

Imamate (Leadership with Divine Authority)

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In the discussion of prophethood, it was proven that it was essential that God, the Wise, should dispatch messengers for the guidance of mankind, should provide them with the laws and commandments so that they could achieve prosperity and perfection; now we say that: Since the life of messenger is not eternal in the world and through his demise it is quite possible that divine commandments which came for the guidance of mankind might have been destroyed.

Therefore, after the prophet there must be someone so that divine commandments without any less or more addition should remain preserved near him; he should make efforts and endeavor in guarding and preservation of those commandments; he should guard the religion and execute the divine commandments, which guarantee the prosperity of mankind. He should look after for the worldly and religious deeds of the people, so that the path of achieving the prosperity and perfection for the human beings remains open and the link between God and the people should not be disconnected; such a person is called an Imam or successor.

The Imam is a protector of the treasure of knowledge of the Prophet; the Imam is the most perfect manifestation of a human being as well as of religion. He is leader of the people; he himself takes a spiritual journey of perfection and prosperity as well as guides others.

Characteristics of an Imam

A. Infallibility

The Imam too, like a prophet, should be immune from making any mistake or negligence in remembering commandments, their propagation, and execution so that the divine commandments should remain with him without any less or more; and he should not allow the people to deviate from the straight path of honesty in execution of commandments and administration of the society; the main road of perfection—which is not more than one—should not be obstructed.

The Imam should be infallible and immune from the performance of any sin and rebellion. And his deeds should be in compliment with his words, so that his words and values should not lose credit and should not lose his confidence and trust from the people. If he would commit sins, deeds opposite to the religious commandments, he would become as an example for the people and through means of his character would invite them to oppose religious commandments. Thus, the Imam must be infallible i.e. he should act upon all religious commandments and should be decorated with the esoteric essence of the religious commandments.

B. Knowledge of Imam

An Imam must know all divine commandments of the religion. He must be thoroughly knowledgeable with respect to every aspect relevant to his spiritual position and leadership. He should be a learned scholar (a'lim) to possess all religious commandments with him, so that in guidance and administration of the people, he should not be helpless and incompetent; he should be able to keep the straight path of prosperity open.

C. Distinctions and Perfection

Earlier it was proven that an Imam acts upon all religious commandments and undertakes his journey in the context of religion. Therefore, he should be the most superior and most perfect human being. He journeys upon the straight path of religion and accompanies others with him and guides them. An Imam is a total manifestation of the religion, and in his blessed existence all realities and divine learning could be witnessed.

D. Miracles

It could be utilized from history and narrations that the infallible Imams (a.s.) like Prophets had miracles and were capable of performing acts which were not possible by ordinary human beings. Occasionally the circumstances required that proof of their position of infallibility and imamate depended upon their performance of a miracle.

Whoever would refer to the books of narrations, their excellent virtues, history, and with unprejudiced intellect should review the abundance of miracles that have been attributed to the Infallible Imams (a.s.) and would attain the certainty that overall they had possessed miracles and outstanding works. Of course it is not our intent that all miracles that have

been related to the Infallible Imams (a.s.) are true and correct; instead perhaps among them some false and unknown matters might have been existed.

E. Imam's Identification

An Imam could be identified through two paths:

First Path

The Prophet or the previous Imam should introduce him and appoint him as his successor and leader of the people. If he is not introduced by God, Prophet and previous Imam, the people by themselves could not identify the Imam, and could appoint him as their leader for their governmental affairs; because it was proven earlier that an Imam and leader of the people should be infallible, most distinguished and learned scholar of the community.

Other than God no one else has knowledge about the position of his infallibility. Ordinary people are not in a position to diagnose the infallible from the non-infallible. Regarding perfection of his holy essence and divine knowledge no one knows except God and Prophet.

Second Path

In order to prove his Imamate, if an Imam has performed an outstanding act or miracle, his Imamate would be proven because had his claim been a lie, God would not have certified his credibility through the means of a miracle.

Difference between an Imam and Prophet

Imam and Prophet have differences between them from the following point of views:

First

A Prophet is the founder of a religion and is a bringer of the religious commandments while an Imam is the guardian of commandments and is responsible for their execution.

Second

A Prophet receives the religious laws and commandments through the means of revelation and has direct communication with God; but an Imam is not a receiver, i.e. the laws and commandments are not revealed upon him instead he receives them from the Prophet and has a vital role in the guidance, and admonishment of prophetic knowledge.

Appointment of a Successor and Number of Imams (a.s.)

Whoever in the society possesses a position and rank and is responsible for its ruling affairs, if he wants temporarily not to go to work, without any doubt, he appoints a successor for himself and assigns responsibility of ruling affairs of the society upon him. He would never be ready to leave that congregation or community without assigning a supervisor or manager. The Holy Prophet (S) of Islam too paid a serious attention about this task and assigned plenty of emphasis regarding this matter.

Every village or city that was conquered at the hands of Muslims, he immediately appointed a ruler and governor for it. When he dispatched soldiers to the war-front, he assigned a commander for them and also he occasionally assigned his replacement in case of his martyrdom or sickness. Whenever he journeyed or participated in a war, he appointed his successor and assigned the ruling affairs of the community in Medina to him.

The Holy Prophet (S) was the ruler of the Muslims, he was not negligent about this matter that after his demise the Muslim society requires an infallible ruler, who through means of execution of divine laws and commandments should administer them and should make efforts and endeavors towards the advancement of his cherished objective. The Holy Prophet (S) knew well that Islamic nation could not remain as a living, powerful, and Islamic nation without an infallible ruler.

Due to this reason it could be said with absolute certainty that: The Holy Prophet (S) with all that compassion that that he had for overall discipline and order of the Islamic community and survival of Islam; it was impossible that he would leave the world without appointing a successor or leader for ruling affairs of the young Islamic nation. Apart from that it was proven earlier that an Imam should be appointed through God and Prophet because except God and His Prophet, no one else could testify to his infallibility.

Therefore it is absolute duty of the Prophet to introduce an infallible Imam to the people and if he has acted negligently in this regards, he has left the matter of prophethood and propagation of religion as incomplete. It is because of this reason that we are certain that the Holy Prophet (S) has declared his successor and Imam of the Muslims.

The Holy Prophet (S) not only appointed the successor immediately after him, instead he also introduced the forthcoming Imams after him. In plenty of traditions that have reached to

us through the Holy Prophet (S) the numbers of the Imams have been declared as twelve. The Holy Prophet (S) said: “There would come twelve caliphs after me and all of them would belong to Qureshite. The first person of them would be Ali (a.s.) and last one would be the promised Mahdi (a.s.). And in some of narrations the names of all twelve persons have been mentioned.”¹

First Imam (a.s.)

The Holy Prophet (S) from the beginning of his appointment until his death has introduced at several occasions Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (a.s.) as his successor and an Imam. In the last year of his life he was blessed of performance Hajj-pilgrimage in Mecca. While, he was returning from the journey, and reached at a place called: Ghadir-e-Khum, a verse was revealed upon him: “O Messenger! Make known that which hath been revealed unto thee from thy Lord, for if thou do it not, thou will not have conveyed His message. Allah will protect thee from mankind. Lo! Allah guides not the disbelieving folk.” (The Holy Qur’an, 5:67)

The Holy Prophet (S) stopped his journey right there and ordered that all Muslims should stop their journey. More than twenty thousand people gathered around him; he ordered that a pulpit should be made; he went upon the pulpit and took Ali ibn Abu Talib (a.s.) in his hands and raised him so that the people could see him. He delivered a sermon and said: “Upon whomsoever I am the master and guardian, Ali too is his master and guardian, O Allah whoever likes Ali, Thou should be his friend and whoever does enmity with him You too should do enmity with him.”

Omar was the first person who made allegiance with Ali and said: “O Ali! Congratulations you have become my master and guardian as well as of other believers.” After Omar, other Muslims too made allegiance with Imam Ali (a.s.). It was in this manner that under extreme heat and burning sun of Hejaz, that important task was materialized, and Imam Ali (a.s.) was officially appointed to caliphate and Imamate.² This important incident was held on the nineteenth of Dhu al-Hijjah in the tenth year of migration, and in order to remember this historical day, we Shi’a celebrate that day as a feast called: Eid-e-Ghadir.

Imam Ali (a.s.) was born on thirteenth of the Holy Month of Raj’ab, in Mecca twenty three years before the migration; his father’s name was Abu Talib and his mother’s name was Fatimah. Since his childhood, he was placed under the direct care of the Holy Prophet (S) and was the prime individual who believed in him. The Holy Prophet (S) married his daughter Fatimah al-Zahra (SA) and thus he became his son in law. His distinctions and services are so vast that it is impossible to describe them.

He was matchless and unique in bravery and manhood; participated in wars and was always in the forefront and never feared any one waged war in support of Islam, and motivation of God’s worship; while encountering severe hardships and dangerous incidents, never spared himself from showing self-sacrifice and risking his life.

He was unique in worshipping and piety; was matchless in wisdom and knowledge and was the treasure of the Holy Prophet’s (S) knowledge. So far it was possible, he confronted with oppression and injustices and defended the oppressed, showed compassion and kindness towards destitute and helpless ones. Imam Ali (a.s.) loved agriculture and engaged himself in tree plantation, habitation of uncultivated lands, and construction of aqueducts.

When the Holy Prophet (S) left this world a group of hypocrites decided to dismiss Imam Ali (a.s.) from the caliphate. They disregarded and ignored his personal perfections and distinctions and remained naïve with all those recommendations of the Holy Prophet (S) and removed Imam Ali (a.s.) from the caliphate and succession.

Taking the excuse that Imam Ali (a.s.) was young and not suitable for the caliphate; had killed plenty of groups in the wars and due to this reason people had grudges against him, and therefore would not tolerate his caliphate. During the caliphate of Abu Bakr, Omar, and Othman, which went on for twenty-five years, Imam Ali (a.s.) was forced to sit alone in a corner where he trained and nourished worthy individuals.

After the killing of Othman, people took allegiance with him and for approximately four years and nine months he ruled the Muslims. He lived in the world for sixty three years and on the night of nineteenth of Holy Month of Ramadan in the fortieth year of migration, was struck a blow upon his head by Ibn Muljim’s hands in the Mosque of Kufa and martyred on the night of twenty first of the same month and was buried in the Holy City of Najaf in Iraq.

An Event from Imam Ali (a.s.)

The person in charge of the treasury of the Islamic Government said: “A necklace of pearls was present in the treasury. One day a daughter of the Commander of the Faithful, approached me and borrowed the necklace and said: ‘I am celebrating the feast of Eid

al-Adha, would return it after three days, and in case it get lost I would pay you its cost.’
The Commander of the faithful saw the necklace in the neck of his daughter and recognized it and asked me: ‘Why have you committed a treachery regarding general wealth of the community?’ I explained him the matter and said: ‘Your daughter assured me that it wouldn’t be lost, and I myself also guarantee about its return; he said: ‘Right now take it from my daughter and if after that you would do so I would punish you’; the daughter said: ‘O my dear father! Do not I have that much right to borrow the necklace for three days to celebrate the days of Eid al-Adah?!’ Imam Ali (a.s.) replied: ‘O daughter of Ali, do not transgress from your right! Do all immigrant women have such a necklace to decorate themselves with it during the days of Eid al-Adha?’”³

Another Event

One day Imam Ali (a.s.) saw a woman who was carrying a water skin upon her shoulders to her home. He said: “Give the water skin to me so that I could bring it to your home, in between the path to her house he asked that woman how she had been; she replied: ‘Ali ibn Abu Talib dispatched my husband to one of the frontiers of the country where he was killed. A few orphan children have remained from him, and do not have the food and clothing, I am forced to work as a maid to earn a living for them; Imam Ali (a.s.) carried that water skin to her house and then returned, and spent the night in anxiety and sorrow.

In the morning he carried a bag full of food to her home and said to that woman: ‘Open the door, I have brought food for the children.’ She replied: ‘May God be pleased with you and judge between me and Ali.’ Imam Ali (a.s.) entered inside home and said to the mother of the children: ‘Do you want to cook the bread and let me take care of the children or vice versa?’ The women replied that I am more familiar with cooking of the bread and you take care of the children.

Imam Ali (a.s.) kept the children amused and as well-cooked the meat; when the bread was cooked Imam Ali (a.s.) with his own blessed hands put the bread and dates into the mouths of the orphaned children and said: ‘O the light of my eyes eat and be contended with Ali.’ A woman from the neighborhood identified that honorable one and said to the widowed woman that: ‘This man is the Commander of the Faithful.’ That woman came near Ali (a.s.) and said: ‘O Commander of the Faithful! I am ashamed from you.’ Imam Ali (a.s.) replied: ‘I am ashamed from you because until now I was negligent about yours affairs.’”⁴

Second Imam (a.s.)

Imam Ali (a.s.) because of God’s command appointed his son Imam al-Hasan (a.s.) for Imamate.⁵ Imam al-Hasan (a.s.) was born on the fifteenth of the Holy Month of Ramadan in the Holy City of Medina in the third year of migration. His father was Ali (a.s.) and mother was Fatimah al-Zahra (SA) –daughter of the Holy Prophet (S). The Holy Prophet (S) loved al-Hasan (a.s.) and al-Husain (a.s.) very much and said about them that: “al-Hasan and al-Husain are best youths of the Paradise.”⁶

After the demise of his exalted father Imam al-Hasan (a.s.) reached to caliphate and Imamate but was encountered with serious opposition from Mu’awiyah who was the ruler of Syria. Eventually his opposition lead to military confrontation and the armies of Imam al-Hasan (a.s.) and Mu’awiyah stood against each other; when Imam al-Hasan (a.s.) reviewed the general affairs of his soldiers, he witnessed treachery from a majority of his commanders. Therefore he avoided war and was forced to have a peace with Mu’awiyah. The basic reason of peace of Imam al-Hasan was due to two reasons:

Firstly: Although the number of the soldiers was significant, they were divided and disorganized. Among them there were plenty of individuals who were hypocrites and were supporters of Mu’awiyah; they had even promised to arrest Imam al-Hasan (a.s.) and hand him over to Mu’awiyah. Imam al-Hasan (a.s.) realized that if he wage a war with a disorganized and hypocrite army, defeat was absolutely certain; apart from that through the means of severe internal warfare, bloodshed and continuous confrontations, plenty of groups who were supporters were getting killed and the Muslim manpower was weakening.

Secondly: Mu’awiyah with his shrewdness tricked the people and through means of pretending and cheating, presented himself as supporters of the religion and defenders of the oppressed and said: “I do not have any other objective except advancement of Islam and implementation of commandments of the Holy Qur’an.” But Imam al-Hasan (a.s.) knew that: “Mu’awiyah is lying and does not have any other aim except continuation of his rule, but was it possible to make people comprehend this matter easily?!”

It was due to this point and other considerations that Imam al-Hasan (a.s.) decided for peace in order to expose the filthy personality of Mu’awiyah and his dangerous plots to the people so that the nation could understand very well about Mu’awiyah and the institution of Bani

Umayyah so that ultimately the grounds for a revolution could be made readied.

Imam al-Hasan (a.s.), for the protection of the fundamentals of Islam made peace with Mu'awiyah and in the peace treaty mentioned these conditions, but Mu'awiyah did not respect any one of them. Imam al-Hasan (a.s.) lived in this world for a period of forty-seven years. Eventually with the encouragement of Mu'awiyah with the hand of his wife Ju'adeh binte Ash'ath, he was poisoned and martyred on twenty-eight day of the Month of Safar, and was buried in the Jannatul Baqi' Cemetery in Medina.

An Event from Imam al-Hasan (a.s.)

A Syrian man saw Imam al-Hasan (a.s.) in the path and started calling him with insults. When he ultimately became silent, Imam al-Hasan (a.s.) paid attention towards him, saluted, smiled and said: "I assume that you are a stranger in the town, perhaps you have misunderstood the facts, if you offer an apology, I would be contended with you, if you need anything I would provide it to you, if you are a destitute I would make you needless, if you are exiled I would provide shelter for you, if you have any special need, I would bestow upon you; I have plenty of wealth and a large house, if you enter into my home and be my guest, it would be better for you."

After the Syrian man heard these words, he wept and said: "I testify that you are the Caliph of God and Imam. God knows better where to place the Caliphate and Imamate. O son of the Holy Prophet (S), before our meeting you and your father were the worst enemies near me; but at present I consider you as the most superior creatures of God, then he entered into his house and as long as he lived in Medina, was the guest of that noble one."7

Third Imam (a.s.)

Imam al-Husain (a.s.) was born on the third of the Holy Month of Sh'aban in forth year AH in Medina, his father8 was Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (a.s.) and his mother was Fatimah al-Zahra (SA), daughter of the Holy Prophet (S).

Imam al-Hasan (a.s.) through God's command appointed his brother Imam al-Husain (a.s.) to Caliphate and Imamate. During Mu'awiyah's Caliphate; he lived under very severe and harsh conditions because the commandments and laws of religion were not executed, and God and the Holy Prophet's (S) commandments were replaced with Mu'awiyah's personal whims and desires.

Mu'awiyah's institutions did not leave any stone unturned in the destruction of Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.) and Shi'a of Imam Ali (a.s.). With all these unpleasant circumstances, he practiced patience and self-restraint until Mu'awiyah died and his son Yazid became his successor. Yazid ordered the Governor of Medina to seek his allegiance from Imam al-Husain (a.s.) and in case of his refusal, he should be executed.

The Governor of Medina announced Yazid's orders to that noble one; Imam al-Husain (a.s.) requested permission of one night in order to think about the situation. But since he did not consider the allegiance and signing of Caliphate in the interest of Islam and his life was in danger, he was forced to move towards Mecca and to stay inside the immune sacred sanctuary of God; thus he moved towards Mecca and entered it on the third of the Holy Month of Sh'aban.

The story of Yazid and Imam al-Husain (a.s.) and his movement was circulated among the cities. The people of Iraq who were opposed to the Government of Mu'awiyah and Yazid, especially the people of Kufa, wrote a significant number of letters to Imam al-Husain (a.s.) and invited him to Iraq.

On the other hand Imam al-Husain (a.s.) realized that Mu'awiyah and Yazid had trampled all commandments of the Islam. In order to secure their rule and position they had not hesitated to commit all sorts of illegitimate acts, tyranny and oppression. They ruled in the name of Islam and considered themselves as successors of the Holy Prophet (S); there was a fear that they would completely turn fundamentals of Islam as upside down. Now they wanted of him that he should testify the authenticity of their government officially; on the other hand Yazid has secretly assigned a group to murder the Imam al-Husain (a.s.) in Mecca, or they should arrest him alive.

It was under these circumstances that Imam al-Husain (a.s.) decided that in order to secure the basic essence of Islam, confront the injustice of Bani Umayyah, and guard the sanctity of the House of God, he should leave Mecca and should rise up against Yazid's tyrannical institution. Thus, he moved towards Kufa which was the center of the Shi'a, they had promised their support and cooperation, and perhaps to achieve his lost rights to confront Bani Umayyah. Yazid's Army besieged and didn't allow him to reach Kufa.

Then the order arrived from Yazid that if Imam al-Husain (a.s.) surrenders take allegiance with him, dispatch him towards me so that I could decide about him, and in case if he did not

surrender, fight with him. Imam al-Husain (a.s.) did not give himself to wretchedness, he did not make compromise with the tyrant Government of Yazid; instead he fought, and with his small army stood up against the huge army of Yazid. He fought with perfect valiancy and bravery and killed a group of his enemies. Ultimately, he himself, his brothers, and sons drank from the chalice of martyrdom; they were killed on the tenth of Muharram in the year 61 AH, and were buried in Karbala, Iraq. Imam al-Husain (a.s.) lived in this world for a period of fifty-seven years.

We Shi'a consider the Day of 'Ashura as day of sorrow and lamination and for the remembrance of epic and valiant martyrdom, organize large congregational assemblies so that the spirit of self-sacrificing and confrontation against injustice and oppression should remain alive among the nations. The objective of Imam al-Husain (a.s.) was defense of religion and confrontation with oppression, we too never forget about this sacred objective. Imam al-Husain didn't surrender his body to degradation and wretchedness and taught Muslims to offer self-sacrificing and extreme devotion.

Imam al-Husain (a.s.) was killed but was not defeated. He made the supreme and distinguished virtues of human beings alive forever; practically taught the people self-sacrificing, extreme devotion, righteousness, and confrontation with injustice and tyranny. He was able to expose and degrade Yazid and Bani Umayyah who were ruling in the name of Caliph of the Holy Prophet (S), and proved their shameful deeds as false. He made the pillars of Umayyad Governments tremble and destroyed their dangerous plot against the Islam.

Organization of assemblies of crying and lamination only in itself does not insure the exalted objective of Imam al-Husain (a.s.), instead his sacred objective must be identified and efforts and endeavors should be made for its pursuit accordingly.

Fourth Imam (a.s.)

The fourth Imam, Imam Ali ibn al-Husain (a.s.), was born on the fifteenth of Jamada al-Thani 38 AH in the Holy City of Medina. His father was Imam al-Husain (a.s.) and mother was Shaher Bano, daughter of the Yazdgerd, Emperor of Iran. Imam al-Husain (a.s.) appointed him for Caliphate and Imamate through God's command.⁹

Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.) made so many efforts and endeavors in prostration and worshipping that he was called al-Sajjad and Zain al-A'abidin. He was present in the incident of Karbala but since he was sick, he was not killed (in battle); during his journey from Karbala to Kufa and Damascus he delivered eloquent speeches and proved the sacred objective and truthfulness of his exalted father and the heart-burning, horrible tragedy of the Martyrs of Karbala and their path of honesty to the attention of the general masses.

Since Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.) did not have freedom and was not in a position to propagate Islamic learning and knowledge and commandments of religion among the people, he was forced to sit in isolation. He kept himself busied in worshipping God and utilized opportunities to nourish and train the individuals. In order for the publication of religious learning he pursued another path; i.e. he presented religious learning in the form of prayers.

Excellent prayers have remained from him; one of this most precious works consists of the book of: Sahifeh Sajjadiyeh; Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.) lived in this world for 57 years and on twenty-fifth of the Month of Moharram in the year 95 AH, he was martyred in Medina and was buried in the Baq'i Cemetery. Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.) liked that orphaned children, blind, crippled, and the destitute should appear at his table-spread and many times he gave them food by his own blessed hands; he provided food and dress for many poor people of Medina. During the night when the people were sleeping he carried the food upon his back and covered his face so that no one could identify him.

He went to the doors of poor and destitute and distributed food among them; it happened very often that the deserving ones were standing upon doors of their house waiting for the arrival of Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.). When they saw him, they gave the glad tidings of his arrival to each other but no one identified him and knew who the source of their food was. When Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.) died the poor of Medina understood that unidentified man was Imam Zain al-A'abidin (a.s.) and it was only then that the sound of their loud cries were raised.¹⁰

Fifth Imam (a.s.)

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) was born on third day of the Month Safar in the year 75 AH in Medina. His father was Imam Ali ibn al-Husain (a.s.) and his mother was Fatimah, the daughter of Imam al-Hasan Mujataba (a.s.). Imam al-Sajjad with God's command appointed Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) to the Caliphate and Imamate.¹¹

His education and knowledge was so much that he was titled as the one who reaches the depth of knowledge (Baqir al-Uloom). The great scholars recognized his intellectual position

and were humbled in front of him and respected him in a manner like that of a school child who sits respectfully before his teacher; they asked their problems from him and received sufficient answers.

For Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) an opportunity arose that was not provided to all of his predecessors. Due to internal conflicts and confrontations of the caliphs, he had relatively more freedom and seriously endeavored in the publication of Islamic learning, religious commandments and laws, and left thousands of educational contexts and narrations as his legacy.

Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) lived in this world fifty-seven years and was martyred on the seventh day of the Month of Dhu al-Hijja in the year of 114 AH, and was buried in the Baq'i Cemetery. Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) loved agriculture and worked hard to earn his livelihood. Muhammad ibn Mankader said: "On a very hot day I met Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) in the vicinity of Medina, I saw that he had gone out for agricultural affairs and sweat was dripping from his body.

He said to himself that: 'For an honorable and exalted person like Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) who is an offspring of the Holy Prophet (S), it is not decent to come out of his home in this heat, I better admonish him. I went near him and offered salutations upon him, while taking deep breaths and while his sweat was dripping he answered my salutations. I said: 'O Son of the Holy Prophet (S)! Is it not insulting that at such a time you are busy in seeking the world? If your death arrives right now what would you do?

That honorable one rested his back against some support and said: 'If my death arrives right at this time, I would die in the state of worshipping; because I am working so that I do not stretch my hand from begging near you or other people. If I am in a state of sinning against God, then in that case I must be scared from death.' I said: 'O the Son of the Holy Prophet (S), I wanted to admonish you but I become admonished from your words.'"¹²

Sixth Imam (a.s.)

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) was born on seventeenth day of the Month of Rab'i al-Awwal, in the year 83 AH. His father was Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) and his mother was Umme Farwah, the daughter, of Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr. Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) with the command of God appointed Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) for the position of Caliphate and Imamate.¹³

During Imam al-Sadiq's (a.s.) period the confrontation between Banu Umayyah and the Abbasids had intensified significantly and as a result the power of the current government was rather weak. Banu Abbas too, in their opposition with Banu Umayyah, supported Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.). Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.), utilized this opportunity and endeavored in education of religious learning and publication of commandments and laws; through organizing educational assemblies, he nourished distinguished pupils and intellectuals; and succeeded in introducing education of issues relevant to legitimate (halal) and illegitimate (har'am) among the people.

Approximately four thousands¹⁴ pupils were trained in the School of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.); books consisting of precious treasures were written from traditions.

Due to this reason the Shi'a School of Thought is called as the Ja'fari School of Thought. Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) lived in this world for a period of 65 years and was martyred in the Holy City of Medina in middle of the Month of Raj'ab or twenty-fifth of the Month of Shawwal in the year 148 AH and was buried in the Baq'i Cemetery.

Seventh Imam (a.s.)

The seventh Imam Musa ibn Ja'far al-Kazim (a.s.) was born on seventh of the Month of Safar in the year 128 AH in Abw'a that has been located in between Mecca and Medina. His father was Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) and his mother was Hamideh. Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) with the Command of God, appointed his son Musa to Caliphate and Imamate. His worshipping and piety was to the extent that he was called Righteous Servant (Abd Saleh); he was very mature and compassionate and never lost his temper while encountering severe hardships, and due to this reason he was called repressor of anger (al-Kazim).

In spite of the fact that the Imam (a.s.) lived in a very difficult period, there was no opportunity for the publication of narration, even then, plenty of people acquired knowledge from his presence and plenty of narrations have been left from him.

He lived in this world for 55 years; in the year 179 AH, Caliph Harun ordered that he should be taken from Medina to Iraq. He was imprisoned for years in Baghdad and Basra and ultimately was poisoned and martyred on twenty-fifth of the Month of Rajab in the year 183 AH. He was martyred in prison of Sindi ibn Sh'ahak in Bagdad and was buried in the Holy City of Kazmain.

A man in Medina continuously bothered Imam al-Kazim (a.s.) and cursed Imam Ali ibn Abu

Talib (a.s.); some of companions of the Imam (a.s.) said: “Please permit us to kill this wicked person, he refused them to do that and instead asked them where that person was?’ They replied: ‘He is busy in agriculture in the vicinity of Medina.’ Imam (a.s.) started moving in the direction of his agriculture farm; he reached near him, sat near him, with a smiling and pleasant face asked him: ‘How much have you spent on this farming?’ He replied one hundred dinars.’ He asked: ‘How do you expect your return?’

He replied: ‘Two hundred dinars.’ He asked how much do you want to earn from it.’ He replied: ‘Two hundred dinars.’ Then Imam (a.s.) gave him a sack containing three hundred dinars and said to him: ‘The product of this farming also belongs to you.’ That man who saw such sort of benevolence against his annoying of Imam (a.s.), stood from his place and kissed Imam’s (a.s.) forehead and asked pardon from his previous insults; Imam (a.s.) pardoned him and returned towards Medina. The next day they saw that man in the mosque, and his eyes fell upon Musa ibn Ja’far (a.s.) he said: ‘God knows better where to place His Prophethood and Imamate. The people were amazed and wanted to find out the reason of change in his behavior, that man started talking about the virtues and distinctions of Imam Musa ibn Ja’far. Then Imam Musa ibn Ja’far (a.s.) said to his companions: ‘Was this act better than your decision? Through the means of an insignificant amount of money I have removed his evil and have changed him into a friend of Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.)’¹⁵

Eighth Imam (a.s.)

Imam Al-Ridha’ (a.s.) was born on the eleventh day of the Month of Dhu al-Q’ada in the year of 148 AH. His name was Ali, his father was Imam Musa ibn Ja’far (a.s.) and his mother’s name was Najmah. With God’s Command Imam Musa ibn Ja’far (a.s.) appointed his son Ali to Caliphate and Imamate.¹⁶

The knowledge and learning of Imam Al-Ridha’ (a.s.) was superior with respect to all of the people of that period. Students for acquiring knowledge came to his threshold and utilized from his presence; a large number of narrations about Islamic learning and religious laws and commandments have remained as his legacy. He had very interesting debates and arguments with the scholars of other religions. He participated in the debate assemblies and answered criticisms of all, and was not helpless in answering about each issue whatsoever.

His vast learning and knowledge made the people present amazed and causing them to offer him praise and compliments; he was regarded among the people extremely honorable, and was called as Scholar of Holy Progeny of the Holy Prophet (S). Caliph Mamun al-Rashid in the year of 200 AH called Imam Al-Ridha’ (a.s.) from Medina to Marv, located in the Khorasan Province of Iran.

When Imam Al-Ridha’ (a.s.) entered into Marv, Mamun suggested that Imam (a.s.) should accept the Caliphate, but he didn’t accept; with a great deal of insistence he suggested that he should accept becoming the successor! He, with this act, had two intentions:

1. He wanted, by appointing Imam Al-Ridha’ (a.s.) as successor, to acquire a religious and spiritual pretense in order to attract the attention of Shi’a and Alawite S’adat towards him and through this means, make him at ease from their opposition and rebellion.
2. He wanted Imam Al-Ridha’ (a.s.) to accept becoming his successor to become close to the Institution of Caliphate and become involved in the affairs of the country and through this means sacrifice his prestige and dignity to lessen Shi’a inclination, attachment toward him.

Imam Al-Ridha’ (a.s.) was well-informed with respect to Mamun’s intentions and knew that: Someone, in order to secure his caliphate, does not even hesitate to kill his own brother; it is not possible that with pure intentions, he would offer caliphate or the position of successor to someone else; however due to these illegitimate reasons he refused to accept becoming his successor, but with the intense pressure of Mamun, he had no other option except to accept it. However, he did so with the condition that he would not interfere in affairs of the country and in appointments and terminations of the rulers. Later on Mamun realized that Imam Al-Ridha’ (a.s.) had not given up his honor and dignity, instead, the inclination and attachment of the people with respect to the Imam was increasing day by day. It was due to this reason that he decided to kill him.

Imam Al-Ridha’ (a.s.) lived in this world for 55 years then he was poisoned through Mamun and in the last Month of Safar in year 303 AH, was martyred in Tus and was buried in the same place which is now called the Holy City of Mashhad.

Ninth Imam (a.s.)

The ninth Imam (a.s.) was born on the tenth of the Holy Month of Rajab or on the nineteenth of the month of Ramadan in the year 195 AH in Medina. His name was Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.), his father was Imam Al-Ridha’ (a.s.) and his mother was Sabikah. Imam Al-Ridha’ (a.s.) with God’s Command appointed Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) for Caliphate

and Imamate. Imam Muhammad al- Taqi (a.s.) attended the Imamate after his father. Although at that time he was in his childhood and had not attained the age of the puberty, God's given knowledge was so much that that he was able to answer all the religious problems of the people. The difficult religious questions that were asked for his testing were replied to very well; in a manner that his knowledge and distinctions became explicit for the ordinary people and they were all amazed with his power of knowledge.

His piety and piousness was to the extent that he was called as the most virtuous (al-Taqi). Imam al- Jawad (a.s.) lived in this world only for twenty-five years; the Abbasid Caliph Motasam called him from Medina to Baghdad, in the 220 AH, where he was martyred on the last day of the Month of Dhu al-Q'ad'a in the same year in Bagdad and was buried near the grave of his grandfather Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.).

Tenth Imam (a.s.)

Imam Ali al-Naqi (a.s.) was born on the fifteenth of the Month of Dhul Hijj'a or second of Raj'ab in the year 212 AH in Sariya in vicinity of the Holy City of Medina; his father was Imam Muhammad al- Taqi (a.s.) and his mother was Sam'anah. Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) with God's command appointed his Imam Ali al-Naqi (a.s.) to Caliphate and Imamate.¹⁷

He was only eight years old when his father left the world; and at the same young age acquired Imamate, but was completely aware of divine knowledge. He was unique and matchless in knowledge and wisdom. His decent conduct, vast knowledge, and piousness of that noble one absorbed and attracted the people towards him.

The Abbasid Caliph Muttawakil was afraid that people would be inclined towards him and would gather around him thus causing a threat to his government; due to this reason he called the Imam (a.s.) from Medina to Samara in the year 243 AH and kept him under his severe vigilance. Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) lived in this world for a period of only forty two years and was continuously under the pressure of Abbasid Caliphs and was martyred on the twenty-seventh day of Jum'ada al-Thani or third of the Month of Raj'ab in the year 254 AH, in Samara and was buried there.

Eleventh Imam (a.s.)

The eleventh Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) was born on the eighth or fourth of the Month of Rabi al- Thani in the year 232 AH in the Holy City of Medina. His father was Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) and his mother was Hudeth. Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) with God's Command, appointed his son Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) to Caliphate and Imamate.¹⁸

Imam al-Askari (a.s.) too like his father was under severe vigilance in the City of Samara and was also in prison for a period of his blessed life. People were not able to see him freely in order to benefit from his knowledge and wisdom. But in spite of that narrations have remained from him as his legacy; his pleasant conduct, virtues and knowledge are not hidden from anyone. Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) lived in this world for only twenty eight years and was martyred on the eighth day of the Month of Rabi al-Awwal in the year 260 AH and was buried there.

Twelfth Imam (a.j.)

The twelfth Imam of Shi'a, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan (a.j.) was born in Samara on the fifteenth of Sh'aban in the year of 255 AH; his titles are al-Mahdi, the one who would rise up (Qa'im) and Lord of the Age (Sahib al-Zaman) and Proof of God (al-Hujjah). His father was Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) and mother was Narjis. Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) with God's Command appointed his son Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (a.j.) to Caliphate and Imamate. In many of the narrations that have reached us through the Holy Prophet (S), he said: "The ninth son from the lineage of Imam al- Husain (a.s.) would have my name and would be the Promised Guide (Mahdi M'aood)."

The Holy Prophet (S) and Infallible Imams (a.s.) have informed that that the son of Imam Hasan al- Askari (a.s.) is the Promised al-Mahdi (a.j.), and he would remain hidden for a prolonged period from our sights. When God would deem it to be expedient, he would appear and would reform the world through expanding justice and equality; he would rule over the entire earth, would make Monotheism and God's worshipping as general and would officially declare the sacred religion of Islam for all of mankind.

In accordance with the forecast of the Holy Prophet (S) and information and narrations from the Infallible Imams (a.s.), God gave a son to Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) named, Muhammad (a.j.); a group of very close companions and a number of people in his inner circle who were trusted by Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) have seen that child and testified about his presence. The Imam of the Age (a.j.) at the time of the demise of his father was only five years old and acquired Imamate after him.

Since the Abbasid Caliphs had heard about the indications of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) and were learned about the Holy Prophet's (S) traditions that the son of Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) is the promised savior who would confront oppression and injustice and would make the government of tyrants upside down; they had a serious determination that if there is a child from Imam Hasan al- Askari (a.s.) they would kill him in order to remove the great danger from their path.

It was due to this reason as well as other considerations, the Imam of the Age (a.s.) was forced to remain hidden from sights and should live secretly, but his link with the people was not completely severed, rather it was possible that through the means of specially appointed people who were called as his deputies (wakil or nayab), people could have communicated with the Imam of the Age (a.j.) and could have obtained the answer to their requests. His famous deputies are four people as follows:

1. Othman ibn S'aeed
2. Muhammad ibn Othman
3. Husain ibn Rooh
4. Ali ibn Muhammad Samari

These four people were appointed as his deputies one after another, then his smaller occultation (gheebat-e-sughra) was completed and official communication with Imam (a.j.) was terminated and greater occultation had begun. Currently Imam (a.j.) lives in greater occultation (ghaybat-e-kubra); he moves among the people, participates in congregations but does not introduce himself. This condition will continue until the general circumstances of the world become suitable, and the ground for the establishment of a single Islamic Government of the world becomes readied.

And a majority of the people would be inclined from the profundities of their heart and soul for the ruling of a system based upon monotheism, and would consider a solution of their problems only through obedience of God's Commandments after becoming completely disappointed from everywhere, and with severe intensity of their infliction with tyranny and injustice would be put out of patience by harassment.

At that time the Lord of the Age, Imam al-Zaman (a.j.), will appear and through mighty power that he would have at his disposal; he would turn the institution of oppression and injustice upside down and through the execution of the divine commandments would fill the world with justice and equality. We Shi'a during the period of his occultation have the obligation of waiting for his arrival: We abstract the most subtle programs of social commandments of the Holy Qur'an and introduce them to the attention of mankind; prove distinctions and advantages of divine laws to mankind.

We bring attention of mankind towards the divine programs and laws; confront with false ideologies and fallacies; endeavor to provide the required preparations and preliminaries for establishment of Islamic Government for the entire world. Meanwhile through abstracting design and plans of solutions of the world's problems from the Holy Qur'an and narrations, provide them to reformers of mankind; through making the thoughts of human beings enlightened, accordingly prepare ourselves for the Imam's (a.j.) appearance and the formation of the government of justice and equity.

Our Belief Regarding Imams (a.s.)

1. The Imams (a.s.) are completely immaculate from sins, mistakes and blunders.
2. They are thoroughly knowledgeable about all divine commandments and laws; knowledge and information which are required for guidance and spiritual instructions have been provided to them.
3. None of the commandments are introduced by them nor are they its commentators.
4. They practice all religious commandments and believe truthfully in them; they are decorated with decent, righteous conduct and are the best individuals of humanity and are the complete manifestation of the religion.
5. They are human beings and are servants of Allah, the Most High, just like any other human beings; they are His creatures susceptible to sickness and death; they are not gods and creators of existences.
6. Eleven of them were martyred. The Twelfth Imam (a.s.) is the immediate son of Imam Hasan al- Askari (a.s.); he is still alive and his appearance is awaited.

Shi'a

Those who consider Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (a.s.) as immediate caliph and successor of the Holy Prophet (S) are called Shi'a. The Imamiyeh Shi'a regard Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (a.s.) and his eleven infallible sons as Imam and leaders and obey their sayings and deeds. A true Shi'a is someone who follows Imam Ali (a.s.) and infallible Imams (a.s.) and their narrations and deeds as their model. Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) said to Jabir: "O Jabir! Is it sufficient for a

person only to say this much amount that: 'I am a lover of Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.)?'

By God he is not our Shi'a but that he should be pious and obey God. O Jabir earlier, my Shi'a were identified for these characteristics: Hospitality, being trustworthy, remembering God, prayer, fasting, goodness towards parents, helping neighbors and the destitute, orphans and those who were under debt, righteousness and being reciters of the Holy Qur'an. They did not say a thing about the people except goodness; they were trustworthy of the people.'

"Jabir replied: 'O son of the Holy Prophet (S)! At this time I do not know any one possessing these characteristics.' Imam (a.s.) replied: 'O Jabir different beliefs should not make you confused and to fall down to commit a mistake. Is it sufficient for the prosperity of a person that he should hold to this much that: I am lover of Imam Ali (a.s.), but does not do God's commandments? If someone says that: I am lover of the Holy Prophet (S) but does not follow his words and deeds, the friendship of the Holy Prophet (S) should not become the means of his prosperity while the Holy Prophet (S) was superior to Imam Ali (a.s.). O Shi'ah! Be afraid of God, and obey His commandments. God does not have family ties or relationship with anyone; the most honorable person near God is the person who is the most pious and foremost in performance of deeds. O Jabir! By God, there is no means of God's nearness except obedience to His Commandments. Freedom from hell is not in our hands, whoever is obedient to God is our friend, and whoever rebels against God's Commandments is our enemy. Our vicegerency (vilayat) is not obtained except through the means of righteous deeds and pioussness.'"19

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Be pious and righteous; make endeavors in self-purification and cleansing and the performance of virtuous deeds; be truthful, trustworthy, and of pleasant conduct; treat yours neighbors kindly; through the means of your conduct and deeds, invite people towards the true religion. Be a source of our prestige and to keep our head high. With wicked deeds do not provide the means of our shame and degradation. Make your prostrations and genuflections prolonged; because when a slave prolongs his prostrations and genuflections, Satan becomes upset and cries: 'O woe! They have done obedience and I have sinned, they prostrate but I refused to do prostration.'"20

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Disciples and helpers of Jesus (a.s.) were his Shi'a; but his helpers were not better than our Shi'a; because they gave him the promise to help but didn't deliver their promise and did not fight in the path of God. But our Shi'a, since the demise of the Holy Prophet (S) until now never refuse from our helping and offered sacrifices for us; were burned in fire, were tortured and severely punished, and were exiled from their homes but did not hold their hands from our help and support."21

Our Beliefs about Other Muslims

While we have differences of opinion with Sunnis with respect to the issue of caliphate and the succession after the Holy Prophet (S), we still regard all Muslims as our fellow brothers; our God is one; our book is the same and our Qiblah²² is the same.

We regard their dignity and progress as our own dignity and progress. We account their victory and domination as our own domination and their defeat and degradation is our own defeat and degradation. We are their partners in sharing their happiness and sorrows. In this act we take inspiration from our great leader Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (a.s.); if Ali (a.s.) wanted to defend his legitimate right to take the caliphate he was able to do so, but instead preferred the general interest of Islam and preserving the religion. He not only confronted the caliphs, rather at the sensitive and required moments rushed to their help, and never refused from taking any step in the interest of Islam.

We believe that the Islamic world would only remain as a living and powerful nation, could retake its grandeur and majesty, rescue itself from the superimpositions of the aliens, only through taking distance from differences, concentrating its energy toward one objective and all of them should take giant steps in the path of advancement, grandeur and progress of the Islamic world.

1. Refer to Ghayat al-Mura'm, Ithbat al-Huda, Yanabi' al-Mawaddah, Sahhah Abu Da'wood, and Musnad-e Ahmad.
2. Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah, v. 5, p-208; a group of Holy Prophet's (S) companions have narrated the story of Ghadir-e-Khum, this narration is continuous and certain and exists in the Shi'a and Sunni books. The relevant narration in the book of Ghayateh al- Mur'am, has been mentioned eighty nine ways from Sunnis and forty three times from Shi'a.
3. Man'aqib A'le Muhammad, Ibn Shahr 'Ashub, v.2, p-108.
4. Bihar al-Anwar, v.41, p-52.
5. Ithbat al-Huda, v. 5, p-373.
6. Yanabi' al-Mawaddah, p-373.

7. Man'aqib A'le Muhammad, Ibn Shahr 'Ashub, v. 4, p-19.
8. Ithbat al-Huda, v. 5, p-169.
9. Ithbat al-Huda, v. 5, p-212; Irsh'ad of Shaykh Mufid, p-238.
10. Man'aqib A'le Muhammad, Shahr 'Ashub, v. 4, p-153.
11. Ithbat al-Huda, v.5, p-263; Irsh'ad of Shaykh Mufid, p-245.
12. Kashf al-Ghummah, Printed in Tabriz, v. 2, p-337.
13. Ithbat al-Huda, v.5, p-328; Irsh'ad of Shaykh Mufid, p-254.
14. Irshad of Shaykh Mufid, p-254.
15. Kashf al-Ghummah, v.3, p-18.
16. Ithbat al-Huda, v.6, p-2; Irshad of Shaykh Mufid, p-285.
17. Ithbat al-Huda, v. 6, p-208; Irshad of Shaykh Mufid, p-308.
18. Ithbat al-Huda, v.6, p-269; Irshad of Shaykh Mufid, p-315.
19. Wafi, v.1, part-3, p-38.
20. Wafi, v.1, p-61.
21. Safinatul Bihar, v.1, p-73.
22. The direction of prayer i.e. Holy Mecca [Tr].