

The Worldview on the Reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.s)

“The world is getting small” is a familiar cliché. But today, we have gone one step further. Now, it is said “The world is still shrinking”. What this implies is that the ancient world was vast and expansive but the modern world is tiny and small. But the fact is that the size of the world has never altered. Neither was it enormous earlier nor is it tiny today. This apparent difference in size is due to the rapid and incredible progress made in the fields of science and technology. Today, it is possible for a person in the West to communicate - verbally & visually – with a person in a remotest area of the East. And the means of getting them closer is the 'computer screen'. The giant strides in the domain of knowledge have now made it possible for a satellite hovering in space to take the image of the minutest of objects. This enables the attacker to target that object and destroy it with pinpoint accuracy. Outer space has come closer to earth. Distances between the East & West have contracted. Meteorologists are able to predict the changing weather patterns in the atmosphere. Lush green fields are now found in places where once the lands were barren and infertile. Vegetation is sprouting everywhere. The season of spring is found where once there was autumn!!

The purpose of narrating this is to ascertain the prophecies of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) concerning his (a.s.) last successor – Hazrat Mahdi (a.s.) and to verify their veracity the world view. We will try to analyse the authenticity of only three of those prophecies.

(1) The era of occultation will be prolonged:

Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) was born in 255 A.H. in the esteemed house of Imam Askari (a.s.), in the locality of Askar situated in the city of Samarra. Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) was martyred in the year 260 AH. Since imamat is a Divine regulation, hence its actualisation was set in motion under a divine plan (For more details, you can refer to the book "Durre-Maqsood).

The era of minor occultation commenced - that lasted for sixty nine years - in which there were special deputies. The testimonies of the witnesses (special deputies) were verified and ascertained in this lengthy era of minor occultation. The major occultation commenced in the year 329 AH. In the light of the final tauqee (epistle), the responsibility of leading and guiding the community fell on the shoulders of the venerable "maraj'e". They are the Hujjat (representatives) of Imam (a.s.) on the people. Eleven centuries have elapsed in the era of major occultation. During this time, the world has witnessed revolutions, calamities, cyclones, political upheavals, newer and sophisticated means of corruption of faith and morals, ever increasing oppression and atrocities and factories that manufacture weapons of mass destructions (WMD).

Yet, this tumultuous and turbulent era of major occultation has failed to affect the beliefs and ideology of the Shia sect of Islam. This is only due to the painstaking and relentless efforts of our scholars in every era – the past, the middle and the present ones. They have minutely scrutinised, analysed and verified the traditions of Ahle Bait (a.s.). They have sieved the false traditions from the authentic ones. These traditions (ahadith) have been the guiding light for the followers of Ahle Bait (a.s.). The reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) may be near or far, yet the prophecy of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) that it will be lengthy is definitely accurate and for all to see.

(2) The final era of major occultation

As the major occultation will keep on getting prolonged, the predictions about the last era' will become more manifest. People will helplessly and despondently say "These are the omens of the last era" Then what are the prophecies of this era? It is said that life will become so harsh and grim for a believer that remaining steadfast on faith and certitude would be an uphill task. It would be as if he is carrying a blistering coal in his fist (meaning that inspite of his agony, he will have to remain unruffled). This may sound like a cliché, yet the world is full of incidences – that are reported and flashed across television screens every day - that give goose bumps to the believers and they have to live in fear and anxiety. Their only option is to put up a brave face and present an image of serenity. For instance, man's journey of seventeen days to the moon, his descent on the lunar surface – all of which entailed an expenditure of millions of dollars - has overwhelmed the imagination of man. The mindboggling advancements in the field of technology, medicine and bio-technology have increased his faith on these sciences and have diminished his certitude on the Almighty Allah. He is overawed and spellbound by this rapid progress. The Western civilisation is full of billboards and advertisements that depict obscenity and vulgarity. Deviant co-habitation has been legalised in many countries. Wantonness and abuse prevail to fulfill carnal desires. Court proceedings of such incidences are regularly published in the newspapers. In this arena of Shaitan, which is dominated by wine and sins, there are prophecies that foretell the advent of a divine crusader who will be carrying the flag of reformation. He will herald the dawn of a new civilisation. He will be the sanctuary for the entire humanity. The world will discuss and deliberate the start of this new era. All these fast changing events taking place at that point in time will bear testimony to the predictions concerning the reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.). It is clear that the individuals who will come forward to acquire the recognition of Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) in these trying times will be only few in numbers.

Outcome of Worldview

In these testing and challenging times where the propagations of flawed and erroneous ideologies are echoing in the ears and when it is so easy to succumb to one's desires and difficult to remain steadfast and patient on religion, especially for those youths who travel to the West in search of greener pastures for their careers. If in the present scenario is so perilous then what can one say about the future? It's like holding fire in the hands.

(3) The world will be filled with injustice and oppression. This will be followed by a reign of justice and equity i.e. reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s.)

Here there are two prophecies. The present era is hurtling towards these two prophecies with such a pace that the reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) appears just around the corner. Similar to the way the false dawn progresses rapidly towards the true dawn every day. The prophecy that the world shall be filled with injustice and oppression is actually a hadith and a warning from the side of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a). The other prediction is a divine prophecy which is mentioned in the Holy Quran. "Surely Allah shall enliven the earth after its demise." Two catastrophies almost severed the jugular vein of the earth which would have led to its downfall and destruction. One was the brutal killing of Hazrat Yahya (a.s.). The place where he was martyred began oozing blood. But the prayers and supplications of the subsequent divine

representatives were the cause of divine mercy on that land. Thus the piece of earth that bore that heart rendering calamity regained its former health and glory. The second agonising incident is of Karbala - especially the occasion where the grandson of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) wanted to drop the blood of his infant son Janab-e-Aliasgar (a.s.) on the earth. The earth shrieked at this juncture, indicating that it was not willing to accept that blood. Finally, Imam Husain (a.s.) rubbed that blood on his face and said, "I will stand before my grandfather on the day of Judgement in this condition." Thus he (a.s.) saved the gasping, trembling and quivering earth from certain annihilation. When the earth survived, its inhabitants too remained secure. Else the gigantic waves of the sea would have drowned the earth and swallowed its inhabitants (just as the Tsunami inundated and destroyed parts of Japan)

The world will be bursting with, injustice and equity. At that time the world will be lifeless. A believer who is blessed by the Benevolent Allah with the twin bounties of intellect and maturity will easily be able to differentiate between the oppressor and the oppressed. Justice is deeply rooted in his conscience and it exhorts him to ponder on the happenings in the world. If he analyses the on-going events he will certainly realise the extent to which injustice has permeated the society and how much the world has become lifeless.

The inventions of the modern age are deadly. Multiple bombs, chemical bombs, nuclear missiles, atom bomb, hydrogen bomb ... And God knows how many more bombs are amassed in the arsenal of superpowers. The weapons of aerial warfare are astounding. Drones, stealth bombers, fighter planes that annihilate their targets with pinpoint accuracy -- thanks to the satellite images beamed on their screens. The naval arsenal too is astonishing. Fleets of nuclear powered aircraft carriers, long range submarines - all of them are weapons of mass destruction. The biggest culprit is the only superpower of the world – the United States of America. The media, the Security Council, Human rights organisations (like Amnesty) – all are puppets in its hands and are dancing to its tunes. Wisdom is called insanity and insanity is labelled as intelligence. The recent agitation in Bahrain is a case in point. Emergency has been declared in that country, yet the protestors are being engulfed with a torrent of bullets rained from helicopters. Doctors and nurses have been forbidden from providing medical help to the victims.....

The army of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - the guardian of the precincts of Holy Kaaba – falsely arrested the protestors and labelled them as rebels. All of them were killed by a firing squad. Their women were picked up from their houses and were victims of all kinds of indecencies. Today Saudi Arabia is speaking the language of Israel - and behaving like it too. It is tightening the noose around the Muslims. And finally the terrorists. They are Muslims in name but are terrorising the world by calling themselves as "jehadis." There is misery and suffering in all corners of the world. The earth is on its last breath submerged in bloodshed and violence. But the promise of Allah will certainly actualise. He has promised that He will grant a new lease of life to this earth and this is guaranteed to materialise. He has hinted about this eventuality in the Holy Quran wherein he says, **"We will certainly make our servants - those who were weakened in the earth – as leaders (Imams) and inheritors (of the earth)"** (Surah Qasas: v 5) Thus when Allah's representative and caliph will reappear, he will grant a new lease of life to this earth and will confer it with dynamism and energy. The earth will be a reflection of Paradise. Now the world should turn its face towards this ray of hope whose glow is intensifying

with every passing day. This ray of hope is none other than Imam Mahdi (a.s.). The only criterion during this period of Intezaar is that one should not be a victim of despondency and gloom. Till the time the people are firmly attached to this divine representative and emissary - who is the inheritor of this earth – the corrupt and immoral environment will not have any effect on their faith. But the travellers on the path of truth and righteousness should be careful that their feet don't wobble while treading this path. Steadfastness, firm intention, virtuous actions - all are the lamps of "Serat-ul-Mustaqeem" and the signposts to the tent of the "King of the era" and "Master of the time." The establishment of justice and equity and the era of peace and harmony seem imminent. Aameen

Justice And The Reappearance Of Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.)

Man by nature loves justice and detests oppression. However at times he is influenced by his environment and he goes against his innate nature of justice and equity. Islam blamed "desires" and the "nafse-ammarah" responsible for this deviation of man from his innate nature. When craving for power and authority intensifies within him he gradually falls to deeper pits, i.e. from societal to the national and then to the international level in acquiring the same. He is always busy in devising and following newer ways to achieve his aim and finally becomes the supporter and devotee of vain and useless people. Just as Qazi Shurayh, the Chief Justice who signed the decree for killing of Imam Husain (a.s.) - became the supporter of the accursed Ibn Ziyad.

Centuries have passed in anticipation of universal justice. Countless lives have been lost for this cause. However, their dreams still remain unfulfilled. The efforts to counter and eliminate terrorism are no way less radical than the terrorists themselves.

This raises a vital question in every mind. Keeping in mind the events unfolding in the world do the discussions on justice serve any purpose? Is the discussion an exercise in futility or is it on a firm foundation? If the weak and the oppressed have lost all hopes of justice then such a discussion is in vain. However if there is light at the end of the tunnel, then in every era the call of Justice will resonate. The deceptions of the insignificant and worthless man do not have the strength and power to stand before relentless divine powers. For this very reason, the spark of justice and its discussions are the core of the Holy Quran and will never get extinguished.

In Surah Nur (24): Verse 55 Allah the Almighty has promised the faithful and the righteous that:

He will most surely make them His successors on earth like those before them He will empower and grant a religious government with which He is satisfied. He shall replace their fear with peace and security

They shall worship only Him and not associate any one with Him

Anyone who disputes in the above is a transgressor

Allah has also promised thus in Surah Anbiya (21): Verse 105:

And certainly We wrote in the Book after the reminder that (as for) the land, My righteous servants shall inherit it.

Allah has made several similar promises and all His promises shall be fulfilled by the reappearance of Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.). The first thing that crosses our minds while discussing the reappearance of Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) is the establishment of justice and equity. The reappearance of Imam Asr (a.t.f.s.) is the cause of establishment of justice. Before we proceed further let us understand the importance of justice in Islam.

Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) says: "Justice is the foundation on which this world is based"; "Justice is the foundation of nations and the adornment for the rulers."; "Justice is the shield of the governments"; "Justice reforms people and in it is the betterment of the masses"; "Justice leads to increase in blessings". Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) says: "Behaving with justice for an hour is better than sixty years of worship during which one prays in the nights and fasts during the days.

Similarly ruling unjustly and with oppression for an hour is more abhorred by Allah than committing sins for sixty years"; "The heavens and earth subsist due to justice"

Imam Musa Kazim (a.s.) says while explaining the verse:

Allah shall enliven the earth after its death. *"Here enlivening does not indicate through water but Allah shall send such people who shall enliven the earth with justice. The earth shall be resuscitated by the revival of justice. The enforcement of divine laws on earth is more beneficial than the drops of rain"*

(Al-Kafi, vol. 7 Pg 174)

Imam Mohammad Baqir (a.s.) while explaining the above verse says:

Allah shall enliven the earth through the Qaem when it (earth) would have died on account of the disbelief of its inhabitants.

(Tafseer-o-Noor al-Saqlain, vol. 4, pg 173)

The above points bring out the importance of justice in Islam. It is discussed at every place.

Establishment of Justice is the basic reason for raising the Prophets (a.s.).

Certainly We sent Our messengers with clear arguments, and sent down with them the Book and the balance that men may conduct themselves with equity;

(Surah Hadeed: Verse 25)

Allah told His Messenger (s.a.w.a): And I command you to establish justice between the people.

(Surah Shura: Verse 15)

We have been instructed to deal with justice and kindness in our social life too.

Surely Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good to others) and the giving to the kindred, and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion; He admonishes you that you may be mindful.

(Surah Nahl : 90)

We must also give due regard to justice during conversations.

And when you speak, then be just though it be (against) a relative.

(Surah Anaam: 152)

The principles of justice should be upheld when dealing with enemies too.

Be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice, and let not the hatred of a people incite you to act inequitably; act equitably.

(Surah Maidah :8) Under the guidance of Ahle Bait (a.s.), Shias have always regarded justice as a criterion in all the spheres of life. In the sighting of the moon, in divorce and in transactions the witnesses must be just. The justice of the narrator while narrating a tradition and of the leader of the prayers while leading the namaz and of the judge while passing a judgment is of utmost importance.

The presence of justice and equilibrium in the body ensures its sound health whereas the establishment of justice in the society leads to eradication of oppression and inequity.

The heavens and the earth shall - if earth is purified of its injustices - shower their blessings. When actions are based on justice, all the citizens of the nation shall interact in a just manner. In the backdrop of these teachings we are awaiting a person whose reappearance shall erase all kinds of oppression from the world and establish justice. The earth shall glow with full intensity. It should be borne in mind that those who await the reappearance of just Imam day and night must make justice as a code of conduct of their lives. We should not get so used to our unjust conduct that the government of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) takes its toll on us and we oppose our Imam in the same way as Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) was opposed by the very people who were foremost in pledging their allegiance to him. The reason for their opposition was that the impartial government of Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) which was against their excessive conduct and undue expectations. A similar approach from the unbiased government of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) too shall become manifest after his (a.s.) reappearance. However we do find some indications about his (a.s.) government in the traditions.

The Ruler and his helpers

This universal government shall be led by Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.), an infallible person and an embodiment of all the attributes of the previous Prophets (a.s.) and Imams (a.s.). Today's era, which is replete with corruption, scams and dishonesty, the credentials and attributes of the helpers of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) have been explained in traditions. They shall pledge allegiance to Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) on the following conditions. They shall

Never steal

Never abuse a Muslim

Never shed innocent blood

Never dishonor anyone (woman)

Never attack anyone's home

Not hoard barley and wheat

Be satisfied with little

Support goodness and purity

Keep away from evil deeds and filth

Enjoin good and prohibit evil

Wear coarse clothes Sleep on the floor

Fight in the way of Allah

Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) shall reciprocate by promising them that he shall:

Stay with them

Walk with them

Wear similar clothes as them

Keep similar mount as them

Shall be content with little

Shall fill this earth with justice and equity in the same way as it is filled with injustice

Shall fight in the way of Allah as is the right to fight

Shall not keep a sentry or a gatekeeper from him (i.e. he will be accessible at all times)

(Al-Malaahim wa al-Fetan by Sayyad ibn Tawoos (r.a.), pg 49)

These conditions indicate that the helpers of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) shall be away from oppression and near to justice. These helpers shall be from among us. Hence we should adorn ourselves with these attribute: to be included among his helpers. After the advent of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) not only shall the society be full of justice but the manner of thinking shall also be based on the same.

The First Public Discourse

Imam Mohammad Baaqir (a.s.) says: Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) shall reappear in Mecca at the time of evening prayers. He (a.t.f.s.) shall be carrying the standard of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) and wearing his robe. In his hand shall be his sword and divine light shall accompany him. After performing Namaz-e-Isha he (a.t.f.s.) shall address the gathering thus: O people! O who believe in Allah and the last day! Rise, I remind you that He has appointed his proof and I invite you to act as per the book of Allah, shun evil and revive the Sunnat.

(Mo'jam-o-Ahaadees al-Mahdi, vol. 3, pg 295)

Justice in every nook and corner

In his (a.s.) era justice shall be prevalent. There shall be no home devoid of justice. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) says:

Hazrat Imam Mahdi (a.s.) shall spread justice in every home just as the summer and winter seasons (permeate in houses).

(Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 52, pg 496)

The arrival of summer and winter does not affect only a particular locality. Rather, it spreads to every nook and corner of the region. Similarly, after the advent of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) every home shall be brimming with justice.

Devout and Brave

The companions of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) shall be the embodiment of the teachings of Islam. On their foreheads shall be the marks of prostration; they shall be active during the day and busy worshipping in nights. They shall have nerves of steel and strength of forty people.

(Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 52, pg 382)

In another tradition we find: The companions of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) shall spread in all cities. He shall enjoin them to treat others with justice and kindness; he shall make them the governors of the country and inhabit the cities.

Economic Justice

One of the root causes of oppression and unrest in this world is economic imbalance.. On one hand, there are those who are filthy rich and lead an opulent life. On the other hand are those who are starving for days together. Some of us live in palatial houses while others sleep under the open sky. This economic imbalance gives rise to several crimes. Some of us suffer from ailments of over eating while others die of starvation. The economic policies of the governments have only increased the gap between the rich and poor. How can we expect the establishment of (economic) justice by the governments whose very existence is dependent on the affluent and corrupt people? How can they be expected to distribute their ill-gotten and hoarded wealth among the poor? In a nutshell the unequal distribution of wealth is the cause of crimes and mischief. Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) has explained the era of reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) in the following manner:

"Justice shall spread on earth. The heavens shall shower rains and the earth shall give out its produce. In such an era my nation shall enjoy such blessings which those before them had never seen.

(Isbaatul Hudaat, vol. 3 pg. 525)

Imam Mohammad Baqir (a.s.) foretells: "...when our Qaem (a.s.) shall reappear he shall distribute the wealth equally among the people. He shall deal with all creatures with justice, both the righteous and sinners shall be dealt justly. One who obeys him has obeyed Allah and one who disobeys him has disobeyed Allah. All the wealth of the world shall gather before him. All the treasures on the surface and beneath the earth shall accumulate before him. He shall call out to people and say: Come and take this wealth for which you severed relations, shed blood and committed sins. He shall distribute it in a manner no one has done so before him."

(Muntakhab al-Asar, pg 383)

In another tradition we find: "He shall distribute wealth twice a year and shall give stipends twice a month. He shall treat people equally. The conditions shall be such that none will be deserving of Zakaat. The (wealthy) people shall approach the poor people with Zakaat but they shall refuse to take it. They (the rich) shall then place their charity in bags and go towards the Shia localities who shall inform them of their needlessness for it."

(Al-Ghaibah of al-No'mani, pg 238)

In yet another tradition we find: "A person shall present himself in the presence of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) and ask him to grant him wealth. Imam (a.s.) shall order a cloth to be given to him and ask him to put wealth in it and take as much as he wishes."

(Muntakhab al-Asar, p. 384)

When all things are abundant and everyone's needs are fulfilled, none shall be in need of anything. Every one shall be satiated and content. During this era, all crimes and mischief arising out of economic depravity and disparity shall be eradicated. If we long for such a peaceful era and wish to see poverty eradicated, then we must pray earnestly for the reappearance of Imam-eAsr (a.t.f.s.)

Impartiality in Verdicts

One of the reasons for oppression and injustice are the biased decisions passed by the courts of law. Corruption is so rampant today that it is commonly known that the judgments of the courts are not based on the arguments provided by the parties but on the understanding between the judge and the bribing party - a fact also accepted by the Indian Supreme Court. One of the characteristics of the government of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is as Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) explains:

"He shall do away with all the corrupt judges and those not able to judge on facts. He shall suspend oppressive and unjust rulers. He shall cleanse the earth of every deceitful person, shall put justice into practice and establish justice among you."

(Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 51, pg 120)

Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) says: "When Qaem (a.s.) reappears he shall bring out eighteen people from behind the Ka'bah. They shall be from the nation of Hazrat Musa (a.s.) and shall judge on the basis of truth."

(Isbaatul Hudaat, vol. 3, pg 550)

Abu Baseer (r.a) enquired: Are there not other people besides them at the back of Ka'bah? He (a.s.) said:

Yes, there are but these are the jurists. These honored people shall be the rulers. Hazrat shall rub his hand on their shoulders and faces after which no judgment shall be difficult for them. (Al-Malaahim wa al-Fitan, pg 202)

A Model Judgment

The impartial judgments and rulings of the government of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) shall be evident after his reappearance. We shall however cite an example of one of the judgments of his revered ancestor Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.).

Once, Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) passed a verdict against one of his soldiers whose name was Najaashi, who belonged to Yemen and thus the people of Yemen were upset at this. They sent Taariq Ibn Abdullah to Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.). Taariq said: O Ameerul Momeneen! We did not expect that you will treat the obedient and the disobedient alike. Your treatment towards Najashi has aroused feelings of hatred in our hearts. You have torn apart our affairs and have made us tread a path that we think will lead us to hell." Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) replied:

"This decision was difficult but for those who tread the path of Allah with fear and humility, then this work is easy. O Taariq! Is he not a Muslim? He has violated the sanctity of Allah. I have given him the punishment which was due to him. Allah says: "Beware! Let not the enmity of a group compel you to act unjustly. Always act justly. It is nearer to Taqwa." When night fell, both Taariq and Najashi fled towards Moawiyah so that they do not have to face the judgment of Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.)."

(Majallae Intezar, vol. 14, pg 82)

Would this fleeing save them from the justice of Allah? Never. When verdicts are based on justice and without an iota of partiality, then criminal minds would rectify and reform their own selves and the grounds for establishment of justice in the society shall be prepared. Pinnacle of Knowledge

Ignorance is one of the reasons for oppression and injustice. No doubt we have taken giant strides in the field of science. Before us are the amazing results of the progress of knowledge. However our progress in the material world has made us oblivious of our inner self. "Scientific awareness" is ascending while "Self awareness" is waning. For this very reason the development of science has not been able to establish justice and equity. The more the world advances in the material sphere, the faster it is advancing on the path of destruction.

At the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) progress of knowledge shall see hitherto unachieved milestones. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) says:

Knowledge constitutes of twenty seven parts of which only two parts have been made known to man. At his reappearance Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) shall add the remaining parts to our knowledge and make them common.

(Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 52 pg 332)

Imam Muhammad Baaqir (a.s.) says: When our Qaem (a.s.) reappears, he shall place his hand on the heads of the people due to which their intellects shall be perfected and their manners reformed.

(Muntakhab al-Asar, pg 607)

Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) says: When our Qaem(a.s.) reappears, Allah will sharpen the sight and the hearing of our Shias to such an extent that they shall be needless of a message bearer. Imam will be seated at his place and all of them shall be able to see him (wherever they are).

(Muntakhab al-Asar, pg 607)

Today, the world views events and incidences through the television. At the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) the Shiites will become needless of these devices and shall - on the basis of enhanced vision and hearing - be able to see and listen to him from every nook and corner of this world. This heightened vision and hearing will not be limited to Imam but to all his followers and lovers.

Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) says: In the era of Qaem(a.s.), the believing brother of the west shall be able to see his believing brother in the east and vice versa.

(Muntakhab al-Asar, pg 607)

Imam (a.s.) says,

"When the Qaem (a.s.) appears, he shall appoint a representative in every place telling them that all the Islamic laws are in the palm of their hands. When you face an issue and cannot resolve it, look at your palm and act on what you find thereon."

(Al-Ghaibah of al-Nomani, pg 319)

"Knowledge shall progress in such a way that the solution of all the problems shall be evident on the palm of their hands" Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) says: In the era of our Qaem (a.s.), the hearts of the people shall be purified of jealousy.

(Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 10 pg 104)

It is noteworthy that when two parts of knowledge have led to such progress, one cannot even imagine what gigantic advancement will the addition of the remaining twenty-five parts bring to humanity!

Universal Security

The establishment of universal harmony shall be the natural consequence of uprooting the causes of oppression, bloodshed, violence and corruption. Imam Mohammad Baqir (a.s.) narrates:

"In that era, a lady shall travel from east to west and shall not be troubled in the least".

(Muntakhab al-Asar, pg 379)

Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) says, "In the era of Qaem (a.s.), the blessings shall be abundant. Abundant rains shall shower over the agricultural fields, the hearts of the people shall be cleansed of envy and the wild beasts shall become docile.

A lady shall travel (alone) from Iraq to Syria. Greenery shall be widespread. She shall be putting on expensive ornaments but none shall trouble her. There shall be neither fear nor anxiety."

(MajdeIntezar Issue 14 pg 205)

Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) says: Mahdi shall dispatch his governors to all countries so that they judge justly among the people. At that time the wolf and the sheep shall co-exist together. Children shall play with scorpions. Evil shall be removed and only goodness shall remain. Agricultural produce shall be abundant. Adultery, alcohol and usury shall be terminated. People shall turn to worship, obeying the laws of shariat and religiousness. The congregational prayers shall be full of splendour. Life spans shall increase. Trusts will be returned. The trees shall be laden with fruits and blessings shall be innumerable. The mischief mongers shall be destroyed and no enemy of Ahle Bait (a.s.) shall remain.

(Majde Intezar Issue 14 pg 205)

This is only a glimpse of the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). If we long to see his government we should prepare ground for his reappearance by praying earnestly for the same and by reforming our character.

O Allah! Hasten the reappearance of our master Saaheb al-Zamaan (a.t.f.s.)! Aameen.

Abqari Al-Hesaan

We have regularly endeavoured to introduce books concerning our master Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s) in the Shabaan alMuazzam Special Edition of AL-MUNTAZAR. This year too, we present for our esteemed readers an introduction of an important and distinguished manuscript “ABQARI ALHESAAN FLAHWAAL-E- MAULANA SAHEB ALZAMAAN” in this issue.

About the Author

The writer of this book is the chief of researchers and narrators, the late HujjatulIslam Ayatullah Haj Shaikh Ali Akbar Nahaavandi. He was born in the year 1280 A.H. and studied under great luminaries like Maula Lutfullah Mazandarani, Mirza Habibullah Rashti, Shariat Isfahani, Marhum Maamqaani and Mirza Husain Noori, the author of Mustadrak al-Wasail, (may Allah's mercy encompass them all).

Marhoom Nahaavandi was known for his piety and chastity. He was unique and matchless in devotion and abstinence. Hence, many scholars and preachers took his permission before narrating traditions among the masses. He led the prayers in the Jama' Mosque of Gauhar Shaad in the holy shrine of Imam Reza (a.s.) at Mashhad. Despite his prayers being lengthy, a large number of people would prefer to pray behind him and it was the largest congregational prayer in the entire province of Khurasaan.

He was exceptional in his submission, humility and worship. He departed from this world on 19 Rabi II, 1369 A.H. and is buried in the mausoleum near the feet of the Imam Reza (a.s.).

His works

He was proficient in the sciences disseminated by the Ahle Bait (a.s.). He ascended to the higher levels of piety and asceticism and was peerless in scholastic efforts. He has authored books on varied topics. Some of his endeavours are still presently available:

1. Khazinah al-Jawaahir 2. Gulzaar Akbari 3. Wasail al-Abeed 4. Raahah al-Ruh 5. Jawaahir al-Kalimaat 6. Anwaar alMawaahib 7. Anhaar al-Nawaab 8. AlFawaaid al-Kufiyyah 9. Raskhah al-Nida 10. Tur-e-Sainaa 11. Anaavil al-Lam'aat 12. Lam'aat al-Anwaar 13. Mufarreah al-Qulub 14. Al-Bunyan al-Rafi' 15. Jannah al-Aaliyah 16. Jannataan Mudhaammataan 17. Al-Yaaqut al-Ahmar

How did some people gain the opportunity of meeting Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s.) during the Major Occultation?

Several people in the period of major occultation have been honoured with the opportunity of meeting Imam Zamana (a.s.) and gained benefit of this unique grace from Allah. Incidents are so numerous that they do not require any proof. But the question is how these revered personalities gained the opportunity for this great bestowal? Was this blessing due to their piety, abstinence and righteousness? Or was their elevated knowledge and spiritual level responsible for their meeting Imam (a.s.)? Or was it the grace and bestowal from the side of Imam (a.s.)?

The truth becomes evident if we analyse the last Tauqee (epistle) of Hazrat Baqiyatullah (a.t.f.s.) which reached the fourth special deputy Shaikh Ali Ibn Mohammad Seymouri (a.r.). In it, Imam (a.s.) says

"Whoever claims to meet me (in a manner similar to the four special deputies) and before the coming of Sufyani is a liar."

This narration clearly refutes regular and pre-arranged meetings with Imam (a.s.). Hence, none can claim - in the major occultation - that some kind of work can result in the meeting and seeing of Imam (a.s.). For, anyone who does such an action would be capable of meeting Imam (a.s.) and this would be similar to the status of the special representatives. On the other hand, when we analyse the various incidents in which people have met Imam Zamana (a.s.), we find different types of individuals who have enjoyed this privilege. The list consists of renowned scholars, pious people, the common man, individuals from the Ahle Tasannun and even the unbelievers (at times). Looking at all these personalities and the differences in the circumstances, spiritual levels and attitudes, we can safely say that the people who met Imam (a.s.) were not of any single type or rank. Rather Imam (a.s.) bestows his favour on both - the special and the ordinary. This grace is bestowed by Imam (a.s.) due to his lofty status of being the Caliph of Allah upon the creation and the worshippers.

Al-Abqari al-Hesaan - The Book

The book under review narrates the incidents of those privileged individuals who had the good fortune of obtaining the grace from Imam Mahdi (a.s.) and gain his favour.

The copy of the book available with us is in two volumes - published and distributed by Dabistane Tehran. Despite being comprehensive, scholastic and literary in its purview, it remains out of reach of most people due to its voluminous size and oldfashioned style of writing. Its script and phrases are ancient. Consequently, people have not paid much attention to it. However, it finds favour in the libraries of famous scholars schooled in Najaf.

Five Parts

The book "Abqari al-Hesaan" consists of two volumes and five parts - three of which find place in the first volume and the remaining two parts are in the second volume. It includes narrations of the people having met Imam Zamana (a.s.) - right from the time of his blessed birth to the minor occultation and then about those who met him (a.s.) in the major occultation.

Chain of Narrators

The beauty of the book is that the author states the chain of narration before recounting each incident. These are of great importance to scholars and researchers alike.

Sections of the Book

As mentioned before, the book consists of five parts. But we refrain from mentioning sequential division. Rather we will discuss the topics mentioned in each part.

The First Part

This part mentions those who were honoured with meeting Imam (a.s.) and were able to recognise His Holiness (a.s.). It also includes details of such events where the people who meet Imam (a.s.) did not recognise him at the time of their meeting but later due to circumstantial evidence realised it was him (a.s.). Then there are incidents from which it is not clear whether the person who has met Imam (a.s.) has recognised him or not.

The Second Part

This part includes incidents in which the meetings with Imam (a.s.) have taken place through "mukashefaat" and "mushaahedaat". "Mukaashefa" implies the stage of 'semiconsciousness' i.e. the condition between sleep and wakefulness. "Mukasheefa" are those 'visualisations' which are detached from the five physical senses. Rather, they are linked to the higher spiritual levels. In the state of dreams, man does not see or hear with the physical organs while in a state of "Mukaashefa" the soul of man is involved in perception of realities.

The Third Part

The third part deals with people who had the honour of seeing Imam (a.s.) in their dreams. These were true visions.

The Fourth Part

This part speaks about the manifestations of Imam (a.s.) i.e. the people come across some light or fragrance or voice of Wali-e-Asr (a.s.).

The Fifth Part

This part refers to people who implored to Imam (a.s.) for help and received a favourable reply.

Tavassul (Mediation)

The last part is particularly interesting. We may or may not meet Imam (a.s.) personally; we may or may not see him in our dreams, yet one thing is abundantly clear.

That we can always solve our difficulties and have our wishes fulfilled by praying and requesting him (a.s.). Hence, it is the responsibility of Shias during the major occultation to seek the help of Imam (a.s.) and also to pray for his early reappearance.

Blessings of the Master of the Time (a.s.)

We mention here some accounts of people desirous of meeting Imam Zamana (a.s.) and who were successful in their endeavour of seeing his radiant visage.

The meeting of Mohammad Ibn Abi Ravvad and Ibn Ja'far Dahhan: Mohammad Ibn Ravvad Ravaasi narrates: 'One day in the month of Rajab, I went to Masjid-e-Sahla along with Mohammad Ibn Ja'far Dahhan. Mohammad Ibn Ja'far told me: Take me to Masjid-e-Sa'saa (a mosque greatly revered since Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) and other Imams (a.s.) have prayed in it). Thus, we proceeded to the Mosque. Once there - while in the state of salaah - we saw a man riding a camel coming towards us. He alighted from the camel, tied it in a shade and entered

the mosque. He proceeded to pray two rak'ats prayers which were very lengthy. He then raised his hands and prayed a dua (this dua is found in the books of supplications under the A'amal of the month of Rajab and the mosque of Sa'saa. It is also available in the Mafaatihul Jinan). He then got up and proceeded to mount his camel. Mohammad Ibn Ja'far Dahhan said: "Shouldn't we ask him as to who he is?" | accepted his suggestion. We got up and went near him. 1 said, "We give you the oath of God. Tell us who you are?" He replied: "I too give you the oath of God, who do you think I am?" Ibn Ja'far Dahhan said: "I think you are Khizr".

The man turned towards me: "Are you thinking what I am thinking?" I said: "Yes, 1 too think you are Khizr." "By Allah!" he announced: "I am the one whom Khizr is desirous of meeting. Now return. I am your Imam (a.s.) of your era". (Al-Abqari' al Hesaan, 2/ 60/28)

24 Parganas (West Bengal, India)

Marhoom Aga Sayyed Ali Tabrisi Damad recounts 'I had stayed in Pargana in India for some time. I was in my house one day, when an affluent lady entered the house. Without warning she took off her veil. I saw that she was young and extremely beautiful but was terribly thin. She spoke: "My body is weak and frail because I am in the clutches of a Jinn, who has reduced me to this state. I have no means of escape from it (jinn) except that I ask your help. You are a Sayyed and from the progeny of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.)." When she concluded her tale, I advised her: "Whenever the jinn appears, recite Ayat-ul-Kursi, he will flee away from you." She pleaded: "I do not know Ayat-ul-Kursi". I made her memorize it. She later returned and thanked me: "Due to the blessing of Ayat-ul-Kursi, whenever the jinn appeared, I would recite it and would be safe from his harm."

Sayyed Ali continues: 'Sometime passed. One day I saw a black object (like a frog) stuck on the roof of my room. It was slowly sliding down the wall, increasing in size. When it touched the floor, it took on a strange shape. Witnessing this I was frightened. It spoke to me in an angry and shrill voice: "You have estranged me from my beloved by teaching her the Ayat-ul-Kursi. I will kill you for this." | started reciting Ayat-ul-Kursi. The form started shrinking slowly till it reached its earlier state and then disappeared. This happened a number of times. Each time it approached me and swore to kill me, I would recite Ayat-ul-Kursi and was saved from its evil. One day, I left the town on a leisure trip. There was a forest nearby. As I entered the forest, I saw a large snake slithering among the trees. It was yelling: "I am the jinn and ! will destroy you. Who will save you from my clutches?" As soon as I heard his challenge ! was stirred to call out for help to the one who is the helper of the weak and the cause of their salvation i.e. Imam Asr (a.s.). I replied to it (jinn): "Hazrat Hujjat (a.s.) will save me."

I had barely uttered these words when I found a young man wearing a green headdress and with an axe in his hand standing in front of me. He gave me the axe and ordered: "Take this and put an end to the snake." I replied "Fear has made me weak, my Master. How will I use the axe?" He clutched the axe and with a single stroke destroyed the snake. "Go. You are now free from its evil." I inquired: "Who are you?" He answered: "Who did you implore for help?" I said: "I had prayed to Imam Asr (a.s.)" He replied "I am the Proof and Imam of the Time (a.s.)." Saying this, he disappeared. I expressed gratitude to Allah for this great blessing.

(Al-Abqari al-Hesaan 2/204/25)

Imam of the Time (a.s.) lodges the Black Stone (al-Hajar al-Aswad)

This incident makes it evident that the alHajar al-Aswad can only be placed by a Divine Proof. Abul Qasim Ja'far Ibn Mohammad Qulwayh states: 'In 337 AH, I reached Baghdad with the objective of proceeding for the visitation of the House of Allah (This is the initial period of the major occultation. This was the very year in which the Qaraametah returned the Al-Hajar al-Aswad to Masjid-ul-Haram). My main intention of this journey was to see the man who would place the Al-Hajar al-Aswad in its original place. I had read in traditions that the removal and placing of the sacred stone is done only through the Divine Proof of the Time, i.e. Hazrat Baqiyatullah (a.s.). (As had happened earlier in the time of Hajjaj (may Allah curse him) who had removed the stone from its designated place and despite trying desperately, he could not place it back until Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s.) himself did not place it with his blessed hands). I fell ill in Baghdad. My health deteriorated to such an extent that I thought I would never recover from this illness. I lost hope of visiting the House of God. I appointed Ibn Hisham as my representative and gave him a sealed envelope. The letter inside contained some queries regarding my age and whether or not I would die from my current illness. I informed him: "My main purpose in sending you is to take this letter and hand it over to the person who places the Hajar Aswad in its original place and request him for a reply." Ibn Hisham continues the narration: "I reached the holy city of Mecca. People were trying their best to set the Hajar Aswad in its place. I paid some money to my servant and told him to inform me of the man who would finally be able to place the stone in its actual position. He appointed some people to protect me from the jostling crowd witnessed that whoever tried to place the stone, the stone itself would start vibrating and would not come to rest in the groove. Meanwhile, a handsome youth with a wheatish complexion appeared and placed the Black Stone perfectly, which stayed put as if it had never been removed.

When the people witnessed this, there was a chorus of Takbirs (Allah-o-Akbar). The youth departed from Masjid-ul-Haram and I followed him. As I increased my speed - pushing the crowd away - the people stared at me as if I had lost my senses or. I was running while the youth had a calm and measured stride. But as much as I tried, I could not catch up with him till we reached a place where there was none who could see us. He halted and said: "Give me the trust which you have brought." I presented the letter to him. Without opening it, he said: "Tell the writer of this letter that he will not die of his present ailment but will live for a further 30 years." Ibn Hisham says: "Overwhelming grief engulfed me at that instant. I was incapable of taking a step. The youth walked away leaving me in that state until he disappeared from my sight." Abul Qasim Ja'far Ibn Mohammad Qulwayh comments: 'Ibn Hisham informed me of the events on his return from the Hajj. The original narrator of the incident continues: "Thirty years after the occurrence of this event, Ibn Qulwayh fell ill. He started his preparations for the hereafter. He wrote his will, arranged his shroud and specified his place of burial. "Why are you afraid of this illness?" asked the people. "Allah will have mercy upon you and cure you of it" they said. He replied: "This is the year foretold in which I am to die." In that year and on that very day, he left for the heavenly abode.

(Al-Aqtari al-Hesaan, 2/57/3)

Conclusion

The bounties and grace of Imam Zamana (a.s.) continue. Although we have narrated incidents of yore in this article but the truth remains that people who ask his help are honoured with his favours even today. We relate below a narration of the present era.

The great scholar, Shaikh Mohammad Ali Amri who only recently passed away, was a resident of Madina. He was 135 years old at the time of his death. He is buried in Jannatul Baqi'. It was well-known that he had met Imam Zamana (a.s.). Hazrat (a.s.) had saved him from the oppressive regime and had him released from prison. The representatives of Al-Muntazar had met him and his son Hazrat Hujjatul Islam Shaikh Kazim Amri in the year 1998 (Muharram 1430 AH). We inquired from Shaikh Kazim Amri: "People say that your father has met Imam Zamana (a.s.)". He waved off the query with a denial. But the representatives persisted and said: "But this is a very common perception, please explain." Finally, he relented and said: "The event took place nearly seventy years ago, when I was not even born. My father and other Shias were arrested just for following the Shia faith. They (the rulers) committed untold atrocities on the Shias at Baab-e Jibraeel until two of the Shias were martyred while my father was taken captive along with others. Since my father was a scholar, he was sentenced to death. But after a lot of opposition, the sentence was reduced to life imprisonment and my father was sent to a prison outside Madina. Our family and tribesmen were unaware of the reduction in sentence and were under the impression that he had been killed. My father returned home after a year. The joy of the people knew no bounds. Everyone asked him as to what had happened. He explained the matter to a few of them and has since related the event to us. He narrated: 'When I was moved out of town and imprisoned, I would pray to Allah and the Imams (a.s.) for my release. I saw a dream one night that Imam Jawaad (a.s.) came to me and gave me the glad tidings of my early release. (The locality where Shaikh Amri resides is known as Avaali and it boasts of the Quba Mosque and a house of Imam Jawad (a.s.)). The next night brought the glad tidings from Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) for my early liberation from captivity. On the third night, I saw Imam Zamana (a.s.) in my dream. He was astride a horse, surrounded by companions, leaving the precinct of Mecca to travel towards Madina. He stated: "My representative is coming to you and he will secure your release." I woke up with a start. I was perplexed, not understanding the implication of my dream. Soldiers later came to my cell and informed me of my impending discharge. Lo! I was free. I thanked Allah and prayed fervently for the early reappearance of my Master?

After the recounting of his father's episode, Shaikh Kazim Amri addressed the representatives of Al-Muntazar: "This is the incident. The truth is that we are safe in Madina because our Master and Leader Imam Zamana (a.s.) supports us. He always helps us. Then he pointed to a tradition (hadith) framed on the wall behind him. It read:

"Surely we are not negligent of your affairs nor are we oblivious of your remembrances....."

Shaikh Kazim advised: 'Imam (a.s.) is never inattentive of our affairs. He does not forget us. If he would stop helping us, the enemy would crush us under its feet. The Tauqee instructs us of the same. The representatives confirmed the narration from Shaikh Mohammad Ali Amri. Initially, he too was reluctant to speak about it but later - on repeated requests, confirmed..

O Allah! Make Imam (a.s.) alleviate the grievances of your oppressed servants!

Exegesis Of Ziarat Of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) On Friday

(Continued from the previous Shabaan issue of 1431 A.H.)

"Today is Friday and it is your day in which your reappearance is expected, the salvation of the believers at your hands and the killing of the unbelievers by your sword."

Three conclusions can be derived from the above sentences of this ziyarat:

1. Friday is the blessed day when the reappearance of Hazrat Hujjat (a.t.f.s.) can be expected.
2. The believers will be overjoyed after the reappearance of Imam (a.s.).
3. The enemies of Allah shall be destroyed at the hands of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.).

Let us try to study and analyze this sentence.

1. Prohibition of fixing a time for Imam's (a.t.f.s.) reappearance

It has already been discussed previously that fixing a time for the reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) has been strictly prohibited. It has been narrated from Fuzail Ibn Yasaar that he asked Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.), "Is there any appointed time for this affair [reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.)]?" Imam (a.s.) replied:

"Those who fix a time for it are liars! Those who fix a time for it are liars! Those who fix a time for it are liars!"

[Al-Kaafi, vol. 1, p. 368, Baab-o-Karaahiyat al-Tawqee; Al-Ghaibah by Shaikh Tusi (r.a.), p. 425-426, H. 411; Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 52, p. 103, H. 5]

All such traditions are consecutive (mutawaatir) - literally as well as conceptually. If we refer the aforementioned books, we will find that most of the traditionalists have brought independent chapters regarding the prohibition of fixing a time for reappearance (tawqee). It is because only Allah knows the time and none should be allowed to play with the emotions of people on this sensitive subject. Imam Sadiq (a.s.) says:

"One who fixes a time for our Mahdi has indeed considered himself to be Allah's partner in His knowledge."

[Al-Hidaayah by Husain bin Hamadan, p. 172]

2. If fixing a time has been prohibited then why is it mentioned in various supplications, ziyaraat and traditions that Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) shall reappear on a Friday?

Before replying to this question it is necessary to mention that not only Friday but traditions have also spoken about the month and year of the reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.). For instance, Muhammad bin Muslim narrates that a person once asked Imam Sadiq (a.s.), "When will your Qaem (a.s.) reappear?" Imam (a.s.), after narrating some of the signs of reappearance, said in his reply:

"Then the Quem (a.s.) shall be called out by his name. It will be the 23rd night of the month of Ramazan and he shall rise on the day of Aashura."

[Kifaayat al-Muhtadi by Mir Muhammad bin Muhammad Mirlauhi Husaini Isfahani, who was a contemporary of Allamah Majlisi (a.r.), p. 217, H. 39; Al-Arbaoun by Al-Khatoonabadi, p. 169-170; Isbaat al-Hudaat by Shaikh Hurr al-Aameli, p. 570, chp 32, part 44, H. 687]

It means that the reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) will take place on the 23rd night of the month of Ramazan (Shab-e-Qadr) and he (a.t.f.s.) shall rise on the day of Aashura.

It is found in the books of Ahle Sunnat that Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) shall reappear on the 17th Moharram between Rukn-e-Yamaani and Maqaam-e-Ibrahim (at the Holy Kaaba), Jibraeel (a.s.) will be on his right and Mikaeel (a.s.) on his left.

[Iqd al-Durar, p.65, chp 4, part 1; Al-Burhaan fi Alaamaate Mandi-e-Aakhir al-Zamaan, p. 145, H. 14]

Shaikh Mufeed (a.r.) in his book al-Irshaad has narrated a tradition from Abu Baseer quoting from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) who said:

"The Qaem shall not reappear except in one of the odd years: like

one, three, five, seven or nine." [Al-Irshaad, p. 389; Kashf al-Ghummah by Abul Fath Ali

bin Isa al-Irbili, vol. 2, p. 462] Now let's try to reply the above question i.e. if fixing a time for reappearance is not allowed, then how can we say that Imam (a.s.) will reappear on a Friday? To speak about the time of reappearance is specifically for Allah or those personalities whom He has chosen to propagate His Knowledge. No doubt that the Holy Imams (a.s.) have mentioned the day, month and year of reappearance but at the same time they have also maintained that we should expect the reappearance of our Master and Imam (a.t.f.s.) day and night and at all times. In order to resolve this apparent contradiction through the principal of reconciliation (alta'deel wa al-tarjeeh), it can be said that although such traditions are found (about Friday), yet Allah has the authority to change i.e. alter the time of reappearance. We should not be afraid of the belief in alteration of destiny (badaa) because the Holy Imams (a.s.) have said that Allah is not worshipped better through anything except (the belief in) badaa. Allah is not honoured better through anything but badaa. Just as there is abrogation, an abrogator and the abrogated in the world of Shariah (Aalam-e-Tashreei), similarly there is alteration in the world of creation (Aalam-e-Takveen). It is astonishing that Muslims are prepared to accept the concept abrogation but deny the concept of alteration.

[For details refer Usul al-Kaafi, vol. 1, p. 146, chp of Badaa; Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 4, p. 92, chp 3, Al-Badaa wa al-Naskh.]

3. Salvation and deliverance from all problems is only after the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)

It is certain that the believers shall receive salvation and happiness in the true sense only after the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). It is the duty of the believers to obey and follow the actions and words of the infallible Imams (a.s.) during the occultation of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.). It is the responsibility of every believer to ensure (personally and collectively) that Imam (a.t.f.s.) is not disobeyed. We should not try to relate our selfish interests and aims to the sayings of the Infallible Imams (a.s.). Rather, we should consider their commands as the axis

and the purpose of our life. God forbid, it should not happen that we use our explanations as a pretext for his (a.s) disobedience.

4. The destruction and annihilation of Allah's enemies is only at the hands of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.)

The prayer of Prophet Nuh (a.s.), **"My Lord! Leave not upon the land any dweller from among the unbelievers."** (Surah Nuh (71), verse 26) shall be truly accepted only after the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). [For details, refer Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 89, p. 340, Aa'maalo Yaum al-Juma'h wa Aadaabehi wa Wazaafehi] *"O my master! Today I am your guest and in your refuge. O my master! You are noble and a descendant of noble ancestors. And you have been commanded (by Allah) to be a gracious host and a sanctuary (for His creatures). So, accept me as your guest and grant me asylum. May Allah send His Blessings upon you as well as your noble and pure progeny."*

1. Terminology: 'Fee' in 'feehe' is Harf-e-Jar and 'hey', which is a pronoun (zameer), refers to 'Yaum' meaning day. 'Zayf' means guest, jaar' means neighbor and 'keraam' is the plural of 'kareem'. 'Ma'moor' is the 'Ism-ema'ool' of 'Amr' which means the one who is ordered. 'Fa adhifni' is comprised of three words. 'Fa' means then, 'adhif' is the imperative tense in second person of 'Baab-e-If'aal' whose root word is 'dha-ya-fa'. The 'ya' has been dropped due to the coming together of two 'saakin' alphabets

2. (Ilteqaa-e-Saakinain).The 'noon' is called 'noon-e-weqaayah' and 'ya' is a personal pronoun in first person. Hence, 'faadhifni' would mean "accept me as a guest". 'Ajirni' is also on similar lines. This is the last sentence of this ziyarat and extremely amazing and astounding. Friday belongs to and is attributed to Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.). When we begin our day on a Friday, we should bear in mind that we are the guests of the master of this day. A well behaved and a civilized guest is he who does not perform any act against the wishes of his host. Hence, on a Friday we should be extremely particular about the fact that we shouldn't do anything against the will of our master. If we remain good guests then rest assured that there is no better host - in this world and the hereafter - than Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.). Let us all pray that "O our master, we are all sinners and have disobeyed. But we are your lovers. O master, we know that we have not fulfilled the rights of your mastership but you are the most gracious. Please bestow us with your grace and pray for our forgiveness in front of Allah. Please intercede for us in this world and in the hereafter. O Lord! For the sake of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and his progeny (a.s.), hasten the reappearance of our Imam (a.s.). O Lord! For the sake of the pure blood of the martyrs of Karbala, include us among the helpers and companions of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.). Aameen!"

Holy Places Related To Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.)

Preface

This topic - which is academic as well as historical - has a wide scope. Its importance and significance not only invites a person to ponder on the places associated with Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) but also illuminates the path of the ones who are in search of truth. It frees the person from the vicious web of evil propaganda and guides him to the path of truth. It gives him the courage to fight the evil forces and makes him steadfast on true path.

Importance

When Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) announced in the Sermon of Ghadeer that he (s.a.w.a.) would have 12 successors - the first of which is Imam Ali (a.s.) while the last is the one whose name is be his name, whose agnomen is his agnomen and he (a.s.) would fill the world with truth and justice - then this sermon was not only a proclamation of the mastership of Imam Ali (a.s.) but it was also an announcement of the supremacy, power and sovereignty of his (s.a.w.a.) last successor. This proclamation shattered the ignoble & unholy plans of the conspirators to acquire power and authority. Hence, Saaqeeba was the place where a malicious gathering took place and a strong effort was made to put a veil on the proclamation of Ghadeer. Since the last fourteen centuries, rulers have used all their might - in terms of power, money and authority - and have left no stone unturned to suppress the event of Ghadeer. Majority of (so called) scholars were their courtiers and in awe of the rulers. Thus, their loyalty was not to the religion but to the rulers. These scholars were successful in erasing the event of Ghadeer from the books of history. Else, how is it possible that majority of the Muslims could be unaware of a sermon and an event which was announced by the one who spoke only what was revealed to him, and which was witnessed by one lakh thirty thousand pilgrims? The holy places associated with Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) preserved the lofty, holy, distinguished and divine event (of Ghadeer) in the annals of history and nullified all the efforts of the enemies of Allah in erasing it.

Advantages

After the demise of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), the way the first three caliphs - also called as "rightly guided" - ruled the Islamic empire, it allowed the age old customs and rituals to creep into Islam in the garb of religion. The influences and elements that were predominant among the pagan and polytheists Arabs (before the advent of Islam) once again raised their ugly heads. Only now they were given the tag of "Islam". Thus, not only idolatry became common but the distinctions between permitted (halal) and prohibited (haram) too were erased. The Islamic environment and its teachings were further corrupted and ruined by Abu Sufyan and Muawiyah. Their frequent journeys from Damascus to Madina played no small role in tarnishing and jolting the foundations of Islam. Thus, when the Islamic empire came under the apparent caliphate of the fourth caliph - Imam Ali (a.s.) - he had to face rebellion from all quarters which led to frequent wars. After his (a.s.) caliphate, Islam was engulfed in a storm of calamities. The painful and agonising event of Karbala took place even while the sermon of Ghadeer was still echoing in the hearts of the people. After this heart-breaking event, the sons of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) - who were his (s.a.w.a.) rightful successors - chose to remain away from the people. But they were the symbols of piety, courage, worship, forbearance and etiquette. They always endeavoured

to expose the malicious and un-Islamic propagandas of the rulers and highlighted the corrupt teachings that had become part of Islam. Due to their endless knowledge, they were able to put forth the true picture of Islam among the people and explained to them the religion that was brought by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Thus, they laid the platform for the establishment of the original Islam of which they were the authentic heirs. They were always called as "sons of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a)" right till the eleventh Imam - Imam Askari (a.s). The lives of all the eleven infallibles – till 260 AH - were filled with oppression and turmoil. History has recorded the smallest details. The sermon of Ghadeer had mentioned twelve successors. Thus as per witnesses and select followers, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) went into minor occultation (for 69 years) and then into major occultation. In this era of major occultation, the venerated places associated with Imam-e-Zamana (a.s) play a vital role. Millions of devotees visit them annually to obtain grace and blessings. The graves of Saamarra and all other places where Imam-e-Zamana (a.s) himself is a regular visitor, are regarded sacred and blessed for his (a.s.) followers. These holy places are the minarets that proclaim the Imamate of the final successor of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) viz. Imam Mahdi (a.s)

Spirituality

The places that are related with Imam (a.s) not only invite devotees towards them but they also provide solace and a ray of hope to the broken heart. Every pilgrim, every believer leaves his house for the sacred journey of visiting the places connected to Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s) with hope and optimism.

"Keep moving for you will meet him somewhere; if you stop, the earth will grip your feet"

Now let us talk about these places after we have discussed their importance and significance. Every believer is restless and keen to visit those places again and again. His only wish is that his entire life should pass in visiting those places. Maybe in one of those journeys he may get a glimpse of the one for whom the heart yearns and he may see his (a.s) glorious visage.

(1) Saamarraa

Today, many people live away from their homes due to various reasons. But the love of their ancestors compels them to return to their native place. Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) too visits his ancestral town and home in Saamarraa to visit the graves of his forefathers. Numerous incidents have been narrated regarding the presence of Imam (a.s.) in Saamarraa. Mirza Mohaddis-e-Noori in his book "Jannatul Mawa" gives reference of Maulana Zainul Abedeen, son of great scholar Mohammed Salmasi and narrates an incident of Allama Sayed Mohammed Mahdi Bahrul Uloom. Maulana Salmasi narrates - "We were reciting prayers in the precincts (Haram) of Askariyain (i.e. the mausoleum of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) and Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.)). He (Bahrul Uloom) wanted to rise for the third rakat after Tashhahud. Suddenly, he looked shaken and hesitated (for standing up). But soon he regained his composure and rose up slowly. After the prayers all of us were surprised at that momentary lapse of poise but none of us could gather the courage to ask him the reason behind it. Finally, we reached home and were about to eat, when one of the elders gestured to me to ask him (Bahrul Uloom) about his act during prayers. I replied that he was closer to the Allamah than me. I managed to get the attention of Allamah Bahrul Uloom who said "What are you two talking about?" I replied, "These people wanted to know the reason for your hesitation during the prayers today." He

revealed, "Today, while I was praying I saw Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) entering the haram in order to do ziyaarat of his holy father (a.s.). I was overawed by his grandeur and splendour. This was the reason for my hesitation. Once he (a.s) left the Mausoleum I was at ease."

(2) Masjid-e-Sehlah

Abu Bakr Hazrami narrates that I asked Holy Imam Ja'far -as- Sadiq (a.s.) (or imam Mohammad-e-Baqir (a.s.)) "Which is the holiest place after the holy places of Ka'abah (Mecca) and the grave of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)? Imam (a.s.) replied,

"It is Kufa. There are graves of Prophets and vicegerents in this holy place. Also in this blessed place is Masjid-e-Sehlah. Allah has not sent any prophet except that he has recited prayers in this mosque. From this very place the justice of Allah will be manifested. The Qaem (a.t.f.s.) of Allah will establish his government over here. It is he who will fill the earth with justice."

(Mustadrak al Wasael, v. 3, pg. 416)

The author of Mafatih-ul-Jinan, the venerated "mohaddis", Shaikh Abbas-eQummi (r.a.) – besides being a great Mujtahid was also an authority on traditions. He narrates from Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) about the greatness of the Holy Masjid-e-Sehlah. Imam tells Abu Baseer, "This is one of the places liked by Allah. No day or night passes except that angels descend on this holy masjid and worship in it. If I had been close to this place then I too would have prayed all my prayers only in this masjid." Then he further added, "O Abu Mohammad! The distinctions of this masjid that have not been narrated surpass those which have been narrated. Abu Baseer asked, "May I be sacrificed on you! Will Hazrat-e-Qaem (a.s.) always be in this masjid? He replied, "Yes"

(3) Karbala

The respected scholar – Shaikh Ali Rashtee - who was the student of "supreme researcher" Shaikh Mutuza Ansaari (r.a.) – narrates an incident. He says, "I was returning to Najaf-e-Ashraf after performing the ziyaarat of Abu Abdillah Imam Husain (a.s). I was travelling in a boat in the Euphrates River. There were others too in that boat but they were busy joking and laughing. But one person from that group was restrained and serious. The others were making fun of him and harassing him but he remained silent. After we disembarked, I met him and inquired from him about the entire episode. He said, "All of them are my relatives and are Sunnis. My father too was a Sunni but my mother was a Shia. By the grace of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s), I am a Shia. My name is Yaqut and I trade in oil. Once I had travelled on the outskirts of Hillah (a city in southern Iraq) to buy oil from the Bedouins. We were returning to Hillah and stopped on the way to take some rest. Due to the tiredness of the journey, I went to sleep. When I woke up I found that I was alone. That area was known for its wild animals and I was alone over there. I was trembling with fear and tried to continue on my journey. Unfortunately I lost the way. I called out to my caliphs on whom I had unwavering faith. But it was of no help. Suddenly the words of my mother came to my mind. She had once said that we Shias have an Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s) whose agnomen is "Abu Saaleh". He always comes to the rescue of those who are in distress and never forsakes the weak and helpless. I vowed that if I call out his name and he comes to my rescue, then I will adopt the religion of my mother. So I said "Yaa Abaa Saleh

Adrikni." No sooner had I uttered these words, I saw a person wearing a green turban approaching me. He showed me the way and ordered me to accept and adopt the religion of my mother. He accompanied me to the outskirts of a village whose inhabitants were Shias. I asked him "O my Master! Will you not come with me in the village?" He (a.s) replied, "No. Like you there are thousands in other cities who are calling out to me for help and I have to reach to their aid too." Saying this he disappeared. I narrated this episode to the famous scholar of Hillah - Syed Mahdi Qazvini. I asked him that if I want to meet Imam (a.s) once again then what should I do. He said "Go for the ziyaarat of Abu Abdillah(a.s.) in Karbala for forty Friday nights (Shab-e-Jumah)." I immediately started going for ziyaarat. On the fortieth Friday night, when I was nearing Karbala, I saw that there was intense scrutiny of all the pilgrims. Only those who had the relevant documents and ID proofs were being allowed inside the mausoleum. Unfortunately I had neither. At that very moment, my eyes fell on Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s). He was in non-Arab attire wearing a white head-gear. Impulsively I called out to him for help. He (a.s) caught my hand and took me inside the haram without the sentries noticing either of us.

(al-Najm al- Saqib, vol. 2, Chapter 7, pg. 719, Incident no 71; Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 53, pp. 292 – 293)

(4) Holy Ka'bah

Numerous traditions narrate that Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s) visits the Holy Ka'bah during Haj. The second special deputy - Janab Mohammed bin Usman Amri - says, "I have personally heard that 'I swear by Allah! Saheb-ul-Amr comes to Mecca every year in the season of Haj. He sees the people and recognizes them while the people see him but don't recognize him"

(Kamaaluddin, vol. 2, Chapter 43, H. No. 8; Wasail al-Shiah, vol. 11, pg.135)

Ali Ibn Ahmed Khadiji Kufi narrates from Azdee who said, "Once I was busy doing the tawaaf of the Ka'abah. I had completed six rounds and was about to start the seventh when my eyes fell on a handsome youth standing to the right of Ka'abah. A wonderful fragrance was emanating from him. He was surrounded by people wanting to talk to him. Everyone was in awe of him. I had never seen anyone talking more sweetly and pleasantly than him. I too was drawn towards him. I went near him so that I could converse with him. But the crowd pushed me back. I asked them "Who is this person?" They replied, "He is the son of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a). He comes every year to meet and converse with the 'special people (i.e. Shias). I called out loudly, "O my Master! I too want to come near you so that you can guide me to the right path." Hearing this, the youth threw some pebbles towards me. I picked them up. People became curious and asked "What did that youth throw towards you?" I said "Pebbles." But when I opened my hand, I saw that it was gold. I ran behind that youth till I caught up with him. Looking at me he said, "Now my argument is completed on you and the truth has become manifest to you. You have received insight in religion. Do you know who am I?" I said "No". He replied, "I am Mahdi. I am Qaem. I am the one who will fill the earth with justice just as it was filled with oppression. The world can never remain void of a divine representative (Hujjat). This is a trust delivered to you. Proclaim it to your (religious) brothers"

(Kamaaluddin, vol.2, Chapter 43, H. No.18; Behaar al-Anwaar, vol.52, Chapter 18, H. No.1)

Conclusion

Numerous lovers of Ahle Bait (a.s) have had the good fortune of meeting Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s) in the mausoleum of Ameerul Momineen (a.s), in Kazmain and also in Jannatul Baqi. Their incidents are found in books. It is not possible to narrate all those incidents in this small article. But, as it was mentioned in the introduction of this article, that a person innately attaches himself to the one who brings him success and salvation. The aim of our lives is to obtain the pleasure of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s). He is the final representative of the Ahle Bait (a.s) and their 'radiant lamp. This world exists only due to his grace and mercy. The doors of his kindness and benevolence are wide open for the believers. It is our responsibility that we make an all-out effort to obtain his mercy. Whenever we get an opportunity to visit these venerated places, we should bear in mind that our Imam (a.s) too frequents those places. If only, Yusuf-e-Zahra would purify our sinful eyes by giving us a glimpse of his radiant visage! If only he (a.s) would illuminate our gloomy hearts by his dazzling brilliance! May Allah give all of us the perception to feel his presence in all the places mentioned above! Is he a true devotee who does not yearn for his beloved? We say in Dua-e-Nudbah "It is difficult for me that I can see all the creatures but am deprived of your meeting." This one statement beautifully sums up the sorrow within every follower of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s) due to his separation from his Imam (a.s). It also expresses his desire and yearning to meet Imam (a.s). May Allah hasten the reappearance of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s) and include us among his sincere servants. Aameen!