Siddique-e-Akbar, Farooque-e-Azam, Al-Maamoon and Mahdi. These names don't befit anyone else... you are my vicegerent, upon my Ahle Bait and upon my wives. After me, you are the caliph of my nation till you live. Then you hand this over to my son Hasan (a.s.). Then he hands over to my son Husain (a.s.), then... then...then....then... and then when the time of death arrives for Hasan al-Faazil, he will entrust it to his son Muhammad al-Mustahfiz.

(Kitab al-Ghaybah, Shaikh Al-Tusi (r.a.), Pg 107-108)

Ja'far Himyari asked Muhammad Ibn Usman (r.a.):

Have you seen Saheb al-Amr (a.t.f.s.)?

He said: Yes and the last time I saw him was when he was near the Holy House of Allah (Kaaba), reciting:

"O My Allah, Fulfill what you have promised me"

Then he [Muhammad bin Usman (r.a.)] said:

Then I saw Imam (a.s.) holding the cloth of the Kaaba and pray in a state of mourning,

"O My Allah! Take revenge from your enemies through me." (Pg 168)

SHABAAN 1430 A.H.

A few people met Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) during the Hajj in 293 A.H. and narrated a few supplications from him (a.s.). One such supplication, he said, Imam Ali ibn Husain Sayyad-us-Saajedeen (a.s.) would recite at this (under the Hijrul Meezaab) place.

Abeedoka be Fenaak

Miskeenoka be fenaak

Faqeeroka be fenaak

Saeloka be fenaak

Va as-aloka ma la yaqdero alaihe ghairok

(Pg 173)

Finally, we pray to Allah, 'O Allah! Show us his handsome and illuminated visage, make our eyes capable of beholding him and hasten the reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.). Aameen!