

Who Are The Twelve Caliphs?

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Evidently, the greatest duty of every Muslim is the recognition and knowledge of the established facts of the Holy Quran and the Sunnah, and to learn them with maximum reflection and thorough study. Also, one must seek from these two, guidance towards the goals of the strong religion and the straight path of Allah. For, these only are the guides that mankind needs to achieve bliss and success in his intellectual, religious, ethical, social and political life.

Moreover, from the most important responsibilities of a researcher of traditions that establish the caliphate of the twelve caliphs is to indulge in deep deliberation over these that he may recognize the twelve caliphs, whose caliphate and Imamah has been documented in these traditions that surpass consecutivity. He must ask himself the following questions:

Who are they?

Who are these caliphs?

What did the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) intend through these quotes?

With whom are these traditions compatible?

Why are the caliphs restricted to this number? And so on and so forth.

It is not proper for the one who studies these traditions to be content with their reading and interpretation, and then moving on to the next tradition. It is also not correct for him to simply glance through them as this would lead to negligence in his learning. Yes, it is obligatory on him to stop at them and not to simply speed through them that he recognizes their purpose in detail and with certainty. For, being careless and negligent towards them is tantamount to carelessness and negligence towards the sayings of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.), in whose reverence Allah, Blessed and High be He, declares: Nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed. (Qur'an Surah Najm 53: 4-5.)

Here, in this treatise, in the company of our thoughtful, researching, learning and cultured readers, we shall place these traditions before us and investigate in it. We will also keep as standard the views that have been expressed earlier concerning them.

It should also be known that the aforementioned traditions are not in need of external or whimsical explanations because some of these explain the others and make the researcher needless of interpretation from other than these traditions.

A group of these traditions establishes that the first of them is Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) and the last of them is the Mahdi (a.s.).

Another group proves that the first of them is Ali (a.s.), the second Hasan (a.s.), the third Husain (a.s.) and the remaining nine are from the progeny of Husain (a.s.).

Yet another batch establishes that the ninth from the progeny of Husain (a.s.), is the twelfth Imam, the Mahdi (a.s.).

A number of these traditions guide towards the names of the twelve Imams, and introduction of their personalities.

There are numerous another traditions that explain, in brief or in detail, tidings about the twelve Imams (a.s.).

Obviously, the wise and logical approach in comprehending the purpose of these traditions is to derive their meanings and implications. The weakness of the chain of narrators in a few of them shall not affect their validity due to the strength and reliability of others. For, the strong and reliable chains do away with the infirmness of the weak ones. Often, we shall demonstrate this reality in the course of our explanations, Inshallah.

Thereafter, we shall ponder on the group of traditions that establishes that the number of Imams is twelve. With which Islamic sect is this number compatible? Or, is compatibility found at all in any of the sects? Or, shall we say, God forbid, that these traditions did not actually occur in reality?

We say: Know that the discussion concerning this group of traditions is divided into two levels:

First: The meanings and implications of these traditions.

Second: Determination of those on whom these traditions apply. In other words, the recognition of the twelve caliphs along with their personalities.

The First Level: The Meanings And Implications Of These Traditions

First: The number of the caliphs, who shall succeed the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) is confined to twelve. None can increase or decrease any one of them. This is the gist of each one of these traditions.

Second: The endurance of the earth and its protection from disorder is dependant on the

survival of the Imams (a.s.).

Third: Non-termination of Islam before their (Imams a.s.) termination i.e. the continuity of Islam depends on them. As long as even one of them lives, Islam will continue to endure and prosper, which proves their prolonged stay on the earth, even if it means the longevity of the twelfth and the last one of them.

Fourth: Islam will continue to remain mighty and the devils will be unable to erase it and destroy its effects as long as the twelve Imams (a.s.) exist. Thus, it will always be mighty and lofty and none can destroy it like the previous Divine laws and religions were ruined. For example, the Shariah of Prophet Moosa (a.s.) and Prophet Eesa (a.s.), in addition to being abrogated by the Shariah of Islam, were distorted in principles and laws through occurrences, wars, Machiavellian politics, manipulations, etc. Hence, whatever is presently available with the Jews and the Christians is not the actual and original Shariah of Prophet Moosa (a.s.) and Prophet Eesa (a.s.), particularly the principles of religion and matters related to beliefs.

As for Islam, then indeed it has remained mighty, lofty and protected from the distortions of the fanatics and the refutation of the deniers. It will continue to be so till the reappearance of the Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) and the Day of Resurrection. For surely, Allah, the High, has placed it in His fortified protection and appointed twelve Imams (a.s.) as guides for it and those who will establish His command in all times till the Day of Judgment.

The above point does not, by any means, contradict the domination of the disbelievers over the Muslims in the past or in the present at some times and in some places, because of their inability to destroy Islam. The proof of this lies in the fact that Islam is still surviving even after the passage of fourteen long centuries, notwithstanding its enemies who with all their force, number and preparedness, were unanimous in the destruction of Islam and weakening the Muslims with all their material strength, military power and economic muscle. But their conspiracies fail to extinguish the Light of Allah, the High. Nay, often they dominated the Muslims apparently and ruled over their countries and their wealth but miserably failed to prevent the seeds of this tree from flowering. Nay, on a number of occasions, the prophecies of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) to his nation in the above traditions were manifested, as also the promise of Allah to His Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and to the Muslims through His sayings like,

They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths but Allah will perfect His light, though the unbelievers may be averse. (Qur'an Surah Saff 61: 8.)

And He says, like a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches are in heaven, Yielding its fruit in every season by the permission of its Lord? (Qur'an Surah Ibraaheem 14: 24-25.)

Fifth: These traditions do not imply that the might of Islam will be absolute and will not be achieved except through the rule of these Imams (a.s.). Rather, they mean that Islam will continue to survive till they survive, even if it does not enjoy the esteemed levels which it deserves. Of course, absolute might will not actualize except in their reign and during their apparent rule. This too will not materialize through the governance of only one of them. When we talk of the might of Islam, we mean the implementation of its laws throughout the universe, a condition that will be achieved only gradually and during the governance of the last of them.

Briefly, we are of the opinion that the might of Islam with some of its levels shall survive, which will prevent the destruction of religion and keep it preserved and protected, only through the twelve Imams (a.s.). And only when its conditions are fulfilled through the government of the twelfth Imam (a.t.f.s.) that absolute might will prevail. Allah, the High, says He it is Who sent His Apostle with guidance and the religion of truth, that He might cause it to prevail over all religions, though the polytheists may be averse. (Qur'an Surah Taubah 9: 33.)

Sixth: Verily, the Imamatus of these Imams (a.s.) will be in succession and continuity uninterrupted. This reality can be easily deciphered from the clear concepts of these traditions.

Here, there are a few important points that refer to the meanings of the words, 'Caliph', 'Imam', and 'Master', which we shall state for completing the discussion.

First

Raagheb Isfahaani, the renowned littérateur writes, 'Caliphate means representation of another, either due to the absence of the represented one or due to his death or due to his inability or due to the eminence of the representative. On account of the last mentioned meaning, Allah has made His friends as His representatives in the earth.'¹

I say: Therefore, a Caliph is the representative of the other, regardless of the represented

person being absent, dead, unable or due to the esteemed and lofty position of the representative in the eyes of the represented person. Or the execution of some tasks, the implementation of the authority of the represented one and the manifestation of his position through the representative are appropriate as per the wisdom, aims, purposes, etc. of the represented one. It is irrelevant whether the representative and the represented one are Allah, the High, His Prophet (s.a.w.a.) or a group of His servants or some of them.

Hence, amongst all the literary applications, we cannot take the first three i.e. the absence, death and inability of the represented person as these cannot be applied for the Prophethood of a Prophet or the Imamat of an Imam. Therefore, the term 'Caliph of Allah' is truly applicable in its real sense on Adam (a.s.), Dawood (a.s.) and all other Prophets like Nuh (a.s.), Ibraheem (a.s.), Moosa (a.s.), Isaa (a.s.), their chief Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and the twelve Imams about whose caliphate the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) has given tidings to his nations.

Moreover, the term 'Caliph', as used in the Holy Quran and the traditions, is not related to any added noun, displaying clearly that it implies only for the Caliph of Allah, the High. So, a Prophet or an Imam is a representative and heir of Allah, the High, and Prophethood and Imamat are from the affairs of Allah, the High. None has got the right to stake a claim to this status but with His permission.

Allah has used the word 'Caliph' in the Holy Quran, thus: I am going to place in the earth a khalif. (Qur'an Surah Baqarah 2: 30.)

And He, Mighty and Glorified be He declared, O Dawood! Surely We have made you a ruler in the land. (Qur'an Surah Suad 38: 26.)

It has come in the traditions that he was the Caliph of Allah, the High. Then the caliphs are the representatives of Allah upon His servants and His deputies for His creatures.

As for the rulers, they are the chiefs regardless of them being Caliphs on earth. Consequently, every Caliph is a ruler and chief, but every ruler and chief is not a Caliph.

The words 'government', 'reign' and 'authority' fall much short in comparison with the concept of a 'caliph'. Caliphate as used by Allah or for that matter by the Prophet, covers all the aspects like majesty, beauty, holiness, governance on the foundations of goodness, justice and human values, handling the weak ones with kindness, etc., which no other term covers. For, the authority of a caliph is connected to the authority of Allah, the Wise, the Just, the Beneficent, the Merciful, the Overpowering, the Subduer, the Generous, the Holy, the Kind, the Forgiving and the Refuge.

A caliph cannot be deprived of his status nor does he divert from the course that Allah has charted for him. He is not ordered but the establishment of justice, repelling falsehood, purification of the souls and acting upon the Holy Quran and the Sunnah. So, whoever digresses from this path and aim will not be a caliph, as opposed to an emir, a governor or a ruler.

Indeed, it's clear for you now that caliphate is a divine position and Allah's representation, which cannot be completed nor realized save through divine appointment and none partners Him in this regard.

Besides the rational argument that the appointment of Allah's caliph in the earth necessitates that he should be appointed by Allah only, the verses of the Holy Quran: (Qur'an Surah Baqarah 2: 30.)

And (Qur'an Surah Suad 38: 26.)

are also evidence enough of the aforementioned fact. For, these two verses clearly suggest that the appointment of a caliph is from the affairs of Allah, the High, and His special acts, in which none partners Him. Hence, nobody else has got any role whatsoever in the appointment of a caliph in the earth.

Here, it will not be inappropriate to indicate that caliphate is a general Grace (لطف) of Allah, the High, which is not confined to a particular era. Thus, like all other general endowments, which demand His absolute lordship, all encompassing mercy and perfect wisdom, His grace too includes His servants at all times and in all places and is not restricted to a particular time or region. Verily, the sole prerogative of the caliph's appointment lies with Allah, the Endower, the Generous Who is not niggardly in His goodness nor does His treasures exhaust and He is the Wise, the Knowing. When the emanation of this Grace is proved to be obligatory in one era, its emergence is automatically established at all times.

And there are proofs that the terms caliph and caliphate when used in the Holy Quran and the traditions imply only Allah's representation, the great divine vicegerency and nothing else. There are a number of traditions in this regard from both Shias and Sunnis like those concerning Al-Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) that he is the caliph of Allah.²

And like the advice of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) to Huzaifah, "If there is for Allah a caliph in the earth, obey him even if he whips your back or takes away your wealth."³

Kumail reports that Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) said, “They are the caliphs of Allah in His cities (in His earth).”⁴

While addressing those responsible for public trusts and wealth, Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) advises them to exercise utmost caution in establishing truth and following the principle of justice in all matters, big or small, significant or otherwise. Then he (a.s.) orders them to say to the people, “O servants of Allah! The friend of Allah and His caliph has sent me to you.”⁵

The great genius, the master in jurisprudence, tradition, literature and a number of other sciences, Shaikh Bahauddin al-Aameli (a.r.), while deriving from the above traditions, has written poems titled ‘Waseelah al-Fauz wa al-Amaan fi madh Saaheb al-Asr wa al-Zamaan’. A couplet from it goes as follows: “The caliph of the Lord of the worlds and His shade On the inhabitants of the earth in every house.”

Objection: Why was the term ‘Caliph’ used for all the rulers after the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) till the recent rulers of the Ottoman Empire, although they were neither appointed by Allah nor by the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.)? Moreover, their governance were not the carriers of the pure Islamic message nor were they having any legal sanctions from Allah. They were also labeled as oppressive tyrants, whose reign had nothing to do with Islam and who had no qualms in taking the servants of Allah as their slaves and usurping their wealth.

Answer: The term ‘Caliph of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.)’ was used in early Islam for the rulers immediately after him (s.a.w.a.) by those who were close to them. Later, the domain of its usage expanded and the above term was used for the oppressive kings as well, fearing their tyranny and barbaric oppressions. After sometime, this term was curtailed to a singular word i.e. ‘The Caliph’.

There is no doubt that this term and its application does not lead to the change of words of the Holy Quran and the traditions, from what appears from them at the time of usage nor do they change the words to their new meanings. Also, the usage of this term was historically erroneous because the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) never appointed Abu Bakr as his caliph. As for Umar, Abu Bakr appointed him⁶, so logically he should be called as the caliph of Abu Bakr (and not the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.)).

As for the status for the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) and his rule over the affairs, then it was not due to the selection of the people or his domination over the affair or his oppression. Nay! It was only due to the choice of Allah, the High. Hence, using the terms, ‘emir’, ‘ruler’ and ‘king’ for those called as caliphs would be more appropriate than being called as a ‘caliph’, leave alone the terms ‘Allah’s caliph’ or ‘the caliph of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.)’.

A right-thinking and sane person, not necessarily a follower of the Ahle Bait (a.s.) can never permit, condone or overlook the usage of the term ‘the caliph of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.)’ for the likes of Usman, Moawiyah, Yazeed, Waleed, the tyrants of Bani Abbas and the progeny of Usman, etc., who ruled over Syria, Iraq, Spain, etc.

Briefly, the epithet ‘Allah’s caliph’ is a lofty and elevated term. The same applies for the term ‘caliph’. It cannot be used, and it is not correct to use it except for Allah’s representative on the earth, whom He has chosen to establish justice, be the highest role model for mankind, implement His laws, inhabit His cities, spread goodness, preserve the laws of Shariah and the signs of truth.

Its usage is incorrect for any other person either due to disregard or carelessness. For the clarification of the falsity of this claim, when he was addressed as, ‘O caliph of Allah!’ Abu Bakr said, ‘No, I am the caliph of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.)’ or ‘I am the caliph of Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.)’.⁷

Of course, his conferring the above titles on his own self has no substance of truth in it because as you just read, caliphate is representation of another, and this representation cannot be complete without the appointment by the represented one. Unanimity prevails concerning the fact that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) did not appoint Abu Bakr as his caliph, nor did he (s.a.w.a.) make any will to him. None of Abu Bakr’s actions like sitting in the place of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.), going on the pulpit, praying in his (s.a.w.a.) prayer niche (mehraab), were on his behalf and under his (s.a.w.a.) representation.

There is an opinion that governance and the appointment of a ruler is the duty of the Ummah (Islamic nation), hence it is obligatory upon it to appoint him. Also, there was consensus in the Ummah – which actually never existed – for the appointment of Abu Bakr, without force or fear. So, using the term ‘Caliph of the nation’ instead of ‘the caliph of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.)’ will be more appropriate and correct. For, in their view, Abu Bakr was the representative of the nation, whose collective responsibility was to implement the laws and protect the system. Needless to mention, the above idea has been formulated without devoting the slightest of deliberations on the definition of ‘caliphate’ i.e. it’s representation of the other.

Second

Whatever we have discussed for the word 'caliph', is also applicable for the word 'Imam' and 'master' (ولي), particularly the latter when it is used for other than Allah, the High. So, an Imam implies the owner of an elevated position appointed by Allah, the High, whether he is a Prophet or the successor of a Prophet. This implication by no means contradicts the literal meaning of the word Imam because literally, the word 'Imam' is used for anybody who is followed in knowledge, ethics or in any field of art and technology. For example, it is said Khalil Ibn Ahmad is an Imam in literature, Kulaini (r.a.) is an Imam in traditions, Shaykh Tusi (r.a.) is an Imam in exegesis, traditions, jurisprudence and principles of jurisprudence, and Abu Ali Seena is an Imam in philosophy and medicine. All these applications do not contradict the usage of the word 'Imam' by Allah, the Holy Quran and the traditions, for the one whom Allah has appointed as an Imam, made them standard for His servants, the minaret in His cities, the one who is to be followed by all and sundry. Thus, the word 'Imam' is normally used for the one who is followed as a leader due to excessive usage in the Holy Quran and the traditions and refers to this specially appointed person. Hence, whenever the word 'Imam' is used independently, and the context does not indicate otherwise, it automatically implies the representative of Allah.

Due to this very special application of the word 'Imam' for Allah's proof and His appointee, a number of holy personalities refused to attach this title (Imam) before their names despite being apparently worthy of it in at least one context or more.

It is worth mentioning that the term 'Imam', notwithstanding its numerous imports, is applicable only for the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) and his (s.a.w.a.) successors designated by Allah, the High. But it appears that the excessive use of the word for the holy and infallible Imams of the Ahle Bait (a.s.) in the traditions has led to its application in the second meaning i.e. for the leaders in other fields.

If someone refers to the Holy Quran and the traditions, he will find plenty of testimonies endorsing the above theory. For example, the Holy Quran says, And when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words, he fulfilled them. He said: Surely I will make you an Imam men. Ibrahim said: And of my offspring? My covenant does not include the unjust, said He. (Qur'an Surah Baqarah 2: 124.)

The above verse clearly indicates that Imamatus is a covenant of Allah, which does not reach to the oppressors. Moreover, it is an appointment from the side of Allah. It is absolutely clear that the appointment of Imam for the people is invalid and incorrect except from the side of Allah, the High.

Some more verses of the Holy Quran that prove our point are cited hereunder.

And We made them Imams who guided (people) by Our command, and We revealed to them the doing of good. (Qur'an Surah Anbiya 21: 73.)

And We desired to bestow a favor upon those who were deemed weak in the land, and to make them the Imams (Qur'an Surah Qasas 28: 5.)

And We made of them Imams to guide by Our command when they were patient. (Surah Qur'an Sajdah 32: 24.)

There are a plenty of traditions that also support this argument. While talking about his successors and the necessity of their recognition, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) declared, One who dies without recognizing the Imam of his time then he can die as he wishes, either as a Jew or a Christian.⁸

Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) says, 'Through us, guidance is granted and darkness is dispelled. Surely the Imams from the Quraish are planted from the Hashemite wombs. None is worthy of it (Imamat) but them and none is eligible for being the masters except them.'⁹ In another place he (a.s.) says,

Certainly the Imáms are the vicegerents of Alláh over His creatures and they make the creatures know Alláh. No one will enter Paradise except he who knows them and they know him, and no one will enter Hell except he who denies them and they deny him.¹⁰

Therefore, there are numerous reliable and consecutive traditions in the books of both Shias and Sunnis, specially the former, that suggest the holy implication of the word Imam and its divine essence. And that whenever it is used independently, it is done in this very meaning, unless the context indicates otherwise. This was regarding the word 'Imam'.

As for the word 'Master' (wali) then sometimes it is used as an additive before Allah, the High, or with other than Him, while on other occasions, it is used without any additive. Now, this additive (muzaaf elaihe) has two applications: Sometimes, the additive is the place of manifestation of the mastership of the master and its execution. Like in the examples, 'Allah is the Master of the people' or 'Allah is the Master of those who believe' or 'The father is the master of his small son' or 'The ruler is the master of the abstaining or absent ones', the people and those who believe are the place of manifestation of Allah's mastership, the

mastership of a father is expressed through his son and the mastership of a ruler is manifested through his subjects. In all the aforementioned examples, a master (wali) is used as a subject (فاعل).

For instance, Allah, the High, says, Only Allah is your Vali and His Apostle and those who believe (Qur'an Surah Maaedah 5: 55.)

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) declared, 'Ali (a.s.) is the master of every believer after me.' Or 'They are my Caliphs, O Jaabir, and the masters of the affair after me.'

At other times, the word 'wali' is used to denote as an object (مفعول) of the noun to which it is added. Like, when we say, 'Ali (a.s.) is the wali of Allah', we mean that Ali is appointed as a master from the side of Allah.

In all the examples cited above, the thing that comes to the mind that the term 'wali', when used before the words 'people', 'those who believe', 'Allah' etc., it carries the meaning of the words 'Caliph' or 'Imam' bearing some sort of holiness and spirituality. Its power emanates from the absolute and perfect mastership of Allah, and this is the meaning in which it is used when applied for the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) and the infallible Imams (a.s.) independently, without any additive. When used for Allah, the High, the word 'wali' implies His absolute perfection, which is not derived from the mastership of others, with the exclusion of all other meanings like helper (ناصر) and lover (محب).

Three

The terms, 'Caliph', 'Imam' and 'Wali', from the various meanings and connotations expressed above, when used in the Book of Allah and the Sunnah, bear only one external implication (i.e. all the three words are used for one person). Nay, each one of them is perennially applicable to the meaning of the other two except for the fact that each one of them has a special meaning that comes to the mind instantly before the others.

Therefore, the word 'Caliph' strikes the meaning of the one who is appointed on the command of Allah, the High, as His representative to judge between the people with truth, to establish justice and equity, regulate the affairs, spread safety and security, etc. Similarly, the word 'Wali' denotes the one who enjoys absolute control in the affairs of creation as well as legislation from the side of Allah, the High, on the basis of His power and legislation. The word 'Imam' implies the one who has been appointed to be followed and obeyed. People receive guidance by accepting his instructions because he is the standard for those who tread the path (سالك), a guide towards divine satisfaction, a protection for those who seek security and a strong rope to which the people fasten. Each one of these terms suggests a special endowment and a particular divine grace, covering His noble servants and confidantes of His secrets, who have His special favours, do not precede Him in saying and are cognizant of His affair.

All the three positions can be conferred on one person along with either messengership or prophethood or both. For example, in the case of Prophet Ibraheem (a.s.), Prophethood as well as Imamate were conferred, while Prophet Adam (a.s.) and Prophet Dawood (a.s.), received Prophethood and Caliphate both. There are instances of Prophets about whose Imamate Allah has informed in the Holy Quran. All these elevated divine positions were collectively found in the holy persona of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.).

Separated from Prophethood, an Imam, Caliph and Wali follows the Prophet like the twelve Imams (a.s.) because Prophethood and Messengership came to an end with their great ancestors, the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad Ibn Abdullah (s.a.w.a.) but Caliphate, Imamate and Wilayat remained in his (s.a.w.a.) nation so that Allah's proofs and arguments are not invalidated. These are the caliphs who carried the burden of the divine caliphate after the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.). This, by no means, contradicts their being the caliphs of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) as has come in a few traditions like his (s.a.w.a.) saying, 'They are my caliphs, O Jaabir', 'O Allah! Have mercy on my caliphs', 'O Ali! You are my successor'; 'You are the caliph after me' etc. Whatever we have mentioned here vis-à-vis these terms are in their absolute and independent applications, and not when used along with other additives other than Allah. For, when they are used with an additive other than Allah, undoubtedly it implies the representation of the other.

The caliphate of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.), as mentioned in the above traditions, denotes the representation in the conveyance of laws and what Allah has revealed to him (s.a.w.a.) for the people. The caliph is his successor in regulating the affairs of this nation, and it is not permissible for the nation to oppose him at any cost. Thus, caliphate, representation, deputation, etc. are only for those who have been specially and exclusively appointed for these positions and nobody else has got any right whatsoever to stake a claim without the requisite permission and order of the represented one.

I wish I had known from where this nation has become the caliph and representative of the

Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) and what is its proof? How can the mastership of an entire ummah be established when the mastership of any single individual from it cannot be proved? This is nothing but audacity and impudence before Allah, the Almighty and His Messenger (s.a.w.a.).

The Second Level

Determination of those Compatible with the Description of these Traditions and Recognition of the Twelve Holy Personalities

Know that these traditions do not fit anybody except the Shiite belief. For, some of these suggest that Islam will not come to an end till there are twelve caliphs amongst the Muslims. Some others indicate that the subsistence of Islam's might depends on the existence of the twelve caliphs. Yet others point out that the religion (of Islam) will survive till the Day of Judgment and that the Imams (a.s.) will continue to exist till the last era. Still some others specify that all the twelve Imams are from Quraish, some of them have even stated that all of them will be from the Bani Hashim and some others have stated that their likes will not be seen.

The apparent of all these traditions has confined the number of the caliphs to twelve and that they shall follow each other in rapid succession. It is known that these characteristics are not found save in the twelve Imams (a.s.), who are famous and well known among both the major sects of Islam. No Islamic sect except the Shias can stake a claim to this fact and it will not be inappropriate if we consider these traditions as a miracle of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) and his (s.a.w.a.) information about the unseen.

There is no doubt that these traditions cannot be interpreted but on this meaning, and a safe and straight mind, devoid of flaws and selfish motives, will not explain it in any other manner. If we add a few more traditions that have come down concerning the twelve Imams (a.s.), in addition to whatever we have related in this book, we will be sure that they are not applicable for anybody but the twelve Imams (a.s.) from the Ahle Bait (a.s.).

Moreover, such traditions are supported by the famous and certain tradition of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) called Hadis-e-Saqalain. Apart from this, there are other equally known traditions like:

(1) The stars are a cause of security for the inhabitants of the sky while my Ahle Bait (a.s.) are the reason for the safety of my nation.' The author of Zakhhaer al-Uqbaa writes, 'Abu Amr al-Ghaffaari narrates on the authority of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.), 'The stars are a security for the inhabitants of the sky. So when the stars will be destroyed, the sky will follow suit. Similarly, my Ahle Bait (a.s.) are the reason for the safety of the people of the earth. When my Ahle Bait (a.s.) are finished, the people of the earth will follow suit.' He continues, 'Ahmad (Ibn Hanbal) has recorded this tradition in his Manaaqeb as well.

(2) 'The stars are the cause of security of the people of the earth from drowning, while my Ahle Bait (a.s.) are the reason for the safety of my nation from disputes.'¹¹ The author of Al-Sawaaeq Al-Muhreqah has stated that Haakem Neshaapuri has considered this tradition to be correct as per the stipulations of the two Sheikhs (viz. Bukhaari and Muslim).

(3) 'The likeness of my Ahle Bait (a.s.) is like that of the ark of Hazrat Nuh (a.s.) ...' which has been narrated through various chains of narrators.

(4) Bukhari reports that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) said, 'This affair (Islam) will continue in the Quraish even if there remain two individuals amongst all the people.'¹²

(5) The tradition used by Abu Bakr as an argument against the Ansaar in Saqeefah narrating from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.), who said, 'The Imams are from Quraish.'¹³

(6) Besides, the warning of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.), 'Whoever dies without recognizing the Imam of his time, dies the death of ignorance.'¹⁴ Al-Hameedi has also brought it in his Al-Jam'o bain al-Sahihain.

(7) Haakem Neshaapuri reports on the authority of Abdullah Ibn Umar that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) cautioned, 'One who dies without any Imam ruling over him, his death is that of ignorance.'¹⁵

(8) Suyuti quotes from Ibn Murdowayh, who reports on the authority of Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) while explaining the Quranic verse, 'On that day, We shall call every people with their Imam' (Qur'an Surah Bani Israael 17: 71.)

informed, 'Each nation will be called with the Imam of their time, the Book of their Lord and the Sunnah of their Prophet (a.s.).'¹⁶ Qurtubbi and Aaloosi have cited this tradition in their exegesis from Suyuti, while Sa'labi has narrated it through his chain from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.).

From all the above traditions, it becomes clear that the existence of the twelve Imams (a.s.) will continue till the end of the world and that all of them will be from Quraish. Significantly, no group from the Muslims can boast of following this number of Imams from the Quraish,

which will continue till the Day of Judgment, save the Imaamiyyah Shias.

Allamah Muhammad Moin Ibn Muhammad Ameen al-Sindi, the author of *Deraasaat al-Labeeb*, has written an exclusive book vis-à-vis these traditions, naming it 'Mawaaheb-o-Sayyed al-Bashar Fi Hadees al-Aimmah al-Isnaa al-Ashar' in which he has proved the Imamate of the twelve Imams (a.s.) through Hadis-e-Saqalain. He has brought undefeatable arguments, proving that the Imams (a.s.) were infallible in their knowledge and that it is obligatory upon everybody to follow them in the acquisition of knowledge. Readers can refer to *Abaqaat al-Anwaar* by Sayyed Mir Haamid Husain al-Lucknowi al-Hindi (a.r.), vol. 2 and vol. 12, pg. 295, 296 & 304-307.

The renowned Haafiz Sulaiman al-Qunduzi al-Hanafi writes, "Some researchers are of the view that the traditions suggesting the number of Imams to be twelve after the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) are well known to be narrated from various chains. With the explanation of the time and the description of the occurrence and the place, it became known that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) implied from these traditions, the twelve Imams from his Ahle Bait (a.s.) and his progeny.

For, it is not possible to interpret these traditions for the caliphs among his companions who succeeded him immediately, due to the paucity of their number.

It is also not probable to construe them for the kings of Bani Umayyah because their number exceeded twelve and because of their vulgar tyranny with the sole exception of Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz. Also, they did not belong to the Bani Hashim while the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) had categorically emphasized in the tradition of Abd al-Malik Ibn Jaabir, 'All of them will be from the Bani Hashim'. The lowering of the voice by the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) in this tradition gives more weight to it because they (the majority of the people) did not approve of the caliphate of Bani Hashim.

Also, it is not relevant for the Abbasi kings because their number exceeded the above stipulation and their non-observance of the Quranic injunction, 'Say: I don't ask you of any reward except the love of my closest relatives' (Surah Shoorā (42): Verse 23.)

and other traditions like the Tradition of the Cloak (حديث كساء).

Therefore, it becomes essential and obligatory to carry this tradition in the meaning of the twelve Imams (a.s.) from the progeny of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) because they were the most learned, the most majestic, the most pious and the most elevated in genealogy of all the people of their time. They were the most superior in birth and the noblest before Allah. Their knowledge was connected to that of their ancestor, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.), through inheritance and endowment. This is the manner in which the people of knowledge, investigation, illumination and grace recognize them.

This interpretation, that these traditions are applicable only for the infallible Imams (a.s.) of the Ahle Bait (a.s.), is supported by Hadis-e-Saqalain and numerous traditions repeated in this book and elsewhere.

As for the saying of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.): 'The nation will form a consensus on all of them' as has come in the narration of Jaabir Ibn Samarah, he (s.a.w.a.) meant that the nation, whole of it, will acknowledge their Imamate at the time of the reappearance of their Qaem (a.t.f.s.)."17

Therefore, the dominant political school stood up to deny the mastership of the Ahle Bait (a.s.) and forsake the decisive texts and evidences concerning their Imamate. They did so either by refusing to bring forth these traditions, or by creating doubts in their chains and rejecting their narrators on account of their crime of the love of the Ahle Bait (a.s.) and narration of their virtues, or by interpreting them in other than their apparent meanings out of perplexity and fear in front of these consecutive and reliable traditions.

Hence, they indulged in wild and pathless interpretations, absurd implications and false opinions. Not a single of these could withstand the test of certainty. As a result, each one of these interpretations led to the refutation, contradiction and rejection of the others. Being completely confounded and out of sheer helplessness, they were forced to interpret these traditions only for the Imams of the Ahle Bait (a.s.), supported by other reliable and authentic evidences in this regard.

Of the discussions in Fath al-Baari, Ibn Battaal narrates from Mahlab, 'I have not met anyone who has achieved certitude concerning this tradition.' It is also said that Ibn Jawzi had remarked in *Kashf al-Mushkil*, 'Arguments have prolonged with regards to the meaning of this tradition. I searched a lot for its answers and asked about it but to no avail.'

They have landed themselves in real difficulty on this subject due to their stubbornness to accept the apparent and irrefutable application of these traditions on the twelve infallible Imams (a.s.), perhaps, out of greed or due to fear from the tyrannical governments and oppressive rulers, who did not tolerate any expression of truth from these scholars. They sold their ethics and concepts to acquire this world and its base provisions.

Thus, the governments used them as pawns to achieve their political ambitions founded on autocracy, oppression and enslaving Allah's servants. These so-called scholars ended up defending the tyranny, oppression and despotic approach of these rulers. They interpreted the evil actions of their masters as being beneficial and an opportunity for the Muslims.

The numerous transgressions and sins like playing musical instruments, dancing, etc. perpetrated by these kings in their courts, their extravagance and misuse of public wealth in whatever Allah had prohibited, their depriving the poor, the needy and the weak of their rights, and all other barbaric acts were justified and defended on some religious pretext or another by these scholars.

For example, they declared absolute immunity for the rulers, the non-permissibility of questioning their actions and the necessity of their obedience, notwithstanding the fact that these included the ilk of Yazid, Waleed, the despots of Bani Umayyah and the tyrants of Bani Abbas. These oppressors appropriated the wealth of Allah and took His servants as slaves like some Muslim rulers of today, who are mere puppets in the hands of arrogant Western superpowers. We have come from God and to Him shall we return.

Now we shall cite some of these contradictory views concerning the interpretation of the traditions vis-à-vis the twelve Imams (a.s.) for you, the believer in Allah, His Book and the sunnah of His Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

First: Some commentators of Saheeh al-Tirmidhi and the author of Fath al-Baari (the commentary on Saheeh al-Bukhari) have interpreted the word 'twelve' to refer to the caliphs of Bani Umayyah, who followed the companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). They suggest that this tradition cannot be cited as a merit but is used only to indicate the steadfastness of the Islamic kingdom. They include Yazid Ibn Muawiyah and his son, Muawiyah Ibn Yazid but not Usmaan, Muawiyah and Abdullah Ibn Zubair because they were among the companions.

They also do not draft Marwan Ibn Hakam in the list because he took the allegiance of the people after the people had paid fealty to Ibn Zubair and hence consider him a usurper. Moreover, as per Fath al-Baari, there is a dispute about his companionship. The list continues from Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan, followed by Walid till Marwan Ibn Muhammad.

I say: I wish I had known what made these writers interpret the traditions of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) in this mischievous and malicious manner! Is this how we reward the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) for his message? Is this not an insult to his (s.a.w.a.) sayings? If this was his (s.a.w.a.) purpose and intent, what is the benefit and use of such traditions and what do they achieve?

From where do they know that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) intended through these traditions the despotic rulers of Bani Umayyah with the sole exception of Muawiyah Ibn Marwan?

From where do they know that the companions are excluded from these traditions? Then why did he (s.a.w.a.) not say, 'after my companions', instead of 'after me' as has been reported by a number of narrators?

Any interpretation that includes Muawiyah and his successors from the Bani Umayyah is clearly false and unacceptable because they were not chosen as caliphs through consensus. Rather, they were despots and the worst of the despots at that.

When things reach to such a despicable state of interpretation, the original quote is completely removed from its apparent meaning, fearing the establishment of the truth of the Shiite faith. None of these tyrants enjoyed any particularity over the other. In which case, a great number of probabilities unfold. Possibly, it is an indication to the caliphs after Abd al-Malik and when he (s.a.w.a.) said, 'after me', he (s.a.w.a.) meant after Abd al-Malik.

Or it is an indication to the caliphs after Hesham. Or it could also mean six caliphs each from the Bani Umayyah and the Bani Abbas or the caliphs after Bani Umayyah. It could also imply the caliphs after Saffaah or Mansoor or other despots of Bani Abbas. It could also mean those from the Bani Umayyah who ruled over Spain or the Fatemids who governed Egypt, and so on and so forth. Meanwhile, none of these probabilities can be said to have an edge or preference over the others.

Moreover, why these traditions should not be interpreted as a means of merit and praise when the terms used in some narration clearly imply glorification?

Is it correct to equate these oppressive tyrants and sinners with the chiefs of the Bani Israel and the companions of Hazrat Eesa (a.s.), as has come in a number of traditions?

This is in addition to the evidence of the number of caliphs being restricted to twelve.

Second: Another interpretation is that after the demise of al-Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), twelve rulers will govern, six from the progeny of Hasan (a.s.), five from that of Husain (a.s.) and one from someone else.

I say: Such an exegesis is clearly against the evident texts of the traditions, which mention

in no uncertain terms, 'twelve caliphs after me', 'this religion will always be mighty and lofty' etc., which proves the connection of the caliphs' era with that of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.), their continuity till the final epoch and the confinement of the caliphs to them as has been elucidated in the narration of Ibn Masood.

This is in addition to the fact that these traditions are applicable for the twelve Imams (a.s.), who are famous and renowned among all the Muslim sects, thereby establishing the truth and validity of the prophecy of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) in clear terms. Then what is the point in struggling to force these traditions to imply others, who do not fit in its description by any means?

If you argue: Although these characteristics are not found in anybody but the twelve Imams (a.s.), it is quite likely that they may be present in the future in some other individuals.

I say: Amazing, indeed! How can we talk of something being present in the future when the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) has prophesied them to exist in his (s.a.w.a.) immediate successors, whose time is joined with his (s.a.w.a.) time? Is not such an interpretation a clear violation? In this case, we have to assume the impermissibility of the era of these caliphs being joined with that of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) and the non-consideration of such traditions. But when there exists, a clear interpretation on which these traditions fit, it is not allowed to refute this claim with an argument of future probability.

Do you not see that Allah described the qualities of our Prophet (s.a.w.a.) in the Old and the New testaments but when he (s.a.w.a.) appeared with an appearance befitting the description, the Jews and the Christians denied his (s.a.w.a.) prophethood, arguing that such a prophet will emerge in the future. Allah has condemned them in the Holy Quran and did not accept their argument that the prophesied advent will occur in the future.

As for their reliance on the tradition, 'twelve caliphs will succeed al-Mahdi, of which six will be from the progeny of Hasan (a.s.)...' to lend credibility to this argument, we say that apart from its contradiction to a number of traditions that have been narrated by both Shias and Sunnis, it also goes against the peculiar characteristics of these traditions. That is, the restriction of the number of caliphs to twelve, the continuity of their existence and the joining of their era with that of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.). The apparent difference between the two narrations is that while the original tradition says, 'after me, there will be...' this narration says, 'after Mahdi, there will be...'

Moreover, this tradition is considered to be weak and unreliable as has been explicitly mentioned by Ibn Hajar, when he says in his al-Sawaaeqah that this tradition is truly absurd and cannot be relied upon. He has quoted this on the authority of his namesake Ibn Hajar, the author of Fath al-Baari.

This is apart from the fact that in all likelihood such a probability is derived from the Israa'iliyyaat (i.e. the fabrications of the Jews in the Islamic texts). They have resorted to such tactics to deviate these traditions from their clear interpretations.

Ibn Munaadi writes, 'We take notice of these traditions because we find them in the Book of Daniel.' If you want to know the background of this book and what has been said about it, refer to the beginning of al-Malaahem by Ibn Munaadi that you may know how a nation is afflicted with superstitions, absurdities and junk when they refuse to take true knowledge from its owners viz. the Imams (a.s.) of the Ahle Bait (a.s.). They are the ones about whom Allah has ordered the Muslim nation to fasten unto them along with the Holy Quran.

Third: Another view in this regard is that of Qazi Ayaaz. According to him, the import of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) through this tradition was that the twelve Imams (a.s.) will exist only during the caliphs' might, the strength of Islam and the steadfastness of its affairs. This occurred when consensus was found among the people on this issue till the decline of the Bani Umayyah when mischief arose amongst them in the reign of Waleed Ibn Yazid. Ibn Hajar, in his Fath al-Baari, has opted for this interpretation citing the tradition 'All of them (caliphs) will be the unanimous choice of the people' as evidence for the same. Thereafter, he proceeds to mention the names of the caliphs, who enjoyed the consensus of the people: Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman, Ali, Muawiyah, Yazid, Abd al-Malik and his four sons, Waleed, Sulaiman, Yazid and Hesham.

He says, 'Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz interrupted the chain between Sulaiman and Yazid. These are the seven after the four rightly-guided caliphs and when Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz is not counted amongst them. The twelfth of them is Walid Ibn Yazid Ibn Abd al-Malik.

I say: This is the worst possible and most insulting interpretation of the Prophetic tradition, even if Ibn Hajar says that it is the most preferable of all interpretations. We will not argue about the antecedents of the Bani Umayyah and the non-correctness of attributing them to be from the Quraysh, as these traditions announce explicitly that the twelve Imams (a.s.) will be from the Quraysh.

But we question: How on earth can such tidings, which were announced as glorification of

the twelve caliphs, be applicable for Muawiyah's caliphate? For, he is the one who Fought with Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.), about whom the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) said, 'War against you is war against me' Organized speeches abusing Ameerul Momineen (a.s.) from the pulpits and, Poisoned to death Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba (a.s.), the chief of the youth of Paradise.

How on earth can these traditions apply for a beast like Yazid Ibn Muawiyah, who fought against and martyred Imam Husain (a.s.), and who was a transgressor who committed sins publicly and announced his disbelief freely becoming a part of the renowned poems of Ibn al-Zab'ari, which he (Yazid) recited in joy when the severed head of Imam Husain (a.s.) was brought to him.

He was the one who ordered Muslim Ibn Aqabah to kill and plunder the people of Medina on three occasions. During these attacks, he killed a number of companions and the city of Medina was totally ransacked. It was during these attacks that more than 1000 Muslim virgins were raped and whenever a Muslim from Medina offered his daughter in marriage, he did not guarantee her virginity saying, 'Perhaps, she has lost her virginity during the Tragedy of Hurrah.' It is said that four thousand illegitimate children were born after this incident.

Muslim, in his Saheeh, reports that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) warned, 'Whoever frightens the people of Medina, Allah will frighten him and upon him is the curse of Allah, the angels and all mankind.'¹⁸

Waaqedi narrates on the authority of Abdullah Ibn Hanzalah, 'By Allah! We did not visit Yazid but that we feared a stone falling on our heads from the sky (as a divine punishment) because he was a man who married his mothers, daughters and sisters, drank wine, did not pray¹⁹ and he is the one who had ordered the attack on the Holy Ka'bah.

Suyuti and others report on the authority of Nawfil Ibn Abi al-Furaat, "I was with Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz, when a person while mentioning Yazid, said, 'the chief of the faithfuls, Yazid Ibn Muawiyah'. On hearing this, Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz (became angry) and asked, 'You call Yazid as Ameerul Momineen?' and ordered that he be whipped 20 lashes."²⁰

It is mentioned in Al-Sawaaeq that it was said to S'ad Ibn Hassaan, 'The Bani Umayyah claim that the caliphate is among them.' He retorted, 'The sons of the blue-eyed (referring to Hind – the wife of Abu Sufyaan) are lying. They are mere kings, nay, the worst of kings.'

How on earth can these traditions be applied for the caliphate of Abd al-Malik, the treacherous, the one who prohibited the Islamic injunction of enjoining good (امر بالمعروف).

Suyuti records, 'Among the evil deeds of Abd al-Malik was the appointment of Hajjaaj as a governor for the Muslims and the sahaabaa (r.a.), who was degrading and insulting them through killings, assault, abuse and imprisonments. Indeed, he killed innumerable sahaabaa and great taabe'een, apart from the ordinary folks. He put a seal around the neck of Anas and other companions with the intent of degrading them. May Allah not have mercy on him and may Allah not forgive him.'²¹

How on earth can these traditions be applied for a person like Waleed Ibn Yazid Ibn Abd al-Malik, the sinner, the alcoholic and the one who did not care for the prohibitions of Allah. He is the one who went for Hajj to drink wine atop the Holy Ka'bah, for which he received outright condemnation from the people.²² He is the one who opened the Holy Quran and on seeing the verse, *واستفتحوا و خاب كل جبار عنيد* And they asked for judgment and every insolent opposer was disappointed ²³, he flung it on the ground and shot it with an arrow, reciting, Are you threatening me with the (words of) insolent oppressor?

Here, I am that insolent and oppressor When you (Quran) are brought on the Day of Gathering by your Lord Say, O Lord, Waleed has ripped me apart.²⁴

He continued to live in vulgar opulence and luxury till he was killed.

Is this the might and respect of Islam? Is this the representation of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.)?

It is reported that when he left for Hajj, he carried along with himself dogs in trunks, got a dome fabricated as per the size of the Ka'bah to place it on its top and carried a few trunks of wine. By this he intended to place the dome on the Ka'bah and sit in it to drink wine. But his advisors dissuaded him from doing so fearing the wrath of the people. Waleed finally relented.²⁵

Masoodi reports on the authority of Mubarrad, 'Waleed has recited some poems in which he has overtly proclaimed disbelief, and while mentioning the Prophet (s.a.w.a.), he said: The Hashemites played with the caliphate (Actually) neither any revelation came, nor did any Book descend And say to Allah to stop me, my food And say to Allah to stop me, my drink.'²⁶

Ishaaq Ibn Muhammad al-Azraq recounts, 'I went to Mansoor Ibn Jahoor al-Azdi after the murder of Waleed. He had two maids from the slave-girls of Waleed... One of them said, 'We

were among his favorite and most respected slave-girls. He went to bed with her (indicating to the other slave girl), when the call for the prayer (azaan) was made. He ordered her to lead the prayers of the people while she was drunk, unclean and veiled.'²⁷

Suyuti brings a narration from Musnad-e-Ahmad: There will come a man for this nation, called Waleed, who will be more oppressive to his people than Fir'aun was for his nation.²⁸ Therefore, it will be more apt to name such persons as Fir'aun than Caliphs, as they resemble the disbelievers and the apostates more than the companions of Hazrat Eesa (a.s.) or the chiefs of the Bani Israel.

If we so desire, we can exhaust the discussion on the likes of the Bani Umayyah but we intend to cut it short due to fear of prolongation. We say: How can Qazi Ayaaz be satisfied with appointing these tyrants as the caliphs of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.), about whom he (s.a.w.a.) has given tidings, and has informed that they will act with guidance and that if they were not there, the world will be destroyed with its inhabitants, and that till they exist, the Islamic nation will continue to survive and that they are like the chiefs (نقباء) of the Bani Israel.

Even more stunning is their omission of Imam Hasan (a.s.) from the narration, despite the fact that he (a.s.) was clearly named as a caliph in the traditions narrated from his grandfather, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.), and the inclusion of Yazid, Moawiyah and Bani al-Aas, whom he (s.a.w.a.) has cursed in these traditions.

And why did they not include Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz among these caliphs?

And as for his stubbornness in clinging on to the saying of Sahih Abi Dawood, 'The Ummah will be unanimous about them',²⁹ then it is weak for the following reasons: It is clear that an action is attributed to its subject only when it is performed with freewill, without any force or compulsion. So, even if we accept that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) has said, 'they will be unanimous', it only implies the unanimity of the nation with their own freewill.

Don't you think that it is incorrect for anybody to declare that the Islamic Ummah, including the people of Mecca, Medina, great jurists, renowned traditionalists, companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the Taabein, at any given time, was unanimous on the appointment of Yazid as the caliph of the Muslims? But he claims that they were unanimous in this appointment and chose him for caliphate. He also goes on to claim the consensus of the Muslims on the caliphate of Waleed Ibn Yazid.

If we rely on this theory, it will necessitate the exclusion of Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) and Imam Hasan (a.s.) from the list of the caliphs because of the opposition of the Syrians for these two, and their unstinted support for their enemies.

This portion seems to have been interpolated as it is not found in a number of reliable and consecutive traditions available on the subject. Therefore, there exists a strong probability that this part 'the Islamic Ummah will be unanimous on all of them' appears to have been added by the narrator, possibly as an explanation for the tradition. Even if we assume that this part did occur in the original tradition and when there is a controversy between the added part and the missing part then, as a rule, the added part is not relied upon. The same applies here because the majority of the traditions do not comprise of the additional part and only Abu Dawood has narrated it.

Hence, it is incorrect and improper to disregard the many traditions, reliable and consecutive, narrated by a group of companions like Abdullah Ibn Masood and Jaabir Ibn Samarah and a number of Taabein just for the sake of one narration.

So, is it wrong to impute such a probability to this statement?

Even if we assume that this statement is correct and found in the original, it is limited by the other sentences found in the numerous other traditions like, 'all of them will act with guidance and the true religion', 'if they do not exist, the earth will be destroyed with all its inhabitants', 'they are like the companions of Eesa (a.s.) and the chiefs of the Bani Israel', and 'the caliphate is confined only to them'. Thus, assuming that this statement does exist in the original, its only correct interpretation and construction is that the Ummah will be unanimous on the Imamate of the twelve Imams (a.s.) and acknowledge their Caliphate after the reappearance of Hazrat Mahdi (a.t.f.s.).

Fourth: Another interpretation of the tradition is that of Ibn Hajar in Fath al-Baari as narrated by Suyuti in Tarikh al-Khulafaa and is as follows: These traditions imply the existence of twelve caliphs during the entire lifespan of Islam till the Day of Judgment, who will act with truth, even if they will not rule in immediate succession of each other. They support this idea with a narration reported in his Musnad from Abi Al-Jild who said, 'This nation will not be destroyed till there are twelve caliphs in it. All of them will act with guidance and the true religion. From them will be two persons from the Ahle Bait (a.s.) of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.)...'

Explaining the statement of Ibn Hajar, Suyuti remarks, 'Hence, from the twelve caliphs, four are the rightly guided caliphs³⁰, followed by Hasan, Moawiyah, Ibn Zubair and Umar Ibn Abd

al-Aziz, which makes it eight. Probably, Mohtadi, the Abbasi caliph, can be added to this list because he was amongst the Abbasi kings like Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz was amongst the Bani Umayyah tyrants. This was on account of the apparently insignificant oppression of Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz and Mohtadi. From the remaining two, one is al-Mahdi since he is from the progeny of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.)' – End of Suyuti's statement.

I say: This view or probability is also incorrect because plenty of traditions have confined a number of caliphs to twelve. In fact, some of these have also explicitly mentioned the names of these caliphs, like the narration of Ibn Masood, which rules out all possibilities of interpretations and conjectures. Moreover, these have stated in no uncertain terms that they will follow each other successively and their eras will be immediately after one another.

As for the narration of Abi al-Jild, which is cited as a support for this probability, it is rejected outright because of the notoriety of Abi al-Jild for presenting his own views and whimsical interpretations as traditions of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Therefore, his statement, 'from them are two men from the Ahle Bait (a.s.) of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.)' is certainly an addition from his own side or from his source. Otherwise, he should have reported, 'my Ahle Bait (a.s.)' and not 'the Ahle Bait (a.s.) of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.)'.

All this is assisted by the report available in the book of Khesaal, through his chain of narrators that Abi Najraan reports that Abi al-Jild has narrated to him and even taken an oath, 'This nation will not be destroyed till there are twelve caliphs in it. All of them will act with guidance and true religion.' Nowhere, in this report, has he mentioned the additional part.

This is in addition to his view that three of them are from the Ahle Bait (a.s.) of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) viz. Ali, Hasan and Mahdi (a.s.) while Abi al-Jild says, 'Two of them will be from Ahle Bait (a.s.) of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.)'.

It is also worth mentioning that after some research concerning the views of the scholars of rejaal, I found that Abi al-Jild, whose name was Jailaan Ibn Farwah al-Asadi and is also called as Ibn Abi Farwah had the habit of either saying things from his side or sourced his knowledge from the Testaments. The author of Shamaael al-Rasool, pg. 484, writes, 'Abi al-Jild used to refer to the Old Testament time and again.' The writer of Al-Jarho wa al-Ta'deel, vol. 2, pg. 547, tradition no. 2275, pens, 'Abi al-Jild al-Asadi al-Basri had command over the Old Testament and its like.'

In any case, one cannot afford to neglect or be heedless towards all the reliable and authentic traditions that talk about the continuity of the eras of these caliphs and the limitation of their number to twelve, notwithstanding the other consecutive traditions in this regard. For, if we consider this tradition to be reliable, it will necessarily require the conformity of the two kinds of traditions. While one talks about the consecutivity of their eras and their number being twelve, the aforementioned limits it's severely as is clear from these two kinds of traditions.

Yes, many consecutive traditions prove the caliphate of these twelve (a.s.). But to interpret it in the manner as Suyuti has done is not valid as demonstrated in the above discussions. Moreover, if we rely on the narration of Abi al-Jild, it will seriously limit the applications of the traditions that emphasize on continuity of eras.

Interestingly, Suyuti too has become a victim of amnesia and forgetfulness. For, as per his own statement, three of these caliphs must necessarily be from the Ahle Bait (a.s.) of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) because Ali (a.s.) and Hasan (a.s.) are undoubtedly from the Ahle Bait (a.s.) in the light of the Verse of Purification³¹ and the clear traditions from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.). Moreover, he has included the likes of Ibn Zubair and Moawiyah amongst those who act with guidance.

These are absolutely disgusting and weak arguments, which show their confusion and obscene helplessness in the exegesis of these traditions, while turning their backs on their only and real interpretation i.e. the twelve famous Imams (a.s.) from the Ahle Bait (a.s.).

Fifth: It talks about the presence of this number (of caliphs) in one time, all of them, and each one of them claims governance and caliphate. They say: The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) has informed us that the strangest of things will occur after him (s.a.w.a.). Of which, is the disunity among the people after him (s.a.w.a.) in one time concerning the twelve chiefs. This is irresistibly comical and some of them have also rejected it, saying, 'This view is that of the one who is totally unaware of the methods of traditions, apart from his ignorance of the traditions present in Bukhari, Muslim, etc. That is, they have clearly mentioned mastership as the attributes of these caliphs and that Islam will remain mighty and lofty...

I say: Surely, the traditions have proved that their duration will be the duration of Islam and its survival. Thus, these traditions support the correctness of the occultation of the twelfth amongst them, his longevity and his prolonged life as will be seen in the numerous reliable

traditions to follow.

Sixth: The interpretation of Ibn Taimiyyah, which states that these Imams (a.s.) are dispersed and scattered in the Islamic Ummah. Resurrection will not occur till they are found.

I say: It seems that they do not deem it necessary to benefit from the actual implication of the traditions and to rely on their wordings and their famous concepts as has been relied upon by those in the know and the wise people. Specially when the words, with their apparent meanings, clearly conform to the approach of the Ahle Bait (a.s.) and their Shias. Consequently, they have said whatever wild and absurd thought that has come in their minds in the interpretation of these traditions. Otherwise, from where has Ibn Taimiyyah brought such a baseless exegesis, which clearly opposes the wordings of the traditions?

Seventh: Another interpretation is the one propounded by our contemporaries, who tread the modern approach with the support of the colonialists and imperialistic powers. Thus, they have drummed up the same beat but with another drum.

They consider these traditions to be applicable for the rulers of the Muslims and whom they have listed as follows: Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman, Ali (a.s.), Moawiyah, Abd al-Malik followed by other kings of Bani Umayyah till Marwan. They say: Thereafter, Imam was transferred to the Bani Abbas, from them is Mansoor, his son Mahdi, Haroon al-Rashid till the end of the dynasty. They have also counted Emaad al-Din al-Zanki, Noor al-Din and Salaah al-Din saying, 'It does not befit us that we be miserly regarding their rights.'

I say: Under this explanation, those called as caliphs in these traditions are the kings and rulers of the Muslims, most of whom acquired this position through force, coercion and domination. Their number far exceeds the limit of twelve. When it is permitted to apply these traditions for all the rulers and kings, regardless, then why should we restrict ourselves to only twelve and be niggardly about the rights of the remaining? What is the purpose of such traditions, which are invaluable words, uttered by as holy a person as the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.)?

It is necessary for the one who has suggested this view that he should not be niggardly and miserly of all the kings, including those of Spain (the erstwhile Muslim dominion of Andalus), Ottoman and even the present dictators and tyrants, whose breaches of Islamic trusts are known to one and all.

By Allah! I do not know what to say about such writers and authors who count themselves from the modern and civilized generation. They say about the sunnah of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as dictated to them by their carnal desires, the desires of those who spend lavishly on them from the public treasury of the Muslims and the desires of their western imperialistic masters. These western colonialists intend to interpret all that has come down in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah, which demand belief in the unseen, as per their materialistic, imperialistic and colonialist views.

There is no power and strength, except that of Allah, the High, the Great.

Know that in reply to these absurd interpretations concerning these prophetic traditions, we have relied only on the peculiarities derived from them and their clear explicit meanings. We did not resort to the other reliable and numerous traditions concerning the Imam of the twelve Imams (a.s.), which discuss their names and their characteristics. Otherwise, the arguments would be much more elaborate.

If you desire further explanation on the subject, refer to the books written in this regard and all your doubts and misgivings will be repelled.

And Allah is the Guide to the truth and propriety.

References:

1. Al-Mufradaat fi Ghareeb al-Quran, p. 156.
2. Sunan Ibn Maajah, vol. 2, pg. 519 The chapter of the Emergence of al-Mahdi (a.t.f.s.); Musnad Ahmad, vol. 5, pg. 277.
3. Sunan Abi Dawood, Kitaab al-Fetan, vol. 2, pg. 200. Musnad Ahmad, vol. 5, pg. 430.
4. Nahj al-Balagah, Saying No. 147; Tazkerah al-Huffaaz, vol. 1, pg. 11 & 12; Dastoor-o-Ma'lem al-Hekam, pg. 84; Al-Amaali al-Khamisiyyah, vol. 1, pg. 66.
5. Nahj al-Balagah, Letter No. 25.

6. Even this appointment is debatable and not established because it is said that when Usman became busy in writing the will of Abu Bakr, the latter fainted. Usman thought that Abu Bakr had died and wrote the name of Umar on his own. When Abu Bakr regained his senses, Usman informed him of what he had done and Abu Bakr duly endorsed it.

The thing which confounds the researcher is that Abu Bakr died during this very illness and Umar was appointed as his successor on the basis of the writing of Usman. But on this occasion, notwithstanding the serious illness of Abu Bakr, Umar never protested that this man is not in his senses! Nor did he prevent Abu Bakr from dictating his will like he had prevented the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) from making known his will! Surely, we are from

Allah and unto Him shall we return.

7. Musnad of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, pg. 10.
8. Al-Masaael al-Khamsoon by Fakhruddin al-Raazi, Masalah No. 47. This article was published in the year 1328 A.H. in Egypt along with other articles. Its publisher had named it, 'Majmooah al-Rasaael'. This tradition can be found on pg. 348.
9. Nahj al-Balagah, Sermon 142.
10. Nahj al-Balagah, Sermon 150.
11. Al-Mustadrak by Haakem Neshaapuri, vol. 3, pg. 149.
12. Saheeh al-Bukhari, vol. 4, pg. 218, Kitaab-o-Manaaqeb-e-Quraish in the Book of Ahkaam.
13. Fath al-Baari, vol. 13, pg. 114.
14. Sharh al-Maqaasid, vol. 2, pg. 275; Al-Jawaaher al-Muziah, vol. 2, pg. 509. There are numerous traditions that convey this concept or are quite similar to it.
15. Behaar al-Anwaar, vol. 23, pg. 76, Tr. No. 3.
16. Al-Durr al-Manthoor, vol. 4, pg. 184.
17. Yanaabee' al-Mawaddah, pg. 446.
18. Murooj al-Zahab, vol. 3, pg. 69.
19. Taarikh al-Khulafaa, pg. 209
20. Al-Sawaaeq al-Mohreqah, pg. 219, printed at Cairo; Taarikh al-Khulafaa, pg. 209, printed at Egypt
21. Taarikh al-Khulafaa, pg. 220
22. Taarikh al-Khulafaa, pg. 250; Taarikh al-Tabari, vol. 7, pg. 209
23. Surah Ibraheem (14): Verse 15
24. Murooj al-Zahab, vol. 3, pg. 216
25. Al-Kaamil fi al-Taarikh, vol. 3, pg. 394
26. Murooj al-Zahab, vol. 3, pg. 216.
27. Al-Eqd al-Fareed, vol. 2, pg. 290.
28. Taarikh al-Khulafa, pg. 251
29. Tarikh al-Khulafaa, pg. 10.
30. Implying Abu Bakr, Umar, Usmaan and Ali (a.s.).
31. Surah Ahzaab (33): Verse 33.