

Let Us Understand Each Other (Shia - Sunni Dialogue)

By: Abdul Hadi Saleh

Introduction

The aim of this book is neither to attack anyone nor to make the opinion of others as nonsense. It is also not an aimless discussion. It is just an effort to explain the beliefs of Ithna Ashari Shias and their tenets. There are many question marks before us.

We have not filled this book with an excess of intellectual arguments and quotations from Islamic texts. We have just proved our point in brief. We have tried to do so as simply as possible without falling to the level of stupidity.

But those who wish to study in detail can refer to the detailed books on which this book is based. All the topics discussed in this book are elaborated in the original sources.

But those who intend to use this book to target the beliefs of other people and to insult them should know that this book is not for them. It is not going to help them. But my prayers for them would certainly do. May Allah give them taufeeq (opportunity) to reason and follow correct guidance.

Abdul Hadi Saleh

About the Book

- * It is not an invitation to a particular sect and not an impetus for people to abandon their present beliefs.
 - * It is a step towards cooling down emotions and providing relief to the troubled minds of the people due to inter-sectal animosities.
 - * It aims at spreading love and unity in order to strengthen the Islamic community from the perils that surround it.
 - * This book endeavours to spread public awareness regarding the various religious beliefs. It presents a balanced view that people may decide on their own-- without any prejudice.
 - * Various misconceptions concerning the Imamite Shias and their practical Laws are cleared in the simplest way possible.
 - * We have refrained from needless details and followed a congenial method to justify various points of view. It will be very useful for the people who are fed with biased reports about Shiaism, and as a result have become opinionated. This has caused untold conflicts and created a vast chasm between the two communities.
 - * It is a substitute for those educational programmes that have failed in their responsibilities of disseminating the values of brotherhood and amity.
 - * This is an invitation for love, peace, amity and to understand each other.
- Come! My Brother! Let Us Understand Each Other!

An Invitation

Brothers...listen to the words of the Almighty in some verses of Surah Hujarat:

O you who believe! If an evil-doer comes to you with a report, look carefully into it, lest you harm a people in ignorance, then be sorry for what you have done.

The believers are but brethren, therefore make peace between your brethren and be careful of (your duty to) Allah that mercy may be had on you.

O you who believe! Let not (one) people laugh at (another) people perchance they may be better than they, nor let women (laugh) at (other) women, perchance they may be better than they; and do not find fault with your own people nor call one another by nicknames; evil is a bad name after faith, and whoever does not turn, these it is that are the unjust.

O you who believe! Avoid most of suspicion, for surely suspicion in some cases is a sin, and do not spy nor let some of you backbite others. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? But you abhor it; and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, surely Allah is Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful.

O you men! Surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty); surely Allah is Knowing, Aware.

(Surah Hujarat 49:10-13)

And also read the following ayats:

And hold fast by the covenant of Allah all together and be not disunited, and remember the favor of Allah on you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts so by His favor you became brethren; and you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He saved you from it, thus does Allah make clear to you His communications that you may follow the right way.

(Surah Aale Imran 3:103)

And be not like those who became divided and disagreed after clear arguments had come to them, and these it is that shall have a grievous chastisement.

(Surah Aale Imran 3:105)

Keep to obedience and be not divided therein.

(Surah Shura 42:13)

Surely Allah loves those who fight in His way in ranks as if they were a firm and compact wall.

(Surah Saff 61:4)

And obey Allah and His Apostle and do not quarrel for then you will be weak in hearts and your power will depart, and be patient; surely Allah is with the patient.

(Surah Anfal 8:46)

And let not those who disbelieve think that they shall come in first; surely they will not escape.

(Surah Anfal 8:59)

Allah the Almighty has said the Truth.

Dedication

Dedicated to the one whose words a few days before he was murdered, were:

"...from the time I am able to recognise my existence and realised my duty in this community I have considered my existence dedicated equally to the Shias and Sunnis. I spread the message of unity and the belief that unites the people. I have lived my life solely for Islam; the path to salvation and the goal of all Muslims. Thus my dear Sunni brothers I am with you, just in the same way as I am with the Shia brothers. I have regard for you in the same proportion you have regard for Islam.

Unjust Governments (Tagoot) and their supporters try to explain to our Sunni brothers that this is a Shia-Sunni problem. O sons of Ali and Husain and sons of Abu Bakr and Umar, this is not a fight between Shias and Sunnis. Nor is it a battle between Shia and Sunni rulers (Baath Regime). Indeed the model of Islamic government was shown by the Righteous Caliphs (Kholafa-e-Raashideen) and one that was established on Islam and Justice. They raised the sword so that it may defend Islam. When there was a battle against the renegades under the banner of Abu Bakr all the Muslims fought under one banner and one standard, in spite of religious differences."

I dedicate this book to Martyr Ayatullah Baqir as-Sadr (r.a.).

Thanks

My thanks are due to As-Shaykh Abdullah Dashti, As-Shaykh Ali Hasan Ghulum and Dr. Yusuf Sayed Hasan Zalalah for their guidance and kind advice.

I also thank my wife Latifa binte Abdullah al-Harz for the inconvenience she bore during the compilation of this book.

O, Muslim brother!

O, Muslim brother! We welcome you with an open mind and a kind heart. Come let us understand each other!

Are the Shias not your Muslim brothers? Are Shias not your friends?...companions and neighbours?

Come let read in a simple way about things that you knew to be hateful without knowing the actual reality.

Come at least for the time being put aside the negative notions regarding Shias and think independently; and leave the points of hatred for others.

Why is there such a distance between us? Though we are living in such a vast world we can come near through various communication media.

Let us turn our attention to Allah the Glorified. Spread amity in our city, our family and among our people. None of us should participate in creating a rift in the Muslim community. Allah forbid! Or become the cause of insult for the Muslims.

Detestable religious arguments kept on instigating us against each other. They have begun

to cross the walls of our houses and establishments.

I dedicate this book for your kind self. O my brother and sister. Come Muslim brother... Let us Understand Each Other!

Preface

The people are inimical of whatever they are ignorant of...

(Behaarul Anwaar Vol.78, pg.14)

It was our destiny that we should live in a world that is already teeming with mistakes of our predecessors. We are divided into numerous sects and groups. But Allah did not force this upon us. The Almighty Allah has given us ability to reason and a free will. And we inherited the responsibility to change the people and unite them, and to direct the negative forces towards discovering truth. This shall please the Almighty.

We must also extinguish the fire of rivalry raging between different sects. We should try to remove all misunderstandings. It is very important for the spread of Islam. It will assure the promulgation of information about Islam with a sincere intention. There are so many bigoted ideas in the minds of people. They are cause for destruction and retrogression while its followers think that they are doing something meritorious.

Steps to remove such misunderstandings from the Muslim nation are not only good but are an important need for today. So that the nation's peace can be maintained and there be unity among people.

In a world where corruption is rampant there is need for people to tackle this problem on war footing. We do find people arise to the occasion. But such people are few. Even though such a mission does not require great orators and writers or experts in languages. It is just enough if they are broad-minded and have the necessary information about all religions and contemporary social problems.

The problems of the community should be highlighted so that people are aware of the course of action they must take for ameliorating the same. Except for this approach all our efforts shall be in vain. We would just be shouting empty threats against our enemies. If such efforts are stopped, the fire of disunity and inter-sectal animosities shall continue to plague the Muslim community.

Can we not stop the actions that lead to groupism?

We must not just keep complaining of these conditions, we must fight them and try to achieve unity even if it is going to take some time. It is surprising that we are a people who believe in democracy considering it as equal to shura (consultation) and believe in the plurality of opinions. And we respect the Islamic beliefs and its symbols. But some of our actions lead to the incorrect interpretation of other people's beliefs. All this is done in order to keep it away from the educational media and cultural platforms. And also conceal it from the people who can affect public opinion.

This, in my opinion, is a crack in the wall of our fort. The fissure is camouflaged with the decoration of fabricated sayings.

Thus ignorance kept on increasing and falsehood continued to spread. And some of the people who followed the false notions were affected by their magic.

This is not a book, but a humble service in Islam to explain the fact that are clouded by the fog of ignorance... So that it may initiate a series of programmes for cultural and religious revival... This is the honour that I wish to achieve.

Origin of the Shias

Sulaiman: How and when did the Shias come into existence? Was it after the demise of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and after the consultation of Saqifah Bani Saada where the successor of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) was selected? Was it a result of the confrontation between Ali (karam allaho wajhohoo) and Muawiya? Or did it come about due to the murder of Imam Husain (a.s.) at Karbala? Or was it was due to confrontation between the companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) that the Shias broke away from the main community of the Muslims?

Ja'far: It is wrong to view Shias as a breakaway group that separated from the main body of the Muslims due to a particular incident like that of the false entity of Abdullah Ibne saba. The word 'Shia' was originally used with the meaning of 'helper' and 'supporter'. Historical occurrences are different and to have a particular opinion about something is different. Shiaism denotes a school of thought that is related to the teachings of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). It also indicates the source of guidance after the passing away of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). Is it possible that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) left the world without providing

clear-cut instructions to his followers as regards the leadership of the community? But after the demise of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) two types of views emerged. One believed that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) had appointed his Caliph on the basis of Divine instructions. The second view was that the Caliphate of the Prophet is a prerogative of the people (Shura).

The differing views caused a division in the Muslim community. Some followed the former and the rest followed the latter view. A series of incidents led to majority of the people aligning themselves with the latter view. The Shia school of thought was banished from the mainstream of the society. These people believed that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) had declared his successor a number of times. He even indicated the name of Ali (a.s.). He also ordered the people to follow Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). As regards the Shura we already know that it denotes the selection of the Caliph through election by the majority of the people. So let us see why the Shias support the former view?

Sulaiman: Before we proceed can you tell me why the number of Shias are less than the Sunnis if they (Shias) are on the right path?

Ja'far: Neither reason nor the Holy Quran implies that the minority is on the wrong path. The following verses of the Holy Quran imply that the majority of the people will be on the wrong!

Most people are not grateful.

(Surah Baqarah 2:243)

Most people do not know.

(Surah Araaf 7:187)

Most of the people do not believe.

(Surah Hud 11:17)

...and do not remember Allah save a little.

(Surah Nisa 4:142)

...little it is that you give thanks.

(Surah Araaf 7:10)

...so they shall not believe except a few.

(Surah Nisa 4:155)

Sulaiman: Indeed! From this aspect the appointment of the Caliph assumes utmost importance after the demise of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.).

Ja'far: Yes. It is important. Don't we see that a king or a ruler invariably appoints his successor in the event of his absence or before his death? Then, is it surprising that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) who was sent to guide the humanity till the end of the world had also appointed his successor?

Sulaiman: But the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) laid down the system of Shura (consultation) for electing a Caliph.

Ja'far: The system of Shura is valid from the etiquette point of view in cases where there is no explicit ruling in the Quran or traditions. However reason, Quran and Hadith prove that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) never explained the details of Shura. We also have the example of those Companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) who acted quite differently from other Muslims (that is they did not resort to shura). Moreover, the system of shura was not created to select the Caliph. It came into being much later. We have no available Quranic verse or hadith to justify shura. The Righteous Caliphs never quoted the ayat of shura to justify their caliphate. The method of selecting the second caliph was absolutely different from shura. On the other hand Umar Ibne Khattab had realised the dangerous situation and that is why he said that 'Saqifah' was an accident. As mentioned by Tabari, Abu Bakr said that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) died when the people had not been far away from Jahiliya. (They were newcomers to Islam). "My friends compelled me to accept caliphate."

(Sharh Nahjul Balagha of Ibne Abil Hadid).

Sulaiman: Then what according to you is the method taught by the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) for the selecting a Caliph?

Ja'far: According to Shias, people cannot select a caliph and neither do they need to select one. For they believe that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) appointed a specific person by the Command of Allah. One who possessed qualities and attributes suitable for the post of successor of the Messenger of Allah. And that he would guide the people and protect the faith. He would be the religious as well as the temporal leader.

Sulaiman: Who was that great personality? Was he a Prophet after the last Prophet and

Messenger, Muhammad (s.a.w.s.)?

Ja'far: No, by Allah! He was not a Prophet. He was an Imam. He possessed all the qualities of a Prophet, except Prophethood. And he is the one who established irrefutable proofs. He was none other than Ali Ibne Abi Talib (a.s.). He was the first Muslim and the first warrior of Islam. He opened his eyes in the presence of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and grew up under his care. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) did not praise anyone as he praised Ali (a.s.).

Imam Ali (a.s.) describes in one of his sermons how he was trained and brought up by the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.). The following is an extract from Nahjul Balagha:

"Certainly you know my position of close kinship and special relationship with the Prophet of Allah - peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants. When I was only a child he took charge of me. He used to press me to his chest and lay beside him in his bed, bring his body close to mine and make me smell his smell. He used to chew something and then feed me with it. He found no lie in my speaking, nor weakness in any act.

From the time of his weaning, Allah had put a mighty angel with him to take him along the path of high character and good behaviour through day and night, while I used to follow him like a young camel following in the footprints of its mother. Every day he would show me in the form of a banner some of his high traits and commanded me to follow it. Every year he used to go in seclusion to the hill of Hera, where I saw him but no one else saw him. In those days Islam did not exist in any house except that of the Prophet of Allah- peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants - and Khadijah, while I was the third after these two. I used to see and watch the effulgence of divine revelation and message, and breathed the scent of Prophethood.

When the revelation descended on the Prophet of Allah- peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants- I heard the moan of Satan. I said, "O, Prophet of Allah, what is this moan?" and he replied, "This is Satan who has lost all hope of being worshipped. O'Ali, you see all that I see and you hear all that I hear, except that you are not a Prophet, but you are a vicegerant and you are surely on (the path of) virtue."

(Nahjul Balagha-Sermon no.192)

Sulaiman: Do you mean to say that this sums up the matter of Imamate? Does it end with the appointment of Imam Ali (a.s.)?

Ja'far: No, Imamate is not confined to only one person, Imam Ali (a.s.). It did not end with his martyrdom. Imamate is the belief in the continuous chain of twelve Imams (a.s.) as indicated by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). Each of them was the Hujjat (Proof) and the legatee of the previous Imam (a.s.).

Sulaiman: However we, the Ahle Sunnat, believe that the successor of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) was Abu Bakr (r.a.). Among his virtues was that he had assisted Islam in its nascent stage with his life and property. He also achieved the distinction of being the companion of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) in the Cave of Hera. Whereas Imam Ali (a.s.) did not have any such distinction. But we do not discriminate between the two exalted personalities (Abu Bakr and Ali). We respect both of them.

Ja'far: It is one of the grave mistakes if we equate the difference among Sunnis and Shias to the difference of opinion as to whether Abu Bakr was the rightful Caliph or Ali.

Sulaiman: How come?

Ja'far: The crux of the matter is whether the people are qualified to decide as to who should be the Successor of the Messenger of Allah? Or the matter has to be decided by the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) himself by Allah's permission and the Holy Quran? Thus the Ahle Sunnat believe that it was upon the people to decide. (By the method of Shura or other type of consultations). And they selected Abu Bakr (r.a.) who in turn appointed Umar ibne Khattab (r.a.). Umar ibne Khattab (r.a.) appointed a committee of six people authorised to select a Caliph from among themselves. Then dissension arose among the people that resulted in the murder of Usman. After that the people elected Ali, who appointed his son Hasan (a.s.) as his successor. Hasan (a.s.) abdicated to Muawiya, who appointed his son Yazeed. This continued till the end of the Umayyad dynasty and afterwards the Abbasid dynasty.

Sulaiman: What about the Shias?

Ja'far: The Shias believe that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) under Divine orders, appointed his successors, who were to be twelve in number and who succeeded each other continuously. The first of them was Ali Ibne Abi Talib (a.s.) and the last, Muhammad ibne Hasan al-Askari, al-Mahdi, al-Muntazar (the awaited one).

May Allah hasten his reappearance.

However the events that occurred after the passing away of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) did not allow complete implementation of the institution of Imamate. (Which in reality embraced religious as well as temporal aspects).

Imamat or Khilafat

Sulaiman: The Sunnis believe in Caliphate whereas the Shias believe in Imamate. However the period of Muslim rule is over and the past situation no longer exists. Then why do the Shias insist upon their belief in Imamate?

Ja'far: Imam does not necessarily have to be a ruler of Muslims. But it is necessary that he should lead the people according to Quran and hadith. He should guide the people in correct belief and towards Allah and fulfill the aim of the creation of man.

It is necessary to obey the commands of the Imams (a.s.). They are the vicegerants of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) like Haroon (a.s.) was the vicegerant of his brother, Prophet Musa (a.s.). Similarly Prophet Isa (a.s.) had twelve disciples and Prophet Musa (a.s.) had twelve Naqeebs (Chiefs) and lastly Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) had twelve successors who are all from his holy Household (Ahle Bayt) (a.s.).

Sulaiman: The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) must have informed the people clearly about his successors. Can you give me a few examples from the Holy Quran and traditions?

Ja'far: Sure, I'll be glad to. First I will quote the Book of Allah (Quran):

First Proof:

Whatever has been mentioned under the explanation of the verse of 'Warning'.

And warn you nearest relatives.

(Surah Shoara 26:214).

According to traditions when the above verse was revealed the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) was ordered by the Almighty to invite his relatives towards Islam. He summoned his relations and said,

"Whoever among you agrees to cooperate with me in this matter will be my brother, my successor and my vicegerant."

Everyone remained silent but Ali (a.s.) stood up and said,

"I will help you O Messenger of Allah."

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said pointing towards Ali (a.s.),

"This is my brother, and my Successor and my Caliph among you. So listen to him and obey him."

The people stood up and in jest said to Abu Talib, "You have been ordered to listen to and obey your son."

(Tarikh Tabari)

Second proof: The verse of Wilayat

"Only Allah is your Vali and His Apostle and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay the poor-rate while they bow."

(Surah Maidah 5:55)

All the Muslims agree that this ayat was revealed for Imam Ali Ibne Abi Talib (a.s.) when in the state of Ruku he gave his ring in charity to a beggar. Quranic commentaries mention that the word 'innama' used in the above ayat indicates that wilayat is confined first to Allah the Almighty, secondly to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and thirdly to Imam Ali ibne Abi Talib (a.s.). It cannot be generalised to include all those who give charity in the state of Ruku.

Third proof: The verse of Purification

"Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House! And to purify you a (thorough) purifying."

(Surah Ahzab 33:33)

All the Shia Tafsirs and the majority of the Sunni commentaries agree that this holy verse was revealed for the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.), Ali Ibne Abi Talib (a.s.), Fatimah Zahra (s.a.), Hasan (a.s.) and Husain (a.s.) when the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) had called them and covered them with a blanket. Then he (s.a.w.s.) had raised up his hands in prayers and invoked the Almighty,

"O Allah, these are my Ahle Bayt, take away impurities from them and purify them a thorough purification."

The Almighty Allah purified them from all impurities of sin. This announcement could not have come if there had not been complete purity in the Ahle Bayt (a.s.). The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) was also completely safe from error or sin, hence he attained the lofty position of

prophethood. Similarly his Ahle Bayt who were to succeed him as Imams (a.s.) were also immune from sin.

(Sunan Tirmidhi Vol. 2, Pg. 308)

There are many other ayats that convey this concept.

Sulaiman: Is it possible for you to mention some traditions in support of Imamate?

Ja'far: Yes.

Hadith al-Manzilah and vicegerancy:

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s) told Ali (a.s.),

"Are you not satisfied that you are having the same position to me as Haroon (a.s.) was having with Musa (a.s.) except that there is no prophet after me. It is not possible that I go away without leaving you as my successor."

(Seerah Ibne Hisham, Vol III, Pg. 520)

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said to Ali (a.s.) at the time he was proceeding for the Tabuk expedition,

"You are the guardian of all the believers after me."

(Ibid.)

When the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) was conducting the oath of brotherhood among the believers he said,

"This Ali (a.s.) is my brother in this world as well as the Hereafter, and my vicegerent for my people and my legatee for my ummat. He is the inheritor of my knowledge and the jurisprudent of my religion..."

(Seerah Ibne Hisham, Vol I, Pg. 123-126)

Hadith of Ghadeer:

On the eight of Zilhajj when the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) declared among the multitude of Haajis at Ghadeer near the miqaat of Johfa,

"Am I not having more authority on the believers than they have over themselves?

They replied, "Yes, O, Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.)." The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) raised the hands of Ali (a.s.) and said,

"Of whomsoever I am the maula, this Ali is his maula too. And of whomsoever I am the guardian, this Ali is his guardian too. O, Allah love those who love him and be inimical to one who is inimical to him."

(Sahih Tirmidhi Vol. 2 Pg. 298)

Hadith of Thaqalayn:

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said,

"I leave among you those things that if you remain aligned to them you will never go astray. One of them is greater than the other...book of Allah and my progeny my Ahle Bayt. They will not separate till they arrive at the pool (Kauthar). So beware how you behave with them."

(Al Ittehaaf be Hubbil Ashraaf Pg. 22)

Hadith Safina:

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said,

"The similitude of my Ahle Bayt is like the ark of Nooh (a.s.). One who boards it will be saved and one who disregards it will be doomed."

(Kanzul Ummal, Vol. 6, Pg. 216)

Hadith stating the number of Imams (a.s.):

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) says,

"The upright religion will remain established till the hour is established or till twelve caliphs have passed over you, all from Quraysh."

In other traditions there is a slight difference, and the word 'caliph' is replaced by 'amir'. A different version of this tradition is as follows:

"This ummat will have twelve custodians from Quraish and those who intend to insult them will not cause them any harm. This upright faith will not decline till the twelve from Quraysh remain. When all of them pass away the earth will swallow its inhabitants."

(Kanzul Ummal 13:27)

The above traditions imply that the caliphs after the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) will be twelve. Their number will be neither less nor more. If we take into consideration the number of historical Caliphs we find their number to be much more. Neither the Caliphs of Bani

Umayya number twelve nor those of the Bani Abbas.

The description fits only the twelve Imams of Ahle Bayt (a.s.).

Moreover this tradition states that the number of caliphs or Imams will be twelve, neither more nor less. Their period will begin after the demise of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and last upto the day of Qiyamat. They will act on truth. This implies that the sum total of the life spans of these twelve should not be fall short before the arrival of qiyamat. This was exactly that occurred. Though the life spans of the first eleven Imams (a.s.) was average, the twelfth Imam (a.t.f.s.) was bestowed with a long life until qiyamat.

As the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) himself said,

"I am the chief of Prophets and Ali Ibne Abi Talib is the chief of the successors. And surely after me my successors are twelve, first of them is Ali Ibne Abi Talib and the last is Mahdi."

(Faraedus Simtain, Pg. 160)

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has also remarked,

"I, and Ali, and Hasan, and Husain and nine descendants of Husain are the purified and the infallible ones."

(Faraedus Simtain, Pg. 160)

There are innumerable traditions of this type. If you wish you may read them in books of hadith.

Sulaiman: But Ahle Sunnat do not consider all these traditions as authentic, and they also differ as to the interpretation of some narrations.

Ja'far: Yes, it is correct. But not all the traditions of these types are rejected by the Sunnis. Some of them are accepted by all the scholars. But they are not told freely to the people. Here I would like to present some arguments as requested by you, otherwise there are many meanings, and incidents that indicate this meaning. You can refer to the special books if you require more details.

Sulaiman: But everyone cannot refer to all these scholarly books!

Ja'far: It is not necessary to read all the books on this subject. Belief of the Shias regarding Imamate is not so complex that common people cannot understand. Some people have created a misunderstanding and labelled Shias as a new sect. This is not true. I only intend to tell the basic facts necessary for the purpose of our discussion.

Sulaiman: Very well. Now can you tell the names and a few details about these twelve Imams, who according to your belief, are the successors of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.)?

Ja'far: By all means! The twelve Imams (a.s.) after the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) were as follows:

The First Imam

Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.)

Father: Abu Talib bin Abdul Muttalib bin Hashim.

Mother: Fatima binte Asad bin Hashim bin Abd Munaf.

Kunniyat (Patronymic): Abul Hasan and Husain, Abu Turab.

Laqab (Title): Al-Wasi, Amirul Momineen.

Birth: He was born in the Kaaba, in thirty Aamul Feel (the year of the elephant).

Martyrdom: He was martyred by the Khwariji named Abdur Rahman Ibne Muljim at Kufa during the month of Ramadhan in the fortieth year of Hijrah and was buried at Najaf on the outskirts of Kufa.

The Second Imam

Al-Hasan ibne Ali Ibne Abi Talib (a.s.)

Mother: Fatima az-Zahra (s.a.), the daughter of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.)

Kunniyat (Patronymic): Abu Muhammad.

Laqab (Title): Al Sibte Kabir (the elder grandson), Al-Mujtaba.

Birth: He was born in Madina in the middle of the month of Ramadhan in 3 A.H.

Martyrdom: He died on the 28th of Safar in the year 50 A.H. He was buried in the graveyard of Baqi in Madina.

The Third Imam

Al Husain ibne Ali ibne Abi Talib (a.s.)

Mother: Fatima az-Zahra (s.a.) the daughter of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.)

Kunniyat (Patronymic): Abu Abdillah

Laqab (Title): Al Sibte, Shaheed-e-Karbala.

Birth: He was born at Madina in the month of Shaban in the year 4 A.H.

Martyrdom: He was martyred with his companions by the army of Yazeed in the month of Mohurrum 61 A.H. His tomb is in Karbala, a town of Iraq.

The Fourth Imam

Ali ibn Al-Husain Ash Shaheed (a.s.)

Mother: Ghazala, Shahzanaan.

Kunniyat (Patronymic): Abul Hasan.

Laqab (Title): Zainul Aabedeen, Al Sajjad.

Birth: He was born in 38 A.H. at Madina.

Martyrdom: He died of poison in the year 94 or 95 A.H. at Madina and is buried at Baqi near his uncle Hasan (a.s.).

The Fifth Imam

Muhammad ibne Ali al-Sajjad (a.s.)

Mother: Umme Abdullah, the daughter of Imam Hasan (a.s.).

Kunniyat (Patronymic): Abu Jafar.

Laqab (Title): Al Baqir.

Birth: He was born at Madina in the year 57 A.H.

Martyrdom: He died of poisoning in Madina in 11 A.H. and is also buried at Baqi near his father.

The Sixth Imam

Jafar ibne Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.)

Mother: Umme Farwa, the daughter of Qasim bin Muhammad bin Abu Bakr.

Kunniyat (Patronymic): Abu Abdillah.

Laqab (Title): As-Sadiq.

Birth: He was born at Madina in 83 A.H.

Martyrdom: He died of poison in 148 A.H. and is buried at Baqi near his father.

The Seventh Imam

Musa bin Jafar as-Sadiq (a.s.)

Mother: Hamidah.

Kunniyat (Patronymic): Abul Hasan.

Laqab (Title): Al Kazim.

Birth: He was born at Madina in the year 129 A.H.

Martyrdom: He was poisoned in the prison of Haroon al-Rashid at Baghdad in the year 183 A.H. He is buried at Kazimiyyah in Iraq.

The Eighth Imam

Ali bin Musa al-Kazim (a.s.)

Mother: Al Khaizraan.

Kunniyat (Patronymic): Abul Hasan.

Laqab (Title): Ar-Reza.

Birth: He was born at Madina in 148 A.H.

Martyrdom: He was poisoned in the year 203 A.H. and is buried in the Khorasaan district of Iran.

The Ninth Imam

Muhammad bin Ali Ar-Reza (a.s.)

Mother: Sakina.

Kunniyat (Patronymic): Abu Abdillah.

Laqab (Title): Al Jawad.

Birth: He was born at Madina in 195 A.H.

Martyrdom: He died of poison at Baghdad in the year 220 A.H. and is buried near his grandfather at Kazimmiyah in Iraq.

The Tenth Imam

Ali bin Muhammad al-Jawad (a.s.)

Mother: Samana al-Maghribiya.

Kunniyat (Patronymic): Abul Hasan al Askari.

Laqab (Title): Al Hadi.

Birth: He was born at Madina in the year 212 A.H.

Martyrdom: He died of poison in 254 A.H. at Samarra (Sarmanra) in Iraq is and buried there.

The Eleventh Imam

Al Hasan bin Ali al-Hadi (a.s.)

Mother: Ummul Walad - Susan.

Kunniyat (Patronymic): Abu Muhammad.

Laqab (Title): Al Askari.

Birth: He was born at Samarra in the year 232 A.H.

Martyrdom: He was poisoned in 260 A.H. at Samarra and is buried there.

All the tombs of the eleven Imams (a.s.) are a place of Ziarat (visitation) by Muslims. Four of the Imams are buried at Baqi in Madina al-Munawwara. However, their tombs were demolished by the authorities along with the tombs of the wives of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and his companions.

The Twelfth Imam

Al Hujjat Muhammad ibnul Hasan Al Askari (a.s.)

Mother: Ummul Walad Narjis alias Saiqal.

Kunniyat (Patronymic): Abu Abdullah, Abul Qasim.

Laqab (Title): Al-Qaim, Al-Muntazar, Al-Khalaf, Al-Mahdi, Sahibuzzamaan.

Birth: He was born at Samarra in the year 255 A.H. He is the last Imam (a.s.), he is still alive and receives his sustenance.

The tombs of eleven Imams (a.s.) are places of Ziarat (visitation) by Muslims. Four of the Imams are buried at Baqi in Madina al-Munawwara. However, their tombs were demolished by the authorities along with the tombs of the wives of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and his companions.

This concludes our discussion on the biographical details of twelve Imams (a.s.). Whatever I have mentioned is recorded in the book Sawaiq-ul-muhriqa of Ibne Hajar. If you want more details you can refer to the books of Islamic history.

Sunni - Shia Relations

Sulaiman: Indeed the Ahle Bayt (a.s.) are the progeny of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). I know that to love them and to respect their rights is the sunnat of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.). It our religious duty to have regard for them.

Ja'far: Yes, it is correct. Moreover the Namaz (salaat/prayers) of a Muslim is not valid if he does not recite salawaat for these noble personages. It is obligatory to recite Allaahumma S'alle a'laa Muh'ammadinw wa aale Muh'ammad...(Ref: Ibne Hajar, Sawaiqul Mohreqa Pg. 88) however the Shias in addition to this also believe that the Ahle Bayt (a.s.) are the guardians of the believers and it is obligatory to follow their commands in all matters of faith. A believer is obliged to follow their path. The Ahle Bayt (a.s.) also have a duty, they have to defend the Islamic religion from every type of attack, be it doubt, cheating, instigation, deviation or disbelief; and evil deeds in every period and under all circumstances. The Ahle Bayt (a.s.) have fulfilled their duty even in the most difficult of the circumstances and shall continue to do so till the day of Qiyamat (the Day of Judgement). The Muslims have always believed in the reappearance of Mahdi, who will fill this earth with equity and justice as it had been filled with injustice and oppression. This Mahdi shall be the last member of Ahle Bayt (a.s.) to appear on the Earth.

Sulaiman: O, Brother! The Sunnis do not harbour enmity towards any of the members of Ahle Bayt (a.s.), but love them instead. Then why do you label the Ahle Sunnat as disbelievers (Kafir)?

Ja'far: By Allah! No one makes such an allegation. It is only the propaganda of those who want to sow discord between the sects. Actually both the Shias and Sunnis are Muslims. They believe in the basic principles of religion. They believe in the oneness of Allah (Ash hado an'lla ilaaha illallaah) and in the prophethood of Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) - (Ash hado anna Muh'ammaddar rasoolollaah).

Sulaiman: But these allegations of infidelity create enmity, hatred and disunity between different groups.

Ja'far: We Shias are usually blamed for all this. Actually the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.)

said,

"A Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. It is not permitted to abuse him, hurt him or usurp his property."

(Al Kafi Pg. 286)

So whatever discord has been created between the Shias and the Sunnis, it has been a great loss to the Muslim nation as a whole.

Sulaiman: Then why have you breached the subject when you know that everyone has convictions towards his own belief?

Ja'far: Certainly, the Almighty Allah has ordered us to hold open discussions with all the people, and to promote the study of heavenly religions. So why should the Sunnis and Shias not have open discussion on these topics? It is very important if we wish to remove misunderstandings. Ignorance is our common enemy. We all wish to study and know about all the Islamic sects so that we can avoid lying, making false allegations, backbiting and accusing each other of polytheism and disbelief...O brother!

Why do we not try to understand each other's point of view? After all, there are more points of similarity than differences between us.

Sulaiman: But your books contain things that hurt the sentiments of the Sunnis and disparage their beliefs. And your own people perform actions that you are trying to dissociate from.

Ja'far: We must admit that every religious group has some people who innovate and perform evil (deeds). It is upon us to restrain them and avoid paying attention to their utterances. Proper training, in the course of time will eradicate the influence of such people from history.

Sulaiman: Very well. Now I recall your attention to the fact that you Shias imagine that Ali ibne Abi Talib was the first Caliph. And you people call him as the first Imam. It is also a known fact that all the Righteous Caliph (Kholafa Rashedeen) had cordial relations amongst them. Ali ibne Abi Talib was helpful to the other Caliphs. He solved their problems and gave his judgements on important issues. He was so indispensable that one of them said, 'I dread for the time when I am confronted with a problem and Abul Hasan (Ali ibne Abi Talib) is not amongst us.'

Ja'far: Certainly, Imam Ali (a.s.) was an example to follow and he clearly indicated his opinion about the caliphate when he said he had found Islam in danger and decided to do that which was more appropriate. Let us see what he has to say in this regard:

"Allah, glorified be He, sent His Prophet (s.a.w.s.) as a warner for the people and a witness upon the other prophets. When he left the world the Muslims differed among themselves. By Allah I never could imagine that Arabs will remove the household of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) from the affairs of leadership. After him I was taken away from it. I had no doubt that people were running to pledge allegiance to a certain person. I pulled my hand until I saw that people have turned away from the faith and bent to destroy the religion of Allah. I feared that if I did not help the Muslims and Islam it would break and fall down. And its consequences would be more serious than the worldly caliphate that is just for a few days and would soon come to an end. Like a mirage. Like the clearing away of the clouds. I stood up in those circumstances and the evil was defeated and religion got a fresh lease of life."

(Sharhe Nahjul Balagha- Ibne Abil Hadeed)

Sulaiman: Very well! So why don't we give up arguments and leave the differences for the scholars? Why can't we just concentrate on mutual co-operation and progress?

Ja'far: You are right. But the reality of circumstances has rendered us helpless. Had all the people agreed upon one thing there would have been no need for this discussion. Leave alone agreement, people do not even think of it. They make fun of each other and call one another kafir (disbeliever). The Muslims possess many useful qualities but they are all misused to create this type of propaganda.

Moreover, what we have presented is just for information. The various religious sciences have become a part and parcel of modern life.

But it is a pity that there is no time for research into religious subjects for finding the true facts regarding Islamic beliefs. The various mass media have failed to depict the true meaning of Shiaism. Ignorance has perpetrated difficulties. What we are doing at present is actually battling against ignorance. We invite all the people to come and have friendly discussions so that Shias and Sunnis may come together on one platform.

Sulaiman: Don't you think that unity among Shias and Sunnis will require one of them to

forgo their original beliefs?

Ja'far: Coming closer does not mean that one person has to forcibly leave his belief. It is between him and his Lord. It denotes an exchange of views, and learning about each other. It helps in building bridges of friendship, co-operation and love.

Prophethood and the alleged mistake of Jibraeel (a.s.)

Sulaiman: I have a very sensitive question. But first you promise that you will neither feel bad nor be angry about it.

Ja'far: We are here to discuss everything openly. Go ahead with your question.

Sulaiman: It is said that according to Shias, Prophethood was intended for Ali but Jibraeel committed a mistake and delivered the Divine revelation to Muhammad (s.a.w.s.).

Ja'far: Thank you very much for your kind query. However, this is pure falsehood. I assure you that Shias have no such belief. How can any Shia ever utter such a thing? We Shias never heap such an allegation upon Jibraeel al-Amin (the trustworthy).

Sources of Islamic Law

Sulaiman: What are the sources of Islamic Law according to the Shias?

Ja'far: Just like the rest of the Muslims, Shias too believe that the sources of Islamic law are mainly Quran and the Sunnat (practice) of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.). However according to Shias, the Sunnat of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) is acceptable only if it has been transmitted through Ahle Bayt (a.s.). This is in consonance of the Prophetic tradition that, "O, people I leave among you those two things that if you remain attached to them you will never go astray, the Book of Allah and my Progeny, my Ahle Bayt."

(Balaghi, Ala ar-Rahman Pg. 44, 2nd edition)

Consequently, for Shias 'sunnat' consists of the sayings and actions of the Masoomeen (the fourteen Infallibles). This is because the twelve Imams (a.s.) are the inheritors of Prophetic knowledge and their traditions reach unto the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). As stated by Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.),

"My hadith is the hadith of my father (that is Imam al-Baqir a.s.) and the hadith of my father is the hadith of my grandfather and the hadith of my grandfather is the hadith of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and the hadith of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) is the saying of Allah, the Almighty."

(Behaarul Anwaar Vol. 2, Pg. 178)

Therefore according to the Shia fuqaha (jurists) there is no difference between the sayings of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and that of the holy Imams (a.s.).

The Holy Quran or the Mushaf (scroll) of Fatemah?

Sulaiman: Another question that pricks at my mind is that you Shias do not believe in the authority of the same Quran that is with the Muslims. You are of the opinion that there have been interpolations in the Quranic verses.

Ja'far: This is another false allegation heaped upon Shias. You can go to any mosque or home of the Shia and you will find the same Quran. Also if you listen to the daily prayers of the Shia you will hear the same Quranic ayats (verses). If you attend the gatherings of Shia you'll find the same Quran being recited and discussed. The religious schools of the Shia teach the same Quran and its tafseer (exegesis). Who told you that Shias possess a different Quran?

The Almighty Allah has protected the Holy Quran from additions and deletions so far. He will continue to protect it in future. It is the same Quran that was revealed to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) Anyone who claims other than this has relied on conjecture or some weak traditions that have found their way into the hadith books of Shia as well as Sunni.

Sulaiman: But your people have replaced the Holy Quran with the Mushaf (scroll) of Fatemah.

Ja'far: These people! It's a pity they have misunderstood. Actually there is no other Quran except the one that is in the hands of Muslims, as I told you some time ago. But there is a mention of 'Mushafe Fatemah' in some traditions. However the word Mushaf is not equivalent to Quran. According to the dictionary meaning, the word Mushaf denotes a bound book. It is not something other than the Quran. It was the practice of some people to collect their knowledge in a bound book, like Khalid bin Ma'dan. He was from amongst the Tabein (companion of the companion of the Prophet). He had the honour of meeting seventy companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). His Mushaf is known as the Mushaf of Khalid bin Ma'dan. The Christians also use the Mushaf for recitation as mentioned in the History of

Sahal the slave of Atibah. He was a Christian and he recited the Bible for his uncle. He used to refer to it as 'Mushaf'.

There were some companions who had in their possession a Mushaf. All of them have recorded in their Mushaf the verses of the Holy Quran and whatever they heard from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) in connection with the exegesis of the Quranic ayats. These Mushafs were similar to short commentaries available in our time. There was one Mushaf of Ummul Momineen Ayesha, Mushaf of Ummul Momineen Hafasah. In the same way Fatemah Zahra (s.a.) the daughter of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) had a book called "Mushaf of Fatemah". It contained the laws of Shariat and some knowledge of the unseen. Some people alleged that it was a different Quran that the Shias have adopted. It was a dirty allegation and created a rift among the Muslim community.

Sulaiman: But one of your scholars have written a book in which he says that there is interpolation (tahrif) in the Quran?

Ja'far: It is just the saying of a few people. No one pays any attention to such people. The Shias believe in the Holy Quran and anything contrary to this is falsehood and fabrication.

Traditions (Ahadith)

Sulaiman: Is there any particular book of hadith that the Shias rely upon for obtaining their articles of faith and especially for knowing the Islamic Law?

Ja'far: The traditions of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) were first memorised and recorded by Imam Ali (a.s.). Later, they were passed on to Hasan and Husain (a.s.), and finally to the succeeding Imams (a.s.). When the Imams (a.s.) narrated the prophetic traditions in the company of their followers, especially during the time of Imam Ja'far as- Sadiq (a.s.) and Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) these traditions were written down by the audience and finally compiled into 400 manuscripts. They are known as al-usool al-Arba' miya (400 usools) Finally some scholars and traditionalists selected and classified the traditions and compiled them into books. Four of the most important books compiled in the fourth and the fifth century of Hijrah are as follows:

1. Al-Kafi of Kulayni (By Ash-Shaykh Muhammad Bin Yaqoob Al-Kulayni Al-Razi d.329 A.H.)
2. Man La Yahzarul Faqih of Shaykh Sadooq (By Shaykh Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Ali Bin Al-Husain Bin Babaway Al-Qummi d.381 A.H.)
3. Al Istibsar of Tusi (By Ash Shaykh Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Al-Hasan At-Tusi d.460 A.H.)
4. Tahzeebul Ahkam of Tusi (By Ash Shaykh Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Al-Hasan At-Tusi d.460 A.H.)

In addition to the above there are other important books like Wasaael-ush-Shia of Shaykh Hurre Aamili and Jame'-ul-hadith ash-Shia by Sayed Husain Al-Burujardi. However the four books mentioned before are the best known.

Sulaiman: All right, but the four books mentioned by you contain a number of things that go against what you claim"

Ja'far: My friend! Let me tell you an important fact about the Shias. According to Shias no book is faultless except the Holy Quran. The books of hadith are not the same as Quran. Therefore, there may be some controversial points in them. Our scholars do not label these books as 'Sehah'(absolutely authentic) , like our Sunni brothers who have Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim and Sahih Tirmidhi, etc. No Shia ever claims that his books of hadith are Sahih. However, some mischievous people pick out weak traditions from our books and use them to defame our beliefs and practice.

Sulaiman: But, don't you rely on the books of hadith?

Ja'far: Of course, we do. But we do not accept every tradition blindly. Each hadith is to be followed only after its authenticity is verified. This verification is carried out by the fuqaha (jurists) and scholars of hadith. Only they are qualified to determine the weakness and strength of traditions through the antecedents of the narrators. They also study the circumstances surrounding the various traditions...Do you understand, brother?

The Companions

Sulaiman: After our discussion about the traditions, let me ask you another question. Is it correct that you Shias do not accept traditions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) related through the respected companions? Even though the Almighty Allah had chosen them for the company of His Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and praised them in so many Verses of Quran for the assistance they gave to His Prophet (s.a.w.s.)? Though they were the most knowledgeable and were perfect models of character.

Ja'far: Most Certainly! The Shias respect, value and love the good believers from among the companions of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s).

Usually people regard the society at the time of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) to be a perfect society. Actually the Prophet's companions consisted of people from all walks of life. Some had weak faiths and some strong. They were not immune from errors.

Moreover, look at the historical occurrences that followed. Differences, conflicts and bloodshed occurred among the Muslims. Then how is it possible to consider all of them at par? Among them were the oppressors as well as the oppressed, the killers and the victims, among them were the religious and irreligious. How can we judge without examining their biographies and historical facts? We shall only listen to and believe in those who are reliable. Among them are such believer that are promised by Allah in the Holy Quran:

"Certainly Allah was well pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance to you under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down tranquillity on them and rewarded them with a near victory."

(Surah Fath 48:18)

And there are hypocrites also that are criticized in the Quran:

"And from among those who are round about you of the dwellers of the desert there are hypocrites, and from among the people of Medina (also); they are stubborn in hypocrisy; you do not know them; We know them; We will chastise them twice then shall they be turned back to a grievous chastisement."

(Surah Taubah 9:101)

Among them are ones that falsely blamed the family of Prophet:

"Surely they who concocted the lie are a party from among you. Do not regard it an evil to you; nay, it is good for you. Every man of them shall have what he has earned of sin; and (as for) him who took upon himself the main part thereof, he shall have a grievous chastisement.

Why did not the believing men and the believing women, when you heard it, think well of their own people, and say: This is an evident falsehood?

Why did they not bring four witnesses of it? But as they have not brought witnesses they are liars before Allah.

And were it not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy in this world and the hereafter, a grievous chastisement would certainly have touched you on account of the discourse which you entered into."

(Surah Nur 24:12-14)

"And when they see merchandise or sport they break up for it, and leave you standing."

(Surah Jumah 62:11)

And it is mentioned in Sahih of Bukhari that the above ayat was revealed when the companions deserted the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s) and left him with only a few loyal escorts.

(Sahih Bukhari, English Translation, Vol. 6, Pg. 391)

And among them were those who conspired to kill him when he was returning after the Battle of Tabuk.

"They swear by Allah that they did not speak, and certainly they did speak, the word of unbelief, and disbelieved after their Islam, and they had determined upon what they have not been able to effect, and they did not find fault except because Allah and His Apostle enriched them out of His grace; therefore if they repent, it will be good for them; and if they turn back, Allah will chastise them with a painful chastisement in this world and the hereafter, and they shall not have in the land any guardian or a helper."

(Surah Taubah 9:74)

And it is a fallacy to believe that being merely one of the consorts of the Messenger (s.a.w.s.) entitles one to a great honour. The erring wives of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) are severely criticised in the Quran. People have misused the offices of his wives to hurt the Prophet. The Holy Quran has promised chastisement to some of his wives:

"O wives of the prophet! whoever of you commits an open indecency, the punishment shall be increased to her doubly; and this is easy for Allah.

And whoever of you is obedient to Allah and His Apostle and does good, We will give to her her reward doubly, and We have prepared for her an honorable sustenance.

O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other of the women; If you will be on your guard, then be not soft in (your) speech, lest he in whose heart is a disease yearn; and

Speak a good word."

(Surah Ahzab 33:30-32)

Also the whole Surah Tahrim (66th chapter of Quran) is in castigation of the erring wives of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s).

Moreover, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) had prophesised the actions of some of his companions. In a tradition recorded in Bukhari he says,

"Some of the people of my Ummat will be brought and they will be taken to the left. I will say, My Lord they are my Ummat, why do You take them to Hell. I would be told You don't know what all they did after you. Then I will say as the righteous one (Prophet Isa) said: 'Till the time I was among them I was witness. When you raised me up You were the only One to monitor them.' I will be told that these people had renegaded after I left them.

(Sahih Bukhari, Volume 6, Hadith No. 149)

We ask: Who were the opposing parties in the battles of Jamal, Naharwan and Siffeen? And who ordered the killing of Caliph Uthman (r.a.) and the murder of Imam Ali (a.s.). Why did the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) predict that Ammar Yasir (r.a.) would be killed by a band of renegades?

Why should we respect the Companions unconditionally and maintain silence on such incidents? Is it permissible to remain quiet in the light of Quranic command that says that those who kill a believer unjustly will forever remain in Hell? So is it possible that we accept traditions from a person who according to Quran is liable for Hell? And after it has been proved that he killed another Companion intentionally?

One of the greatest scholars and writers has written a book in which he has recorded the phenomenon of 150 fabricated companions.

(Ref. One hundred and fifty Imaginary Companions by Allamah Sayed Murtuza Askari)

Sulaiman: Then how so many false traditions have entered the corpus of Muslim hadith. What is the reason for it?

Ja'far: It's a pitiful scenario! The Umayyads employed political intrigues just as unreliable media feeds rumours to the people. They had a single aim. To create and fabricate traditions with the help of forgers of traditions and groups of liars. They forged traditions in the name of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) by which they could derive support for their politics and strength. Thus how is it possible for us to take the Ahkaam-e-Deen (Islamic laws) from one whose sole qualification is that he was a Muslim and for some period of time had the opportunity of the Prophet's company? Investigation is a must.

Sulaiman: Does it mean that all the companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) are unreliable?

Ja'far: No, it isn't so. As I mentioned earlier among them are the chosen ones, those who did Jihad, the helpers and those had good intentions, in spite of some minor mistakes they committed.

Sulaiman: Okay! But how is it possible to distinguish the hypocrites from the believers among the companions. Only the Almighty can know whether they believed from their hearts or not.

Ja'far: It is very easy! The Almighty Allah informed His Prophet (s.a.w.s.) that no one shall love Ali (a.s.) but the believer and none shall despise him except the hypocrite. As mentioned in the traditions related by Imam Ali (a.s.), Ummul Mo'meneen Umme Salma (r.a.), Abdullah ibne Abbas, Abuzar Ghaffari. Anas ibne Malik and others. Abuzar (r.a.) says: "We did not recognise the hypocrites except from three qualities: Their denial of Allah and the Prophet, their aversion to prayers (salaat) and their hatred towards Ali ibne Abi Talib (a.s.)."

Abi Saeed Khudri (r.a.) said: "We, the Ansars, recognised the hypocrites by their animosity towards Ali ibne Abi Talib (a.s.)."

In a narration the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has clearly mentioned,

"O Ali, no one loves you except the believer and none hates you except the hypocrite."

(Mustadrakul Sahihain 3:729)

Sulaiman: Very good! Now tell me what is the opinion of the Imams of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) regarding this matter?

Ja'far: The Holy Imams (a.s.) adopted a two-pronged strategy to prevent the spread of concocted traditions:

They publicised the liars among the narrators, refuted them and cursed them.

They urged the Muslims to accept only those traditions that passed the test on the basis of Quran, and to hurl upon the wall, the ahadith that failed that test.

It is narrated from Imam Ja'far-as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said,
 "Everything returns back to the book (Quran) and Sunnah. And any hadith that is not in conformity of the Quran is false."

Therefore, scholars to the present day divide the traditions into four groups based on their authenticity.

1. Correct, 2. Good, 3. Reliable, 4. Weak.

Sulaiman: Is it sufficient excuse for the Shias to curse the companions?

Ja'far: It is necessary that we do not form our belief on the sayings of common people. In every society and in all religions and sects, there are some practices, and the actual beliefs are not based on these actions. Cursing is considered bad manners and many of Shias have given fatwa (decrees) that cursing is haraam and included it among sin and rebellion. Ali (a.s.) fought many battles, but we see that he disliked abuses; and he used to say, "I dislike that you be from the abusers." But this action, in spite of its detestability does not make anyone Kafir, except if he curses the Prophet or Imams (a.s.) as mentioned in authentic traditions.

Sulaiman: What a beautiful explanation! But how did the practice of cursing began in Islamic society?

Ja'far: It is a great pity! We see the companions themselves indulge in this habit. Some of them abused others, they used phrases like "Son of a black woman" and "O hypocrite." Officially, the first one to start the practice of cursing was Muawiya the son of Abu Sufyan. He started this custom. And we have been told that He ordered his officers and preachers to curse Imam Ali (a.s.) from the pulpits of Mosques and in the sermons of Friday prayers.

On the other hand we find that Ali (a.s.) ordered his companions not to curse the army of Muawiya during the Battle of Siffin.

Muawiya and Yazeed

Sulaiman: Listen, many a times I have heard from the Shia preachers and speakers cursing Muawiya. Also the people who distribute water and drinks during majalis (Mohurram gatherings) urge the audience to curse Yazeed. Is it such a meritorious deed?

Ja'far: First of all let us understand the meaning of 'Curse' (lanat). Lanat is a prayer to deprive someone of Divine Mercy. We find that 41 verses of the Holy Quran sanction Lanat. If it had not been so, how could we have known what is from the Shaitan and what is from Rahmaan (The Beneficent Lord)? It is upto you to study the biographies of Muawiyah and Yazeed and decide for yourself whether they deserve curses or not. And whatever praises that you find for Muawiyah in narrations and history are fabricated. This is testified by Asqalani in Fathul Bari from Ahmed ibne Hanbal. He says: "I asked my father what he thought of Ali and Muawiyah." He pondered for some time and said, "Know that! Ali had many enemies. His enemies searched for some fault or the other in him. But when they failed, they came together to a person who had fought him and began to praise him excessively in their enmity of Ali (a.s.). He said: "This points towards the fact that all that has been related from the fazail (virtues) of Muawiyah is fabricated."

(Ibne Hajar Asqalani's Fathul Bari fi Sharhe Sahih Bukhari)

Sulaiman: I wish to learn about the deeds of Muawiyah that make him eligible for 'lanat'?

Ja'far: According to unanimous opinion of Muslims, Muawiyah practised treachery and cheating against Ali (a.s.) and was the direct cause of battles that resulted in the bloodshed of Muslims. Let us not forget the fact that Ali (a.s.) was the rightful caliph of his time and according to the traditions of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) it was incumbent upon all Muslims to obey him, and this included Muawiyah.

Secondly, during the caliphate of Imam Hasan (a.s.), one of the chiefs of the youth of Paradise, Muawiyah continued his political intrigue till Imam Hasan (a.s.) was forced to abdicate the caliphal seat in view of the risk to Islamic nation and Muslims.

And when Muawiyah secured the throne, he used illegal (Haraam) methods against his opponents and against the followers of Ali (a.s.).

He tyrannised the people by sword and by stopping their allowances from the public treasury if they were from the Shias of Ali (a.s.).

He initiated the evil practice of cursing Ali (a.s.) from the pulpits of mosques.

He was the first to create feelings of racial discrimination between tribes and nationalities. Arabs and non-Arabs were given different status. The amount of allowance varied for different classes of people.

He promoted the fabrication of traditions disparaging Ali (a.s.) and gave impetus to hadith in favour of his son Yazeed, who was a well-known transgressor of his time.

He distorted the face of Islam through the creation of misguided sects like the 'Murjea' etc.

He ordered the poisoning of the beloved grandson of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.), Imam Hasan (a.s.). This was carried out through the Imam's wife, Judah bin Ashath bin Qays, by holding out a false promise to have her married to Yazeed.

After Muawiyah had broken the terms of treaty with Imam Hasan (a.s.), he said: "O people of Kufa! Did I fight you for prayers, zakat and hajj? Indeed you already pray, pay zakat and perform hajj. I fought you to rule over you. And indeed, Allah gave me this honour and debased you.

All the blood that has been shed over here deserved to be shed and every term of the treaty is trampled under my feet."

(Sharh Nahjul Balagha 16/14)

But Yazeed was way ahead of his father, Muawiyah! He tried in vain to obtain the pledge of allegiance by force from Imam Husain (a.s.). Even after breaking the terms of treaty with his brother Imam Husain (a.s.). We all know the position of Imam Hasan (a.s.) near the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). Many a times the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) remarked.

"Husain is from me and I am from Husain."

(Fadailul Khamsa Vol. 3, Pg. 263)

He (s.a.w.s.) also wept when Imam Husain (a.s.) was in his cradle. And he had prophesied the martyrdom of Imam Husain (a.s.). Rather, he had forecasted his killing by a renegade group and even indicated the exact location. He (s.a.w.s.) took a handful of soil from that place (Karbala) and gave it to Ummul Momineen Umme Salmah and told her to keep it with her, saying that when Husain (a.s.) will be martyred, that soil would turn into blood.

(Tabaqat Ibne Sa'ad, Tradition no. 269)

This is Husain (a.s.), the chief of the youth of Paradise, who himself said about Yazeed, "Yazeed is a transgressor, a drunkard and a murderer. And a person like me cannot pledge allegiance to such a man."

(Sayed Ibne Tawoos, Maqatal al-Husain Pg. 11)

It is necessary upon you to show your solidarity against those who hate Imam Husain (a.s.). What is to be said of Yazeed? After the serious carnage, they ordered the beheading of the martyrs. Even though, Imam Husain (a.s.) had exhausted all arguments. He was martyred alongwith his companions and family members in a condition of extreme thirst. He was having his women and children with him. The corpses of martyrs were trampled under the hooves of horses; then the ladies and children (especially, Hazrat Zainab (s.a.), the lion-hearted lady of Karbala) were taken as prisoners of war.

In their midst was the ailing youth, Imam Ali ibne Husain (a.s.) - titled Zainul Abdeen (ornament of the worshipper). Then they beheaded the corpses and carried the heads on the points of lances. When the head of Imam Husain (a.s.) was placed in the court of Yazeed, in a tray, Yazeed hit it with a cane and shamelessly recited obscene couplets.

May the curse of Allah be upon the oppressors. It is really surprising the some brothers harbour enmity with Shias based on the false accusation that Shias curse the companions. I don't know why they do not harbour enmity against Yazeed and Muawiyah who had cursed the two great personalities of Islam, Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) and his noble son, Imam Hasan (a.s.).

Wives of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.)

Sulaiman: What about Ayesha, the respected wife of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.)? You people accuse her of immorality?

Ja'far: Allaho Akbar (Allah is Great)! Refuge from Allah that Ayesha (r.a.) should be blamed as such (slander) whereas she is the wife of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.)!

Indeed she some actions of her hurt the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) though people least expected it from her, due to her nearness to the him. The Quran has called her by the title of Ummul Momineen (Mother of the Believers), just like the other wives of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.). Let us not, however, overlook the fact that Quran has also denounced some of the Prophet's wives and threatened them with dire consequences.

"If you both turn to Allah, then indeed your hearts are already inclined (to this); and if you back up each other against him, then surely Allah it is Who is his Guardian, and Jibreel and-the believers that do good, and the angels after that are the aiders.

Maybe, his Lord, if he divorce you, will give him in your place wives better than you, submissive, faithful, obedient, penitent, adorers, fasters, widows and virgins." (Surah Tahrir 66:4-5)

"And when the Prophet secretly communicated a piece of information to one of his wives - but when she informed (others) of it, and Allah made him to know it, he made known part of it and avoided part; so when he informed her of it, she said: Who informed you of this? He said: The Knowing, the one Aware, informed me." (Surah Tahrir 66:3)

As is well known, Ummul Momineen Ayesha was in the forefront of instigating people against Uthman. She also rose up in revolt against Imam Ali (a.s.) when he was the legitimate caliph of his time. Ayesha marched towards Basrah and fought him at the Battle of Jamal. In spite of the fact that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) had warned her against it. Moreover, Umme Salma (r.a.), who was aware of the prophetic warning, reminded Ayesha of the words of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.):

"Which of you will mount the camel and the dogs of Hawwab will bark on you?" (Tarikh Abul Fida Vol. 2, Pg. 71)

When Ayesha was on her way to Basrah, dogs started barking at her. She asked the name of that place. When she was told that it was Hawwab. She was shocked and she exclaimed, "I am destroyed! The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) had said to his wives: "Which of you will be the one at whom the dogs of Hawwab will bark?"

Abdullah Ibne Zubair came and assured her that it was not Hawwab. He even mobilised 50 false witnesses from Bani Amir who testified it was not Hawwab.

Also refer to the following report in Sahih Bukhari:

Narrated Abu Wail: When Ali sent Ammar and Al-Hasan to (the people of) Kufa to urge them to fight, Ammar addressed them saying, "I know that she (i.e. Aisha) is the wife of the Prophet in this world and in the Hereafter (world to come), but Allah has put you to test, whether you will follow Him (i.e. Allah) or her."

(Sahih Bukhari Vo. 5, H. 116)

Note: Allah's order is to obey the Imam (Ali a.s.) and the wives of the Prophet were specifically ordered to remain within the confines of their homes. Refer verse 33 of the 33rd Chapter of Quran, "And stay in your houses..."

Abu Talib

Sulaiman: The ways of you Shias are strange. As far as the companions are concerned you exercise utmost caution with regard to their reliability. On the other hand we see that you support a Kafir, defend his faith and praise him.

Ja'far: As far as the first part of your question is concerned, there is nothing wrong with it. The history is before you to study and derive your conclusions. So that you are free of blame. But tell me who is that 'Kafir' whom Shias venerate?

Sulaiman: You people respect Abu Talib, who remained firm on disbelief in spite of his nearness to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.). His proximity to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) cannot exempt him from accepting Islam, even though he had defended the Prophet. (s.a.w.s.).

Ja'far: We seek refuge in Allah! You accuse Abu Talib of disbelief while he was the foremost among Muslims and the first among the defenders of Islam. He was never a Kafir that he needed to publicly declare his belief. It is not something strange. There were some people in the Arabian Gulf who followed the monotheistic religion of Ibrahim (a.s.) (Deen-e-Hanifiah=the upright religion). The best among them were the legatees of Ibrahim (a.s.) and Ismail (a.s.), like Hashim, Abdul Muttalib, Abu Talib and Abdullah the father of Prophet (s.a.w.s.). The well-known words of Abdul Muttalib are clear as regards his belief, when the forces of Abraha surrounded the Holy Ka'aba. It proves that he was on the upright faith.

Similarly when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) declared his prophethood, Hazrat Abu Talib accepted Islam. He also underwent many difficulties for him. He was the supporter of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and was with him throughout the initial stages of Islam. Till the time when Quraish forced them to take refuge in the valley of Abu Talib. This can be summed up in the words of Prophet (s.a.w.s.),

"Quraish were not able to harm me a bit till Abu Talib was alive."

Sulaiman: If what you say is correct, why is Abu Talib falsely accused of infidelity?

Ja'far: The reason behind it is malice. Some narrators and historians are under the impression that Abu Talib died in the state of disbelief-in spite of there being no proof to

support such an assertion. Some of the traditions have been forged to discredit Imam Ali ibne Ali Talib (a.s.) and taunt him saying his father died a Kafir.

Sulaiman: But there are so many authentic traditions that mention Hell as the everlasting abode of Abu Talib?

Ja'far: According to the Shiite belief all such traditions are fabricated. Certainly, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) was present at the funeral of Abu Talib (may Allah be pleased with him). The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) remained with the bier of Abu Talib till he was entrusted to the grave. Then he said:

"You have done Sile Rahem (that fulfilled the rights of relationship), o my uncle, you will be given a good compensation for this. I was brought up under your care and when I grew up, you supported me. By Allah! I will do such Isteghfir (seek repentance) for you and do intercession for you, that the Jinns and men will be astounded."

(Sibte Ibne Jauzi, Tadkeraku Khawaas, Asnaul Matalib Pg. 15)

Apart from the books of history and biographies of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.), many other proofs can be given for the faith of Abu Talib. For example: the following couplets of Abu Talib are self-explanatory:

"By Allah, these people with all their power cannot do anything to you. Till I am buried (under the ground).

Declare your faith without fear I give you the good news and your eyes may become cool and illuminated.

You called me and I know that you wish good for me. Certainly you said the truth though before too, you were Ameen (Trustworthy).

Verily I came to know that the faith of Muhammad is the best of all the religions on the face of the earth.

Certainly Allah honoured the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.s.).

Then among the people the most honourable is Ahmed. His name is one of the names of Allah. He is honoured.

Then the One of the heavens is Mahmood and he is Muhammad."

(Behaarul Anwaar Vol. 35, Pg. 165)

Tawassul

Sulaiman: Let us resume our discussion about the Holy Ahle Bayt (a.s.). You Shias exceed all limits while expressing your love for them. So much so, that it seems you equate them to Allah.

Ja'far: How's that? Can you give an example?

Sulaiman: You Shias seek the fulfillment of your dua (invocations) through the channel of Ahle Bayt (a.s.). You pray to them (tawassul).

Ja'far: Tawassul is not prohibited and neither is it an innovation (bidat). It is valid according to the verses of the Holy Quran:

"O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah and seek means of nearness (waseela) to Him and strive hard in His way that you may be successful."

(Surah Maidah 5:35)

In another ayat we have:

"And We did not send any apostle but that he should be obeyed by Allah's permission; and had they, when they were unjust to themselves, come to you and asked forgiveness of Allah and the Apostle had (also) asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful."

(Surah Nisa 4:64)

Ahmed Ibne Hanbal, Tirmidhi and Ibne Majah and others have reported from Usman bin Hunaif:

"A blind man came to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and said, 'Do ask Allah to grant me fitness and cure.' The Prophet (s.a.w.s.) told him,

'If you wish so I will pray for you and if you wish so, be patient and this is better for you.'

He replied, 'Do pray.'

The Prophet (s.a.w.s.) ordered him to perform wuzu with utmost care and pray two rakat (units) of prayers and then to invoke as follows:

'O Allah! I ask you, for the sake of Your Prophet (s.a.w.s.), who is the prophet of mercy I focus my attention upon You so that my need gets fulfilled. O Allah! Make him my intercessor.'

(Sunan Ibne Majah Vol. I, Pg. 441)

Sulaiman: Perhaps it was during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). But can we say that tawassul is valid even after the demise of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.)?

Ja'far: Once we have accepted the validity of Tawassul, what difference does it make whether the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) is alive or not? Of course, the companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) continued to seek his tawassul even after he had passed away from among them. Tradition scholars have recorded that during the reign of Uthman bin Affan a man came to Usman bin Hunaif and complained to him that the caliph did not pay heed to him and fulfill his need.

Ibne Hunaif by referring to the words of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) ordered him to perform wuzu, offer two rakat prayers and then say:

"O Allah I ask you, for the sake of and through our Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) who is the Prophet of Mercy, I divert my attention to you. O Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) I contact and attend to Allah through your medium, so that my need is fulfilled."

(Al Mojamul Kabeer Vol. 9)

The man returned and his need was fulfilled.

More than this, it is accepted by all Muslims that tawassul of our Prophet (s.a.w.s.) was valid much before he took birth in this world. Hazrat Adam (a.s.) is reported to have seen the following inscription on one of the pillars of the High Heaven:

"There is no god except Allah and Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) is the Messenger of Allah."

This has been mentioned in Mustadrak of Hakim and Tibarani has also recorded it.

Sulaiman: Good! But you people go beyond the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and seek tawassul of the Imams of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.)?

Ja'far: Certainly, as I said, Imamah is the continuation of Prophethood. Even though the Imams (a.s.) are not Prophets, they are the successors of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.). They have a high status near the Almighty. Why do you find this surprising? It is a fact that companions (of the Prophet) have sought the tawassul of people who were not even from the Ahle Bayt (a.s.)! It is mentioned in Sahih Bukhari that:

Umar Ibne Khattab used to pray to Allah resorting to and through Abbas Ibne Abdul Muttalib, during draught to get rainfall. And used to say: "O Allah we always did beseech you by resorting to your Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and you used to irrigate us and send rain. Now we beseech you by resorting to the Uncle of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.). So let the rain fall and irrigate us. He says: "The (people) got rains."

(Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 2, Pg. 75)

It was due to the tawassul of Abbas who, apart from being the Uncle of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) did not command any other merit.

We can also quote other examples whereby the Imams of other sects have resorted to tawassul from their counterparts. For example, the book Al Khairaat ul Hasaan fi Manaqibe Abi Hanifa al-noman that Imam Shafaei (r.a.) visited (the grave) of Abu Hanifa and sought his intercession for the fulfillment of his dua. Similarly, Imam Ahmed bin Hanbal prayed through the channel of Imam Shafaei.

In Sawaequl Muriqa the following couplets of Imam Shafaei are recorded in praise of the Holy Ahle Bayt (a.s.)

"The family of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) are my medium towards contacting Allah. I do expect that tomorrow on the doomsday I will get my Namaae Amaal (record of deeds) in my right hand through their intercession and mediation."

Tabarruk (Seeking Blessings)

Sulaiman: It is possible to accept the validity of Tawassul as a kind of invocation (dua). However we see that when the Shia people visit Makkah, Madinah and Iraq, they act in a strange way. They kiss at the dust of Baqi graveyard and touch with reverence the enclosures around the graves of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and the Imams of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). Through these rituals these people intend to derive tabarruk (blessings).

Ja'far: Actually, to seek tabarruk is permissible (mubah) according to all the Muslims. As we are all aware, kissing the Black Stone (Hajar-e-Aswad) during the Hajj is a part of the pilgrimage rituals.

Sulaiman: But those rituals are accepted as authentic because the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) himself performed them.

Ja'far: The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) had also performed many actions that prove the permissibility of Tabarruk. For example when Janabe Fatemah binte Asad left for her

heavenly abode he (s.a.w.s.) shrouded her in his own shirt and laid her in the grave. And when he was asked to explain this action of his he said, "I wanted that the fire (of hell) should not touch her and that her grave becomes spacious for her." (Kanzul Ummal, Vol. 6, Pg.7)

The practice of Tabarruk was common among companions during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). They even obtained Tabarruk from the body of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and it gave instant results. It is mentioned in Sahih Bukhari that Ali (a.s.) was cured of his eye ailment when the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s) applied his saliva to his eyes.

This is mentioned in the incident of Khaiber. (Sahih Bukhari Vol.4, H.192,219,253 Eng-Arabic Edition)

In the same way as related by Anas Ibne Malik, when people searched for Wuzu water and it was not found, they all came to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s) who was having some water. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) put his hand in the utensil. They saw that springs of water were flowing from his fingers and all the people could do wuzu with it. In the same book there is a narration from Urwah Ibne Masood who says that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) never spat upon the hand of any one but that that person applied it to his face and his body. When he did wuzu people would fall on him for wuzu water as if fighting in a battle. Muslim in his Sahih has related that when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) came to Mina (after circumambulating Ka'ba) and shaved his head after stoning the Satan and after the sacrifice, he distributed his hair among the people. (In another tradition its is mentioned that he used to give to them). And as related in the tradition of Sahih Bukhari Hazrat Umme Salmah (r.a.) had some strands of the Prophet's hair and when someone got sore eyes he used to send a bowl of water to Umme Salmah. She dipped the hair in this water and the disease was cured. When the afflicted person applied this water. There are many traditions of Tabarruk, through the arrows of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and also through his hands (palms).(Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 7, H. 787 Eng-Arabic Edition)

Sulaiman: We all venerate a thing or an object associated with the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s). But that was during his lifetime. But you Shias pay homage to his grave and the graves of his descendants from the Ahle Bayt (a.s.) to this day. Is it correct to seek Tabarruk from the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) when he is dead?

Ja'far: There are so many examples of companions who continued to seek Tabarruk after passing away of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.), may my soul be sacrificed for him. One of them was Bilal the Muezzin, who rubbed his face on the grave of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.).

Also, Janabe Fatemah Zahra (s.a.) who went to the resting place of her father and taking a handful of dust put it to her eyes saying:

"One who smells the dust of the grave of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s). Would not need to smell any other perfume in his life.

Such calamities have befallen me. That if they had descended upon days they would have turned into nights."

(Wafa ul wafa of Samhoodi Vol. 2, Pg. 444)

Caliph Abu Bakr and Umar also acted upon this when they made a bequest that they should be buried beside the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). And the Muslims continued to venerate the Prophet's grave. Among them are the Shias of Ahle Bayt (a.s.) who take tabarruk from the tomb of the Prophet (a.s.), from the graves of the Ahle Bayt (a.s.) and from those of the righteous saints.

In Surah Baqarah the Almighty says,

"And the prophet said to them: Surely the sign of His kingdom is, that there shall come to you the chest in which there is tranquillity from your Lord and residue of the relics of what the children of Musa and the children of Haroon have left, the angels bearing it; most surely there is a sign in this for those who believe."

(Surah Baqarah 2:248)

This ayat mentions objects that were associated with Prophets (a.s.). They were supposed to benefit people in difficulties.

Anyway, Tabarruk is not wajib (obligatory) and to practice it, is not shirk. Rather, it is one of the ways of showing respect and devotion. Opposition exposes those who intend to belittle the Prophet (a.s.) or those who try to reduce the status of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.).

Finally I want you to go and refer Sahih Bukhari again. You will find a perfect example of Tabarruk:

Narrated Israil:

Uthman bin Abdullah bin Mauhab said, "My people sent me with a bowl of water to Um Salama." Isra'il approximated three fingers ('indicating the small size of the container in which there was some hair of the Prophet. Uthman added, "If any person suffered from evil eye or some other disease, he would send a vessel (containing water) to Um Salama. I looked into the container (that held the hair of the Prophet) and saw a few red hairs in it," (Sahih Bukhari Volume 7, Hadith 784)

Shafa'at (Intercession)

Sulaiman: Do you mean to say that this barakat that you pray for, through tawassul, is to obtain the deliverance of the sinner so that instead of fire he enter Paradise?

Ja'far: You mean Shafa'at! It denotes the special favour of the Almighty Allah that He has bestowed upon some of His sincere servants, due to which they are able to intercede for the forgiveness of some greater sins and save one from the divine punishment in order that they may be able to enter Paradise. It has no connection with Shirk. Surely, Shafa'at is under the dominion of Allah and it is possible only through His permission. Therefore He gives to whomsoever He wishes the ability to intercede. It is the same thing that is mentioned in a number of verses of the Holy Quran. For example:

"There is no intercessor except after His permission."

(Surah Yunus 10:3)

"Who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission?"

(Surah Baqarah 2:255)

"On that day shall no intercession avail except of him whom the Beneficent Allah allows and whose word He is pleased with."

(Surah Taha 20: 109)

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) gave the good news of this Divine Mercy (rahmat) as mentioned in the Chapter of Tayammum:

He said, "I have been given five things not given to any other person...I have been given Shafa'at."

(Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 1, Pg. 256- English edition)

And in Sahih Muslim, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) says,

"I am the chief of the children of Adam on the day of Qiyamat...and the first to intercede and be interceded."

(Sahih Muslim, Vol. 4, Pg. 1230- English)

Also in Bukhari he (s.a.w.s.) says, "The people will come to me, and I will prostrate myself underneath Allah's Throne. Then I will be addressed: 'O Muhammad! Raise your head; intercede, for your intercession will be accepted, and ask (for anything). for you will be given.'"

(Sahih Bukhari Vol 4, Hadith 556 & Vol. 3, Hadith 3.)

Sulaiman: Don't you think that Shafa'at motivates people them to sin more? Specially the words: "My intercession is for those who commit greater sins."

Ja'far: No, because Shafa'at is not the right of a sinner. It is mercy from Allah the Almighty- nothing else. Whoever deserves it, gets it. Imam Sadiq (a.s.) says, "The intercession of us Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) will not reach those who consider salaah (prayers) unimportant."

(Behaarul Anwaar Vol. 82, Pg. 236)

And the tradition that says that Shafa'at is for those who commit greater sins is meant to retain hope among the excessive sinners so that they will not fall into the pool of despondence forever. They will have a glimmer of hope, which would enable them to leave a sinful life and pray for the forgiveness of past sins. It is an important thing. It is for removing despair and despondence by the Mercy of Allah.

Infallibility

Sulaiman: Is it correct that Shias believe that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and his Ahle Bayt (a.s.) were infallible and absolutely immune from even the smallest of sins?

Ja'far: Yes, it is correct. From where does evil originate (sins happen)-from Iblees and from selfish desires. But Iblees does not have any power upon the righteous servants of Allah according to Quran. Refer to verse nos.30-42 of Surah Hijr.

"He said: My Lord! because Thou hast made life evil to me, I will certainly make (evil) fair-seeming to them on earth, and I will certainly cause them all to deviate

Except Thy servants from among them, the devoted ones."

(Surah Hijr 15:39-40)

"Surely. As regards My servants, you have no authority over them except those who follow you of the deviators."

(Surah Hjr 15:42)

Sulaiman: But Shias believe that the Imams of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) are also infallible?

Ja'far: We say that the Imams are infallible because infallibility is one of the necessary conditions of Imamate. It is not possible among the unjust people. And injustice is one of the causes of disobedience (sin). The Quran says,

"And when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words, he fulfilled them. He said: Surely I will make you an Imam of men. Ibrahim said: And of my offspring? My covenant does not include the unjust, said He.

(Surah Baqarah 2:124)

And the Imams are guided by divine commands,

"And we appointed them Imams. They were guided by our command."

(Surah Anbiya 21:73)

Sulaiman: But these ayats are general, they do not imply the appointed prophets.

Ja'far: We say that the Imams of Ahle Bayt (a.s.) are generally meant in these ayats. And do not forget, the Almighty Allah has removed impurities from Ahle Bayt (a.s.) and purified them, as clearly stated in the following verse:

"Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House! and to purify you a (thorough) purifying."

(Surah Ahzab 33:33)

from every natural and artificial evil 'rijs'. Reason dictates that anyone who guides to Allah should be an ideal and perfect being; and every action of his should be correct so that people are satisfied with him, and there should be no scope for doubt in their veracity.

And Allah, the Glorified says:

"O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those in authority from among you."

(Surah Nisa 4:59)

It is obvious that Allah could not order unconditional obedience to anyone except those who are infallible. How could the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) guarantee that his Ummat would not go astray till they remain attached to Imamate if there had been a chance of their being prone to mistakes?

As the famous traditions says: "I leave among you two weighty things, that if you remain attached to those two you will not go astray after me. They are the Book of Allah and my progeny, my Ahle Bayt."

(Al Ittehaaf be hubbil Ashraaf Pg. 22)

The undeniable link between the Imams of Ahle Bayt (a.s.) and the Holy Quran itself proves their infallibility. Just as the Quran is free of blemish, in the same way Ahle Bayt (a.s.) are also infallible. Anyone who believes in the authenticity of this tradition has also to believe in the infallibility of the Masoomeen (a.s.).

Sulaiman: But some ayats speak of the injustice that the Prophet inflicted upon himself. As mentioned in Surah Abasa; that he frowned on seeing a blind man.

Ja'far: The correct method of justifying such ayats is to follow the ayat, "Certainly, you have highest morals". It is mentioned in Quranic commentaries that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) was sitting with the leaders of Quraish and trying to convert them to Islam. The visually handicapped gentleman came and sat in the assembly, and interrupted again and again the conversation of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). So it is possible that the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) frowned at him to show to the Quraish leaders that he valued their audience but was compelled to reply again and again to the blind man. It is also possible that Allah warned the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) because he was a prophet and the best manners were expected from him.

You can refer to the Tafsirs (commentaries) of the Holy Quran if you wish to study this matter in detail. Notable commentaries are Al-Mizan fi-Tafseeril Quran of Allamah Sayed Muhammad Husain Tabatabai and Majmaul Bayan fi Tafseeril Quran of Tabarsi.

Anyway, we believe that all doubts against infallibility are based on ambiguous ayats and not the clear (mohkam) ones. People have these ayats and failed to derive the correct meaning.

This resulted in the people having doubts in the infallibility of the Prophets (a.s.). According to our belief the ayats are not concerned with the obligatory and prohibited acts. At the most

they speak of Tark-e-Awla (leaving a more preferable option) and even the greatest of Tark-e-Awla is not a sin.

Visiting the Graves

Sulaiman: You people venerate the graves of Ahle Bayt (a.s.) and yearn to visit them (ziarat). Isn't it haraam?

Ja'far: We believe that the traditions used by those who prohibit the ziarat of graves are incorrect. Or they have not understood the context of the traditions. And it has been the practice of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) to visit graves. He visited the grave of his dear mother and wept upon it. His companions joined him in the lamentation. (Sahih Muslim 2:671). In the same way Fatemah Zahra (s.a.) visited the tomb of her father. Muslims throughout the ages have visited the tomb of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) and the graves of the Imams of Ahle Bayt (a.s.) that are situated in the Baqi cemetery of Madinah. Therefore if you prohibit the visitation to graves it will go against some authentic traditions, like,

"Verily, I had restrained you from visiting the graves. Now, visit them. Certainly, it reminds one of the Hereafter."

(Sunan Tirmidhi, Vol.3, Pg. 370)

Since the earliest times it had been custom of people (Muslims) to visit graves.

Sulaiman: However, you people bestow on them the position of divinity and respect them greatly. You also build upon them places of worship?

Ja'far: Certainly, the Almighty Allah has ordered us to consider the place where Ibrahim (a.s.) stood, as a place of worship.

The Holy Quran says,

"Appoint for yourselves a place of prayer on the standing-place of Ibrahim."

(Surah Baqarah 2:25)

Similarly, the cave where the 'People of the Cave' took shelter was also made into a place of worship. As mentioned in the following ayat,

"When they disputed among themselves about their affair and said: Erect an edifice over them - their Lord best knows them. Those who prevailed in their affair said: We will certainly raise a masjid over them."

(Surah Kahf 18:21)

Moreover, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s), the Ahle Bayt (a.s.) and the Muslim leaders have till this day circumambulated around Hijr-e-Isma'il (when they go Hajj or Umrah). It is actually the grave of Hazrat Isma'il (a.s.), his mother Hajra (s.a.), his daughters, and some other Prophets (a.s.).

Now, if it is haraam to visit, or to convert into places of worship, the graves of prophets and messengers and the righteous servants of Allah, why do we find the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) following such a practice? And if it is the practice of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s), then what restrains us from following this practice (Sunnat)?

Sulaiman: But this is 'shirk' (Polytheism- associating someone or something with Allah)!

Ja'far: I said, 'for the servants of Allah', then how can it be shirk when the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s) has followed this practice? Also, have you ever seen any Muslim praying towards a grave while considering it as a Qibla (direction faced during prayers)? Whenever you see people praying at the tombs, know that they are engrossed in the worship of Allah. They have not changed their deity. They worship Allah at this place because it is a blessed and purified place. The place is associated with one of the beloved ones of Allah. It is a sign that reminds us of this great personality who is the dweller of this place.

It is haraam according to shariat to worship anyone other than Allah at the grave. Such a thing is not found in the Islamic world. The doubters and those who misinterpret have such wrong notions, which are of no value.

Sulaiman: Are you not content with visiting the graves, that you also sacrifice animals as (vow) nazr?

Ja'far: You will never find anyone slaughtering a sheep or goat at the grave so that its blood flows around the grave. It is a concocted story and an attempt to distort the definition of 'nazr'?

'Nazr' (dedication) is of two types. One of them is the nazr whereby a Muslim performs it for Allah but gifts its sawaab (reward) by the permission of the Almighty. Included in this type are worship-acts like prayers, fasts, charity and sacrifice for Allah. The second type of Nazr

is for the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) or a righteous person from among the Muslims. Like the construction of a Mosque, digging of wells, spending on orphans, with the intention of serving Allah the Almighty, the One without partners. After performing such acts, one gifts the rewards to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) or a righteous personality.

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s) said to the girl, who had vowed to do something for her father,

"Fulfill your vow."

(Sunan Abi Dawood, Vol. 2, Pg. 80)

Similarly, a man had vowed to slaughter a camel on a particular spot, not having an idol or any association with the customs of Ignorance (jahiliya). When he asked the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s) about its permissibility, he said,

"Fulfill your nazr (vow)."

Now, as far as the slaughter of goat on the grave is concerned (if such a practice exists). It consists of gifting the sawaab of this action (the slaughtered meat is distributed to the poor and other people) on behalf of the dweller of the grave. It is a worship act for Allah, not for the person on whose grave it is performed. But if an animal is not sacrificed according to the rules of shariat, it is haraam to eat its meat. The rules for slaying an animal include the pronouncement of Bismillah and Allaho Akbar and facing the Qibla (Holy Ka'ba). One who is slaughtering must be a Muslim. Apart from this, while taking a vow, the person should have uttered (By Allah I vow to sacrifice an animal as nazr). Verily, all Muslim Scholars are unanimous that it is permissible to gift the sawaab of such nazr to a departed soul.

Raja't (The Return)

Sulaiman: Shias believe in the second coming of your Imams (r.a.) after their demise and after a long time. How do you justify this belief?

Ja'far: The actual meaning of Raja't is that the Almighty Allah by His unbounded power will raise some people from the dead during the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) at the end of time. Now there are two points before us:

First - Is Raja't possible?

We know that it is obligatory for Muslims to believe in every word of the Quran. And Quran says,

"So Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him to life..."

(Surah Baqarah 2:259)

"...then Allah said to them, Die; again He gave them life;"

(Surah Baqarah 2:243)

Also while discussing the people of the cave Allah says,

"They shall say: Our Lord! Twice didst Thou make us subject to death, and twice hast Thou given us life,"

(Surah Mumin 40:11)

After reading these ayats we have to admit that Raja't is very much possible.

Secondly: There are ayat to prove the Raja't of Imams (a.s.) and some people. There are many traditions that have been recorded. This has also been proved according to the criteria of shariat. It is considered one of the articles of the belief of the Shias. But this belief is not one of the Durooriyaate Deen (obligatory articles of belief). It means that if a person believes in it, it is sufficient. If he does not, he is free to investigate. He will not be blamed for sinning or disbelief according to Shia jurisprudence.

Mahdi the Awaited one

Sulaiman: We have heard that Shias believe Mahdi the awaited one to be the twelfth Imam? And that he is in occultation (ghaib) till the time of his reappearance?

Ja'far: The belief in Mahdi the awaited one is not special to the Shias. All the Muslims believe that at the end of time Mahdi will rise and fill the earth with justice and equity just as it would have been filled with injustice and oppression. It mentioned in the Quran regarding the Divine government on the earth:

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

(Surah Anbiya 21:105)

There are numerous traditions about Mahdi (a.s.) and these traditions have been recorded by most of the respected scholars of Ahle Sunnat. For example:

Samarqandi in his book Tohfatur Talib, Sharani in Al-Yawaaqeeto wal Jawahir, Kwaja Parsa

in Faslul Khitab, Ibne Hajar Asqalani in Al Qaulul Mukhtasar, Muhammad ibne abi Talha in Matalibusso-oul, Shablanji in Noorul Absar, Sawaidi in Sabaekuzzahab. All of them have mentioned regarding Mahdi (a.s.) that he is Muhammad the son of Hasan al-Askari (a.s.), and that he is alive and present like Isa (a.s.). He will remain so till the Almighty permits him to reappear like He would allow Isa (a.s.) to descend.

Some of the Ahle Sunnat scholars have described the characteristics of Mahdi (a.s.) that he will be from the Ahle Bayt (a.s.).

Al Bukhari in his Sahih in the Chapter of 'Descension of Isa (a.s.)' mentions a tradition from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s):

"What would your condition be when the son of Marium descends amongst you and your Imam will be from you?"

Muslim in his Sahih (Vol. 2) also records a tradition from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s):

"There will be at the end of my Ummat a Khalifa. He will collect unlimited wealth. Which cannot be calculated."

Tirmidhi and Abi Dawood remark, "This Caliph is Al Mahdi."

(Sunan Tirmidhi, Vol. 2, Pg. 270, Sunan Abi Dawood Vol. 4, Kitabul Mahdi)

3.and 4. Abi Dawood in his Sunan and Tirmidhi in his Sunan write that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said,

"This world will not come to an end till a man from my Ahle Bayt has not ruled upon it. His name shall be same as mine. Even if a single day remains from the tenure of this earth the Almighty will prolong it so much that a man from my Ahle Bayt (a.s.) rises and fills it with justice and equity in the same way as it would have been filled with injustice and inequity."

Abi Dawood has recorded this tradition with the additional words,

"He will rule for seven years."

Abi Dawood says that this hadith is authentic and Tibrani has quoted it in his Mojam; other scholars have also mentioned it.

(Sunan Abi Dawood Vol. 4, Kitabul Mahdi)

Ibne Tayyimiyyah writes in his book, Minhajus Sunnah:

"The traditions of Mahdi are well known. They are mentioned in the Musnad of Ahmed Ibne Hanbal, Sunan of Sajistani and Tirmidhi and other books of traditions."

However the people who do not believe in Mahdi are very few, and they disbelieve due to ignorance or false pride. Because the majority of the scholars have admitted to the authenticity of the belief of Mahdi.

Mahdi will fill the Earth with Justice and Equity

Mustadrak of al-Hakim, Volume 4, page 558

Abu Abbas Muhammad ibne Yaqoob narrates from Hajjaj bin Rabi bin Sulaiman from Asad bin Moosa from Hammad bin Salmah from Matru and Abi Haroon, from Abi Siddiq an-Naji from Abu Saeed Khudri that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said,

"The earth shall be filled with injustice and oppression when a man from my family will appear and rule the earth for seven or nine years and fill the earth with justice and equity."

Other books of Ahle Sunnat that mention this tradition are, Al Mustanad, Vol.3, pages 28 and 80, Arbaeen of Abu Nuyam, Faraedus Simtain, Talkheesul Mustadrak Vol. 4, page 558, Al Haawi al Fatawi page 63.

Musnad Ahmed Hanbal Vol.3 page 17:

Abdullah narrated from his father, from Abu Nasr, from Abu Muawiya Shaiban from Matar bin Tahman from Abi Siddiq Naji from Abu Saeed Khudri that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said,

"The hour shall not be established (qiyamat will not come) till a person from my Ahle Bayt (a.s.), with a bright face and a high nose will fill the earth with justice and equity like it would have been filled with injustice and oppression.

Other books that mention this hadith are Faraedus Simtain and chapter of Ramoozul Hadith page 447.

Sunan Abi Dawood, Vol. 4, page 154.

Sahal bin Tamaam narrates from Imaranul Qitan from Qatadah from his father Nazrah from Abi Saeed Khudri that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said,

"Mahdi is from me, he has a broad forehead and a high nose he would fill this earth with justice and equity just as it would be filled with injustice and oppression. And he shall rule for seven years."

Other books that mention this hadith are: Al Mustadrak Vol. 40 page 557, Al Jama bainal Sahihain, Al Arbaeen, Al Masaabihus Sunnah Vol 2, page 134, Tazkeratul qurtubi, Al Bayan Fi Akhbaare Sahibuzzamaan, Muntakhab Kanzul Ummal Vol. 6, page 30, Talkhisul Mustadrak Vol. 4, page 557, Mishkatul Masabih Vol. 3, page 24, Matalibus So-ool page 89, Noorul Absar page 229, Al Fusoolul Mohimma page 272, Al Haawi wal Fatawi Vol.2 page 57, Al Jameus Sagheer Vol.2 page 579, Yanabiul Mawaddah page 340, Mukhtasar Tazkirah Qurtubi page 131, Al Fathe Kabeer vol 3 page 259, Sharhe Mishkat Vol.4, page 338.

Sulaiman: Then what is the point of controversy between the Shias and Sunnis?

Ja'far: They differ upon the identity of this Mahdi. Whether he is already born and in occultation and soon reappear by the permission of Allah. Or he would be born in the near future just before the time of his Zuhoor (reappearance). Is he the son of Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) the eleventh of the Shiite Imams? Was he born on the 15th of Shaban 255 A.H.? Or he is some other person?

Sulaiman: How did Mahdi (a.s.) disappear?

Ja'far: Imam Mahdi (a.s.) was five years of age at the demise of his father, Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.). The Almighty wished that he should remain away from the sight of the people and especially from the despotic rulers of Bani Abbas. The rulers were aware that according to the Shia belief the son of Imam Hasan al-Askari is the awaited Mahdi who will destroy the oppressive governments and lay the foundation of a just rule. They feared this eventuality and hence decided to have him killed when they heard that his five-year-old son performed the last rites of Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.). However they were unable to trace him. He disappeared into the house of his father and though he lived among the people in Samarra, Baghdad and other places, his enemies could not touch him.

For a long period of 69 years, from 260 A.H. to 329 A.H. the twelfth Imam (a.s.) maintained contact with his Shias through his special representatives (Nawwabe Khassa). This period is known as the Lesser Occultation (Ghaibate Sughra).

After the demise of the fourth and the last special representative commenced the period greater occultation (Ghaibate Kubra). During this period there are no special representatives between the Imam (a.s.) and his followers. The people are supposed to refer to the pious scholars (fuqaha) for solving their problems.

Sulaiman: But how could a five-year-old boy assume the responsibility of guiding the community (Ummah)?

Ja'far: If you ask me about the historical authenticity of this matter, you can refer to traditions and books regarding this topic. Because the issue of childhood is decided by Allah. That is, if He wishes He can empower even a child with Prophethood and Imamat.

Therefore we find in the Holy Quran that Isa ibne Maryam (a.s.) attained the status of Prophethood while yet an infant.

"But she pointed to him. They said: How should we speak to one who was a child in the cradle?

He said: Surely I am a servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and made me a prophet;" (Surah Maryam 19:29-30)

Similarly Hazrat Yahya (a.s.) was endowed wisdom during childhood.

"O Yahya! Take hold of the Book with strength, and We granted him wisdom while yet a child."

(Surah Maryam 19:12)

Sulaiman: But how is it possible that a person who was born in 255 A. H. is still living after more than a thousand and fifty years?

Ja'far: It is not impossible for a person to live that long. There is no maximum life span of human beings. A person can continue to live till a cause of his death appears. Therefore we find in history numerous personalities who were able to attain an exceptionally old age.

The Holy Quran also proves it to be true. In connection with Hazrat Nuh (a.s.) the Holy Quran says that he preached among the people for 950 years. The people of the cave slept for 300 years before they woke up. Later they again went back to sleep and according to Muslim belief they still continue to sleep. Similarly Hazrat Isa (a.s.) who was born more than a thousand years before Imam Mahdi (a.s.) is still alive on the fourth heaven and will descend to the earth in the near future.

The authentic traditions stress upon the fact that Isa (a.s.) will descend and perform prayers behind Imam Mahdi (a.s.). Another example is that of Hazrat Khizr (a.s.) who is alive since the time of Prophet Musa (a.s.) and he resides on this very earth. The majority of the people

believe in this.

Sulaiman: How can we benefit from this belief during the period of occultation?

Ja'far: According to the traditions we benefit from him during the ghaibat in the same way as we benefit from the Sun when it is hidden behind the clouds. There are some other benefits, which are not known to us presently. However we shall come to know the real reason only after the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s.). It is the same with regard to the raising of Hazrat Isa (a.s.) to the heavens.

As said about Isa (a.s.)'s ghaibat that instead of death he was raised up. It is said that one of the reasons is that he will come in the Aakheruzzamaan (the period of time). The same is said of Imam Mahdi (a.s.). Doubtlessly Imam Mahdi (a.s.) will reappear as a Universal Reformer and lay the foundation of a Divine government on the earth. The belief saves us from despair whatever may be the condition of this earth due to difficulties and calamities. Hence, now it is the duty of all of us to create the conditions favourable for the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s.), the Universal Reformer.

Sulaiman: It is said that Shias undertake pilgrimage (like Hajj) to the Sardab (cellar) in Samarra, Iraq, in search of Mahdi whom they hope to find in that place?

Ja'far: This is an allegation. The Shias like other Muslims perform the Hajj of Ka'ba in Mecca. It is one of the obligatory duties.

Those who say that Shias go to Samarra to meet Imam Mahdi (a.s.) are liars. They visit this place because it has special significance of being the place of birth of Imam Mahdi (a.s.). Before that it was the residence of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) and Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.). Therefore it is blessed place.

Sulaiman: If the belief of Mahdi, the awaited one, is common to all the Muslims then why do we find that people are so ignorant of it?

Ja'far: I myself ask the same question. But I think it is due to the lack of information or the failure of the ulama (scholars) to realise the importance of this topic and to educate the people in this regard.

Extremism in the Love for Ahle Bayt (a.s.)

Sulaiman: It is very much true that loving and respecting Ahle Bayt (a.s.) is incumbent upon all the Muslims. But you Shias exceed all limits in your love towards them and even resort to their worship.

Ja'far: Right! All Muslims are supposed to love Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) and his progeny (a.s.). Why should it not be? We have been ordered in the Holy Quran,

"Say: I do not ask of you any reward for it but love for my near relatives;"

(Surah Shura 42:23)

But how can you accuse us for worshipping them?

Sulaiman: You name your children in a way that conveys this. Like Abde Zahra (servant of Zahra), Abdul Husain (servant of Husain), Abdur Raza and Abde Ali etc. How can you serve someone other than Allah? Do you mean to ascribe partners to Allah?

Ja'far: Do not be hasty in laying blame on the Shias. Listen to what I have to say. The Arabic language has the distinction of being the most eloquent one. Each word has more than one meaning. For example when the Quran says,

"And at the time when the hour shall come, the guilty shall swear (that) they did not tarry but an hour..."

(Surah Rum 30:55)

In this verse the word 'hour' in the first instance stands for Qiyamat. And in the second place it denotes the unit of time of this world. In the same way the word 'Abd' (servant) has different connotations:

Serving in the sense of obedience. As the Quran says,

"O my father! Serve not the Shaitan,"

(Surah Maryam 19:44)

Serving like an employee.

Servant in the sense of enslavement. As mentioned in the quranic ayat:

"And marry those among you who are single and those who are fit among your male slaves and your female slaves;"

(Surah Nur 24:32)

When we name our children as Servant of Nabi, or Servant of Rasool or Servant of Zahra etc. we do so in the sense of obedience and service, not worship and deification. For what is

better than the distinction of being a Muslim and obeying the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and the Imam (a.s.)? Imam Ali (a.s.) says about himself,

"I am not, but a servant among the servants of Muhammad (s.a.w.s.)."

It is due to this very fact that some people even among the Ahle Sunnat and Khawarij, in the past as well as the present had names like Abdul Nabi and Abdul Rasool etc.

For example:

Abdul Nabi bin Ali bin Mahdi. He was the ruler of Zubaid in Yemen in the 6th Century of Hijrah. He was a Khwariji as mentioned in the book Asmaa-e Hukkamul Muslemeen.

Abdul Rasool (Servant of the Prophet) Seyaf, the commander of the Mujahideen of Afghanistan, who has recently changed his name due to political exigencies to Abde Rabbe Rasool (Servant of the Lord of the Prophet).

How can you accuse Muslims of polytheism when they chant a number of times the words: "I witness that there is no god except Allah, the One without any partners?" Moreover have you seen a single Shia, named as such, bowing or prostrating towards any of the Masoomin (a.s.)? They do not worship anyone except Allah, the High, and the One who has no partner.

Swearing by the name Ahle Bayt (a.s.), and seeking help through them

Sulaiman: Why do you people take oath upon the Prophet (s.a.w.s.), or by the right of Ali or Abbas, and say, "By the Prophet" or "By Abbas"?

Ja'far: Oath or vow is only valid if it is taken in the name of Allah, the Almighty. And to fulfill this vow becomes wajib (obligatory). If such an oath is broken, one has to pay kaffarah (penalty). For details refer to the books of jurisprudence.

As the people swear, 'By the Prophet, by Abbas, by Zahra etc., it is necessary that the thing for which they are swearing must have importance or weightage. Like the phrase, 'By the time (wal A'sr)...by the head of my father and mother, or the Quran or by the right of Ka'ba, or by the sanctified house. It is correct that falsehood is haraam (prohibited) under all circumstances. But oath without the name of Allah does not become a Qasam (a vow that must be fulfilled).

And we find that the Holy Quran introduces to people the right of Allah through a number of oaths in the words of the Almighty Himself:

"I swear by the sun and its brilliance."

(Surah Shams 91:1)

"But nay! I swear by the falling of stars."

(Surah Waaqiyah 56:75)

"By your life! They were blindly wandering on in their intoxication."

(Surah Hijr 15:72)

Sulaiman: Then why do some people exclaim, 'Yaa Ali' or 'Yaa Husain', while lifting something heavy, instead of saying 'Yaa Allah'?

Ja'far: It is one of the components of Tawassul (mediation) and it is not something new. And this type of seeking help implies the metaphorical meaning of quranic verse, "Only thine help we seek." For if we take the absolute meaning then absolutely no one can be called for help except Allah. The Holy Quran also mentions in the incident of Musa (a.s.),

"And he who was of his party cried out to him for help against him who was of his enemies."

(Surah Qasas 28:15)

Also in the incident regarding Zulqarnain, the Holy Quran says,

"He said: That in which my Lord has established me is better, therefore you only help me with workers, I will make a fortified barrier between you and them."

(Surah Kahf 18:95)

Sulaiman: But that is with regard to seeking help from someone living. Is it correct to ask the help of dead people?

Ja'far: I call your attention to the following words of Allah:

"O our people! Accept the Divine caller and believe in Him, He will forgive you of your faults and protect you from a painful punishment."

(Surah Ahqaaf 46:31)

The caller here and the one who is called is the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and all Muslims are unanimous that this ayat is valid till Qiyamat; even after the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has passed away from this world a long time ago. The tradition that is related from Ibne Masood (r.a.), that he said:

"If anyone of you loses his animal in the desert, he must call, 'O creature of Allah, come to my help.' Certainly, there are creatures of Allah whom you cannot see."

The following Dua (supplication) is mentioned by Ibne Majah, Nisai and Tirmidhi:

"O Allah! I turn towards You through the channel of your Messenger of Mercy. O Muhammad! I turn to Allah through you. O my Lord! Fulfill this wish of mine."

Then his wish shall be fulfilled. There are also other traditions of the same kind.

These conditions are only for the sake of emphasis. A Polytheist or infidel does not utter them. Only those who love these exalted personalities due to their closeness to the Almighty utter them. And for their sacrifices for the sake of Islam. These people strove and gave sacrifices and it is very meritorious to remember them; and their remembrance leads to the remembrance of the Almighty. Anyway, this matter is not a pillar of faith that if one does not know it he becomes a Kafir. And it is not even an accepted dictum among the people.

Islamic Festivals

Sulaiman: You people have so many celebrations in a year. So many birth and death anniversaries. Why are they so?

Ja'far: All these celebrations are held to renew our connection with our Imams (a.s.) and to keep alive their connection and to gain lessons from their life. And they are also channels of the spread of Islamic Culture and awakening. If we leave these celebrations and whatever is recited in it like poems, etc....how would the common people acquire the general knowledge about religion, sayings of Imams (a.s.) and things associated with the life of Masoomeen (a.s.).

The media, in spite of its vast spread have paid little attention towards all these. Do not think that everyone is capable of reading books or contacting the Maraja (Scholars). In the same way we also note that such celebrations and programmes are not an innovation in religion. They have become a part and parcel of Islamic worship. And they support Islamic beliefs.

For example the Hajj:

Most of the rituals of Hajj are associated with some memorable events from the Prophets' and the saints' life. For example:

The place of Ibrahim (Maqaame Ibrahim) which is appointed as a place of worship by the Almighty due to the fact that it was the same spot where Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) stood during the construction of Ka'ba.

The Saay (running) between Safa and Marwa hills is also in remembrance of the event when Hajra (s.a.) ran from Safa to Marwa in search of water for the baby Ismail (a.s.)

The stoning of Jumaar (Shaitan) reminds one of the stoning of Shaitan by Ibrahim (a.s.)

Similarly, the day of Arafat and the going towards Mash'ar, the blessedness of Friday, Rajab and Shaban and Ramazan and other things.

The aim of these celebrations is to remember the beloved ones of Allah, the life of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and the life of Imams (a.s.) and to feed people on the auspicious occasion of the birth of Imam (a.s.) and Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and to gift the reward. We must however refrain from rituals that Sufis have initiated, like Music and Singing etc.

Eid-ul-Ghadeer

Sulaiman: Shias celebrate so many Eids that are peculiar to them, like Eid-e-Ghadeer, whereas we do not know of any Eid except Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Azha?

Ja'far: We must understand the meaning of Eid before we speak without knowledge. For the Arab people, Eid meant a day of celebration, festivity and a joyous occasion. A day of prayers and other worship acts. Eid for Arabs is the time of 'the return of happiness'-according to Lisnau Arab (Dictionary) of Ibne Manzoor. And it is the meaning of Eid as understood by the commentators of the Holy Quran:

"Isa the son of Marium said: O Allah, our Lord! Send it down to us food from heaven which should be to us an ever-recurring happiness, to the first of us and to the last of us, and a sign from Thee, and grant us means of subsistence, and Thou art the best of the Providers." (Surah Maidah 5.114)

Similarly the scholars have also understood the following traditions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) in the same way.

"The day of sacrifice, the day of Arafat, the 10th day of Zilhijj are the days of Eid for the Muslims. The days of eating and drinking," as mentioned in Musnad of Ahmed Hanbal under hadith no. 16743.

In a tradition it is mentioned that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said on a Friday:

"O gathering of Muslims, this day has been appointed as the day of Eid by Allah. So take a bath (on this day)."

Imam Ali (a.s.) says in Nahjul Balagha (428),

"Any day on which Allah is not disobeyed is the day of Eid."

There is a blessing for Muslims that they refrain from dissension and false allegations among themselves with regard to celebrating the day of Ghadeer as Eid. It is not a usual Eid when Namaz is Mustahab (recommended) and fasting is Haraam (prohibited). Also, note that Shias consider it Mustahab to fast on this day.

Sulaiman: But you have not explained about Eid-ul-Ghadeer?

Ja'far: Al-Ghadeer is related to a tradition of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and this tradition has been related by so many narrators that is classified as Mutawatir (widely related). Hakim Nishapuri has mentioned a tradition from his chain of narrators from Zaid bin Arqam that, "When the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) was returning from the farewell Hajj, he reached Ghadeer-e-Khum (the pond of Ghadeer).

He camped at Ghadeer and ordered a pulpit to be built with camel saddles and said:

"I have been summoned and I shall answer the call. I leave among you two heavy things. One of them is greater than the other, the Book of Allah and my progeny. Then be careful how you deal with them. And do not forsake them till you reach the Pond of Kauther." Then he said, "Indeed Allah, the Almighty is my Master and I am the master of all the believers." Then he took the hands of Ali (a.s.) and said, "Of whomsoever I am the master, this Ali is his master too. O Allah befriend one who befriends Ali and be inimical to the one who harbours enmity against him."

(Al Ghadeer, Allamah Amini Vol.1, Pg. 9-11)

Al Hakim says that this tradition is correct according to the standard of Bukhari and Muslim, but they have not recorded it. Although Zahabi has mentioned it in his Talkhis Ala Mustadrak. This hadith has also been mentioned by other reputed Sunni scholars in their books of traditions, among them the most important being; Ibne Hajar Asqalani, Qandoozi in Yanabiul Mawaddah, Al-Maqrizi, Ahmed ibne Khulafa, Mohib Tabari in Riyazun Nazarah, Ibn Khallikan in Wafayatul Ayaan, Khatib Baghdadi in Tarikh-e-Baghdad, Ibne Qutaybah in Imama Wal Siyasah, Ibn Tayimiyyah in his books Huqooqe Aalal Bayt and Aqeedatul Wastiya. Al-Masoodi in Muruz az-Zahab, Balazari in Ansabul Ashraaf, Ibne Kathir in Tafsirul Quranil Azeem, Ibne Hajar Haithami in Sawaequl Muhreqa etc. There are many such scholars and writers who have quoted the tradition of Ghadeer in their writings.

Another notable fact mentioned in authentic historical books is that after the declaration of wilayat of Ali (a.s.) all those who were present with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) proceeded to congratulate Ali (a.s.). Especially the caliph Umar greeted in the following words: "Congratulations to you, O' Abul Hasan, you have become my master and the master of all believing men and women."

(Al Ghadeer, Allamah Amini Vol.1, Pg. 11)

Weeping for Imam Husain (a.s.)

Sulaiman: You people continue to weep for Imam Husain (a.s.) on Ashoora and other days of martyrdom.

Ja'far: Weeping within the limits of Shariat is meritorious and acceptable as mentioned in the Quranic Ayats:

"And that is He it is Who makes (men) laugh and makes (them) weep;" (Surah Najm 53:43)

It is said that Prophet Yaqoob (a.s.) wept so much for his son Yusuf (a.s.) that the pupils of his eyes became white.

"And he turned away from them, and said: O my sorrow for Yusuf! And his eyes become white on account of the grief," (Surah Yusuf 12:84)

The Prophet (s.a.) himself wept on many occasions. It is related from Anas bin Malik: The Prophet said, "Zaid took over the flag and was martyred. Then it was taken by Jafar who was martyred as well. Then Abdullah bin Rawaha took the flag but he too was martyred," and at that time the eyes of Allah's Apostle were full of tears.

(Sahih Bukhari Volume 2, Hadith 338)

He (s.a.) also wept for Imam Husain (a.s.) on various occasions. For example, on the day Husain (a.s.) was born. And whenever the he (s.a.w.s.) prophesied the martyrdom of Imam Husain (a.s.). Zainab binte Jahash the wife of Prophet (s.a.w.s.) narrates: One day the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s) was in my house and Husain (a.s.) was also there. For some

moments I forgot about him. He entered into the Prophet's room. I tried to pick him up but the Messenger of Allah restrained me. Then he stood up to perform the prayers while holding Husain (a.s.) in his arms. When he went into ruku (bending in genuflection) or sajdah (prostration) he put down Husain (a.s.) and again took him in his arms when he stood up. Then he sat down and wept. When he finished his prayers I said, "O Messenger of Allah! Today I have seen you do something that I had never seen before."

He said, "Jibraeel came to me and informed me that this Husain (a.s.) will be killed by my ummat (people)."

(Mustadrakul Sahihain, 4:398)

He then showed me the soil of the place of his martyrdom. He gave me (a handful of) red dust."

Many traditions prophesising the martyrdom of Imam Husain (a.s.) are mentioned in the Shia and Sunni books. If a person is well informed of Imam Husain's tragedy, it is necessary that his emotions are raised. The emotions that emanate from the heart. And these emotions are motivated by sorrow and sadness. These do not come out only in tears and some words and dirges. How eloquently the following couplets express it:

"My eyes weep for you not for some sawaab (reward)

But my eyes weep due to the tragedy that has befallen you."

Sulaiman: But you do stop at weeping. You do chest beating and injure yourself with knives?

Ja'far: Chest beating that does not harm a person, is permissible. It is an expression of one's emotion. One that brings out the emotions boiling in the heart. It is a natural phenomenon like a person claps and stands up from his place due to joy or excitement. However, there is a limit to it. An important condition is that no harm should come to the body. But since such actions do not express the original belief, it does not make any difference. It does not harm one's faith.

Sulaiman: Let us return to our discussion on weeping. There is a tradition that states that a dead body is punished when the family members weep for it?

Ja'far: Such a tradition has been related from Ummul Momineen Ayesha (r.a.) that she said: No by Allah the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) never said. "The dead body is harmed due to weeping of somebody." But he said, "This kafir! His family's weeping causes an increase in his punishment." And that it is only Allah that makes one to weep and to cry. And no one will bear the load of others."

(Sahih Muslim. Chap. 9, Tradition No.25)

Also, in Sahih Bukhari we find that:

The Prophet (s.a.) said, "Allah will not punish people because of the tears they shed (over the dead) but He will punish (them) because of this." Pointing to his tongue.

(Sahih Bukhari Vol.7 Ch.24)

Moreover, we find that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) himself wept on the dead and the martyrs. On various occasions he wept upon graves. He wept on the illness of Sa'd bin Ubadah and on the death of his son Ibrahim, and on his beloved grandson Imam Husain (a.s.). The Prophet (s.a.w.s.) wept on the martyrdom of his uncle Hamza ibn Abdul Muttalib and the martyrs of the Battle of Muta. He lamented the martyrdom of his cousin Ja'far ibne Abi Talib. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) was seen weeping on the grave of his beloved mother. Abu Hurairah says, "The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) visited the grave of his mother and wept; and all those with him (also) wept."

(For detailed references see the booklet: Weeping for the Dead- Published by WIN)

Husainiyahs (Aza Khanas)

Sulaiman: You Shias organise Majlises for weeping and lamentation especially in buildings that you have named 'Husainiyah'?

Ja'far: The word "Husainiyah" is related to and in remembrance the chief of the Martyrs, Imam Husain (a.s.). And was Allah's will that Husainiyat should bring a universal revolution in the Ummat that was heading towards its doom. So Imam Husain (a.s.) left Madinah to perform Jihad and expressed his aim in the following words:

"I have not come out to make merry, or be ecstatic over what I possess. I am not making mischief, nor exercising oppression. But I am ready to fight for the sole goal of seeking reform of the Ummat of my grandfather the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.s.). I want to enjoin good and forbid evil and guide the affairs of the people as my grandfather and father were

doing..."

(Al Khwaraizmi, Maqatal ul-Husain Vol.1, Pg. 88)

Therefore we find that 'Husainiyah' are not restricted to weeping and lamentations. Speeches and Majlises are also recited therein. These discourses are for the edification of people through the knowledge of Quran and traditions. People are taught the laws of religion and beliefs. They are trained to observe chastity and encouraged to do good and refrain from evil. In short, they are taught the ideal way of life based on Quran and the life of Masoomen (a.s.)

Sulaiman: But the incident of Imam Husain (a.s.) that you people relate time and again was just a historical happening that culminated in the killing of Husain (a.s.) alongwith his family members and friends?

Ja'far: The tragedy of Karbala is not an isolated incident. It was not a personal conflict between Imam Husain (a.s.) and Yazeed bin Muawiyah. It was the struggle between truth and falsehood. Therefore the incident did not die by the martyrdom of Husain (a.s.) The factors that existed at that time continue to live throughout history.

It still continues, even if the flags and masks have changed. And people of the truth now and in every period require strength and impetus, and an ideal for their progressive march. Thus Husainiyat provides a model in Imam Husain (a.s.) a personality that connects the people to the Ahle Bayt (a.s.).

Sulaiman: All right but don't you think that 'Husainiyas' are innovation (bidat) in Islam?

Ja'far: 'Husainiyah' are special buildings for discourses on morals and guidance. Such discourses are praised in the words of the Holy Quran:

"....and in this has come to you the truth and admonition, and a reminder to the believers."

(Surah Hud 11:120)

Husainiyah is a place where the divine signs are enlivened. Such a place is blessed that reminds one of Allah:

"...and whoever respects the signs of Allah, this surely is (the outcome) of the piety of hearts."

(Surah Hajj 22:32)

Surely, bidat (innovation) is nothing but introducing something new in religion. Something that did not exist before. Now tell me is it bidat to spread the knowledge of traditions through modern media like Television, Computers and internet? If it is, we must refrain from such acts for they did not exist in the time of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.). No, my friend, such innovations are haraam only if they spread evil and sensuality. But if they are used to spread Quranic sciences we must make optimum use of them instead of considering them as 'bidat'.

Sulaiman: I agree, but the fact remains that special buildings (Husainiyah) for keeping and discourses did not exist in the Prophet's time.

Ja'far: Verily the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s) was the first person who laid the foundation of lamentation for Imam Husain (a.s.). That was on the day he was given the good news of the birth of a grandson through Hazrat Zahra (s.a.). He took Husain (a.s.) in his arms and wept when Jibraeel (a.s.) informed him of the imminent martyrdom. Other narrations are also recorded in this context. For example the tradition from Ummul Momeneen Umme Salma when the Prophet (s.a.w.s) told her of Husain's martyrdom. He also informed her that he would be massacred at Karbala and gave her a handful of dust of Karbala and told her to keep it in her custody, and even said that it would turn to blood at the time of Husain's martyrdom.

(Mustadrakul Sahihain 4:398)

Also, after the tragic massacre, Yazeed bin Muawiyah, the Umayyad Caliph, provided a house to Ali ibne Husain (a.s.) and his sisters and aunts. Where they could lament and mourn for their loved ones.

Similarly, when Imam Ali Ibne Husain (a.s.) returned to Madinah and his mount halted, he pitched a tent. The ladies of his household assembled in it. When they reached the Prophet's mosque he announced the public mourning for Imam Husain (a.s.).

Imam Ali ibne Husain (a.s.) laid the foundation of Aza (mourning for Imam Husain a.s.) by mourning for 34 years. Many places were designated as Husainiyah. Whether it was a specially constructed building called 'Husainiyah' or the Masjid, which was used as Husainiyah.'

Sulaiman: Are 'Husainiyah' confined to the Shias?

Ja'far: No, the 'Husainiyah' is a place for public gathering. Wherein the people can listen to religious discourses on Islamic sciences. They also enliven the remembrance of the Prophet's grandson, Imam Husain (a.s.). For the tragedy of Karbala is an Islamic tragedy, rather a tragedy for the whole humanity. Everybody is welcome in the Husainiyah. Husain (a.s.) is the Imam of all the people.

Sulaiman: But we have some cassettes that contain matter absolutely detrimental to the unity of Muslims. They attack the belief of those who are against Shias.

Ja'far: It is no secret that Husainiyat is like other aims of media. It is also possible that some illiterate people misuse it. And some people misuse it for their personal profit that is harmful to the aim of Mimbar (pulpit) of Husain (a.s.). In the same way the orators of Imambaras differ as to their levels of knowledge. In this way, it so happens that some people accuse that Shias are Kafirs. It is the natural reaction to this! And we believe that the Orator should care for all sects. He should not divide the sects from the pulpit. He should not cause dissension among people. We must deal with such types of affairs very carefully. Previously such kinds of incidents were very rare. The belief of Shias may be different from that of the other sects. But it does not mean that they should hide their belief from others or criticise others. The media can be used to remove the misunderstandings against the Shias.

Husainiyat is such a factor, it offers the facet of Islam that has not yet gained currency in the eyes of the common people. Till now all the people have obeyed the rules of proper behaviour. All Muslims should follow this code.

Eatables served During Majalis

Sulaiman: I have a Shia friend and every year on the day of Aashoora (10th of Muhurram) he gets me a dish of rice and meat from the Husainiyahs. But I secretly avoid partaking of it. Rather I throw it in the garbage can.

Ja'far: It is haraam for you to throw away Allah's sustenance. Why do you act in this manner?

Sulaiman: I am compelled to do so. We have heard that on this day you sacrifice animals in the name of Husain (a.s.). Hence according to our belief its meat becomes haraam for consumption.

Ja'far: It is a lie and a strange allegation! According to Shia jurisprudence, meat of every animal is haraam that is sacrificed without uttering the words 'Bismillah' or 'Allaho Akbar'. If an animal is slaughtered by reciting any name other than Allah's it is considered dead and its meat is haraam. It is necessary to fulfill the necessary conditions for slaughtering an animal:

The person who slaughters must be a Muslim. The animal should be facing the Qibla at the time of slaughter. He must utter the words 'Bismillah' and 'Allaho Akbar'. Another condition is that the knife for slaughtering the animal must be of iron, and four main arteries must be severed in slaughter. However, this is not a proper occasion for describing the detailed rules of slaughter.

Thus if an animal is slaughtered by uttering any name other than of Allah, even if it is of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) or an Imam (a.s.), its meat becomes haraam. It is known that everything purchased from Muslim market while there is no certainty of it being from a kafir is allowed and considered Halaal. The meat cooked on Aashoora is not exempt from this rule. It is strange that our markets are full of different kinds of meat from different countries. People consume it without any investigation. It suffices for them that a word 'Halal' is printed on the packaging. But when it is cooked on Aashoora, they are needlessly suspicious!

Sulaiman: But why do you prepare food in Husainiyahs and serve it to people on this day?

Ja'far: The food that is cooked in Husainiyahs is clean. The believers (Momineen) and Muslims, who attend the majlis in Husainiyahs to commemorate the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson, consume this food after the programme. We remember that ever-living sacrifice and selfless devotion of those who laid down their life for Allah. We think it is a way of enlivening the signs of Allah. Like these people who feed the people, and the sawaab that is earned is gifted to Imam Husain (a.s.). Because of this, the Husainiyah's serve the guests. It is a dinner hosted by Allah. The food is served on the way of Allah. People eat to their fill and thank Allah. Apart from this, any other opinion on this subject is useless discourse that sows the seeds of hatred between Muslims. It is a well-known fact that feeding and giving water to a Muslim is of the most preferable (blessed) acts.

Congregational Prayers

Sulaiman: It is noticed that Shias rarely arrange congregational prayers. We see that even if there are a number of people at one place, they all recite solitary (furada) prayers?

Ja'far: It is an allegation that needs to be clarified.

Congregational prayers have a great merit and Muslims are unanimous on this. So much so, that some scholars consider Jamat prayers obligatory. Anyhow, it is an established fact that congregational prayers are better than solitary (furada) prayers. One rakat (unit) recited in congregation is equivalent to forty rakats alone. In other traditions it is mentioned that if in congregation prayers the number of people exceed ten the sawaab (reward) of it is so great that even if the sky is made a slate and the seas ink, and the trees as pens and all the creatures including the angels strive to write down the sawaab of one rakat of this prayer will not be able to do so...

Similarly the sawaab of Namaze Jamat keeps on increasing depending upon the location of Mosque. Due to this you will find the Shia mosques packed with worshippers behind the Imam-e-Jamat. However, there are some rules that Shias follow more strictly with regard to Shariat. They make sure the Imam-e-Jamat has the necessary qualities. They are as follows:

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The Imam of the congregational prayers should be,
Adult (Baligh), and it is haraam to follow a child in prayers.

Sane: It is not allowed to pray behind an Imam suffering from lunacy.

He should be Ithna Ashari (Twelver) Shia.

Adil: That he must refrain from haraam acts and fulfill all obligatory duties. He must not be a habitual sinner.

Of legitimate birth.

Being able to offer the prayers correctly and recite Arabic accurately.

Thus one who intends to recite correct congregational prayers must observe all the rules strictly.

This subject does not harm the relation between people. Prayer (Salaat) is for Allah alone and it is obligatory on people that they fulfil all the necessary conditions.

Sulaiman: But we often see Shias reciting prayers in congregation behind Sunni Imams, in Masjidul Haraam (Mecca) and Masjidaul Nabi (Madinah) and in other places. Now, according to Shia law this is not correct.

Ja'far: You are right! We have been specially permitted by our scholars to recite prayers in congregation behind a Sunni Imam if we make an intention of (solitary prayer) furada. We can just complete the rituals with congregations while reciting our own prayers.

It is sanctioned by the hadith of Ahle Bayt (a.s.) to cultivate an atmosphere of unity among Muslims. So that conflicts and dissension may be minimised.

It is an important matter. Shias take care of the rules that Sunni brothers ignore. It is a step especially from the Shia fuqaha to restrain the tendencies of disunity among the people.

Tarawih and Iftar

Sulaiman: You have explained everything in a beautiful way. Now just tell me why Shias do not recite Tarawih? And we know that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) had laid great emphasis on such prayers.

Ja'far: You are right. Shias do not recite Tarawih in congregation like the Ahle Sunna. You are also right that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has emphasised on superagatory prayers during the month of fasting. But as I have already clarified, we Shias do exactly as the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) has instructed. As regards the Tarawih prayers we should know that it is not allowed to perform it in congregation. The following incident recorded in Sahih Bukhari will explain the matter:

Narrated Zaid bin Thabit:

The Prophet took a room made of date palm leaves mats in the mosque. Allah's Apostle prayed in it for a few nights till the people gathered (to pray the night prayer (Tarawih) (behind him.) Then on the 4th night the people did not hear his voice and they thought he had slept, so some of them started humming in order that he might come out. The Prophet then said, "You continued doing what I saw you doing till I was afraid that this (Tarawih prayer) might be enjoined on you, and if it were enjoined on you, you would not continue performing it. Therefore, O people! Perform your prayers at your homes, for the best prayer of a person is what is performed at his home except the compulsory congregational) prayer."

(See Hadith No. 229, Vol. 3) (See Hadith No. 134, Vol. 8)

Sulaiman: Then how did Tarawih become so prevalent among Muslims?

Ja'far: The Caliph Umar made it a practice to hold Tarawih in congregation, therefore it was something new. Consider the following passage from Sahih Bukhari and you shall understand:

Ibn Shihab said, "Allah's Apostle died and the people continued observing that (i.e. Nawafil offered individually, not in congregation), and it remained as it was during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr and in the early days of Umar's Caliphate." Abdur Rahman bin Abdul Qari said, "I went out in the company of Umar bin Al-Khattab one night in Ramadan to the mosque and found the people praying in different groups. A man praying alone or a man praying with a little group behind him. So, Umar said, 'In my opinion I would better collect these (people) under the leadership of one Qari (Reciter) (i.e. let them pray in congregation'. So, he made up his mind to congregate them behind Ubai bin Ka'b. Then on another night I went again in his company and the people were praying behind their reciter. On that, Umar remarked, 'What an excellent Bid'a (i.e. innovation in religion) this is;

(Sahih Bukhari 3.227)

Sulaiman: Thank you for clearing the misunderstanding in this matter. But why do you not break your fast at the same time as the Ahle Sunnat? You wait for another 10 to 15 minutes and consequently make your fast makrooh.

Ja'far: Delay does not make a fast makrooh (detestable). Though undue delay is detestable in itself. But the breaking of fast is supposed to be after nightfall and not at sunset.

The Holy Quran says:

"...and eat and drink until the whiteness of the day becomes distinct from the blackness of the night at dawn, then complete the fast till night,"

(Surah Baqarah 2:187)

We Shias are very particular in obeying the commands of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and Quran and we do not add or delete anything from religion. Even the greatest scholars of Shias are not permitted to introduce innovations in Islam.

Aliyyan Waliullah

Sulaiman: In Azaan (call for prayers) you people recite the two witnessings (shahadatayn) - that is, Ash-hado alla ilaaha illallaah (I bear witness that there is no god except Allah), and Ash-hado anna Muh'ammadar Rasoolullaah (I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah). After this you add the third- Ash-hado anna A'liyyan Waliullah (I bear witness that Ali is the wali of Allah). Is this Islamic? Did the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and his companions recite such things in the Azaan?

Ja'far: I want you to know some facts that are not common knowledge:

The words, Ash-hado anna A'liyyan Waliullah are not a part of Azaan. One who considers them a part of Azaan invalidates his Azaan. In other words even if a Shia recites Azaan without the said words his Azaan would be correct.

It is also known that Tashahud during the first and the last rakat (unit) of prayers does not feature this third 'shahadat'. Tashahud is recited as: "Ash-hado Alla ilaaha Illallaaho Wahadahu Laa Shareeka Lah-wa Ash-hado Anna Muhammadan Abdohoo wa Rasooloh."

The words Aliyan Waliullah indicate that he (Ali) was most sincere in his love and obedience to Allah the Almighty. It is the same fact indicated by the verse, "Know that! The friends of Allah. There is no fear upon them and no sorrow."

The virtues of Ali (a.s.), his sacrifices, struggles (jihad) and his position near the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) qualifies him to be addressed as the chief of the friends of Allah (awliyullah) after the Prophet (s.a.w.s.). Thus, the testimony, Aliyyan Waliullah is like the recommended recitations of the Muazzin (one who recites the Azaan), that he recites softly, e.g. reciting of salwaat etc. Yes, the recitation of Aliyyan Waliullah was due to the historical circumstances, and the terrible condition of the Shia who had accepted the wilayat. Now that this sorrowful period has passed. Shias considered it necessary to recite it loudly. Aliyyan Waliullah does not invalidate the Azaan unless it is considered to be a part of Azaan.

As I already mentioned before, Ali is the wali of Allah. All Muslims agree upon this. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) informed the people regarding him, "Of whomsoever I am the master, this Ali is his master too."

(Sahih Tirmidhi Vol. 2 Pg. 298)

Hayya a'laa khairil a'mal

Sulaiman: Shias also additionally recite the words Hayya a'laa khairil a'mal (Rush towards the best of deeds). Among the Sunnis it is a practice to recite "As-salaato khairumminan nawm" (The prayer is better than sleep) in the morning azaan?

Ja'far: Brother, try to understand. It is an established fact beyond any doubt according to authentic texts that the phrase 'Hayya a'laa khairil a'mal' was a necessary part of the azaan during the time of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.), during the tenor of Caliph Abu Bakr and the first part of the caliphate of Umar ibne Khattab. It was he (Umar) who deleted this phrase from azaan.

Refer to Sahih Muslim Volume I page 48. According to a tradition related by Ibne Masood, "The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) commanded the people to recite 'Hayya a'laa khairil a'mal' in azaan and iqamah. This practice continued till Umar prohibited it."

It is our belief that the words, "As-salaato khairumminan nawm" are not a part of azaan and iqamah. There is no record of such words during the time of the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.s.) and during the tenor of Abu Bakr. The addition is also attributed to Caliph Umar as mentioned in the Muwattah of Imam Malik.

When the Muezzin came to Umar Ibne Khattab to seek permission for the morning prayers, he found him sleeping. Muezzin said, "As-salaato khairumminan nawm"(The prayer is better than sleep). Umar liked it and ordered that this sentence should be added to the morning azaan.

Combining the Prayers

Sulaiman: It is a known fact that Shias combine the two prayers of Zuhr-Asr and Maghrib-Isha. They resort to this every time and under every circumstance.

Ja'far: All Muslims agree on the fact that it is allowed to combine the Zuhr-Asr and Maghrib-Isha prayers. But the argument is concerning the circumstances that allow such combinations. All agree that the joining of Zuhr-Asr is allowed in Arafat (during Hajj). Also the combining of maghrib-Isha in Muzdalfah (also during Hajj). But the Ahle-Sunnat among themselves disagree that in exceptional circumstances like rain, travel, disease, fear or emergencies it is allowed. But the Shia say that joining is allowed under all circumstances, whether there is any disability or not. They consider it permissible in all conditions. Even if some of their fuqaha have said that praying two prayers separately is better. The argument they present for this is the authentic traditions from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.), from the Holy Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) and also the verses of the Holy Quran itself. Especially the ayat (Isra 78) is quoted in this regard.

"Keep up prayer from the declining of the sun till the darkness of the night and the morning recitation; surely the morning recitation is witnessed."

(Surah Bani Israel 17:78)

We understand from this ayat that there are three occasions for prayers: Time of Zawaal (Decline of the Sun from its zenith), at the beginning of Maghrib and at the Dawn. Rather we find a large number of traditions in books of Ahle Sunnat like Sahih Muslim, Bukhari etc. that confirm the above fact. According to Ibne Abbas:

"The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) prayed the Zuhr and Asr prayers together in Madinah without any fear and without any travelling. Abu Zubair says that he asked Saeed, "Why did he (s.a.w.s.) do it?" He said, "Ibne Abbas asked about it as you ask me. He (s.a.w.s.) replied that he did not wish that people of his Ummah should be put to inconvenience."

(Sahih Muslim, Chapter of Combining two prayers)

Narrated Ibn Abbas:

"The Prophet prayed eight rakat for the Zuhr and Asr, and seven for the Maghrib and Isha prayers in Medina." Aiyub said, "Perhaps those were rainy nights." Anas said, "May be."

(Sahih Bukhari Volume 1, Hadith 518)

Narrated Amr:

I heard Abu Ash-sha'tha' Jabir saying, "I heard Ibn Abbas saying, 'I offered with Allah's Apostle eight rakat (of Zuhr and Asr prayers) together and seven rakat (the Maghrib and the Isha' prayers) together.'

(Sahih Bukhari Volume 2, Hadith 270)

Narrated Salim's father:

The Prophet used to offer the Maghrib and Isha' prayers together whenever he was in a hurry on a journey.

(Sahih Bukhari Volume 2, Hadith 209)

Joining of Hands During Prayers

Sulaiman: Why do you people keep your hands separate in prayers. Why don't you join them like us?

Ja'far: According to the School of Ahle Bayt (a.s.) joining of hands during prayers is neither recommended nor legal. It is sufficient for the Muslims to pray according to the method prescribed in the following tradition:

The Messenger of Allah says,

"Pray like you see me praying."

(Behaarul Anwaar Vol. 85, Pg. 279)

Thus we find that joining of hands did not exist during the time of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.). Neither did it come into practice during the reign of Abu Bakr or the beginning part of Umar's caliphate. The historical records are sufficient to prove this.

Apart from this the Maliki do not consider it recommended to join hands during prayers. And the rest of Sunni brothers consider it Mustahab and not wajib.

Turbah (Piece of Clay for Prostration)

Sulaiman: Why do you Shias place a stone before you during the prayers and put your forehead on it during prostration (Sajdah)? It is said that Shias worship that stone.

Ja'far: How can the Shias worship a stone while you know very well that they confess to the Oneness of Allah the Almighty (Tawheed) and the Messengership of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.)?

We do not prostrate upon the one we worship, but we worship Him Alone. It is kept in the front to rest our foreheads.

And if what you say is correct why does the Shia Islamic law makes it compulsory for the worshippers to face the Ka'ba (Qibla) during prayers?

Also it is not a stone, it is dried mud, dried to a fixed shape easy to pick up and can be stored conveniently. Common people call it Turbah. All the Muslims consider it permissible to prostrate on mud and a dried piece of mud.

Sulaiman: Does it mean that Sajdah on anything other than turbah is invalid?

Ja'far: According to Shia jurisprudence a Sajdah is valid only if performed on one of the following substances:

All that is the part of earth, like soil, sand and marble.

All that grows out of the earth but not used for eating or dressing. For example, wood and palm leaves.

Paper.

The above laws are based on the authentic tradition of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s) and his purified household (Ahle Bayt [a.s.])

The Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said, "The earth has been appointed as a pure place of prostration (Sajdah)." The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) considered performing of Sajdah on other things besides earth to be detestable.

It was seen of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) that his forehead and nose was smeared in mud due to Sajdah. He did not permit his companions to do Sajdah on anything else, as mentioned in some traditions. When these people complained that the sand of the Mosque was hot he told them to keep it in their hands to cool it and then do Sajdah on it. If it had been allowed to do Sajdah on other things they would never have asked, and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) also would have advised them to do Sajdah on carpet or durry etc.

(Musnad Ahmad Vol. 1, Pg. 388)

Yes. It is apparent from the traditions that Allah the Almighty permitted the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and the Muslims to prostrate upon vegetation if it is not generally used for eating and weaving. So the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s) made for himself a Khumra. It was small piece knitted palm leaves.

(Sahih Bukhari Vol. 1, Pg. 9, Kitabul Haiz)

Narrated Abu Said Al-Khudri:

I saw Allah's Apostle prostrating on mud and water and saw the mark of mud on his forehead.

(Sahih Bukhari Volume 1, Hadith 798)

Narrates Abdullah bin Shaddad:

Maimuna said, "Allah's Apostle was praying while I was in my menses, sitting beside him and sometimes his clothes would touch me during his prostration." Maimuna added, "He prayed on a Khumra (a small mat sufficient just for the face and the hands while prostrating

during prayers).

(Sahih Bukhari Volume 1, Hadith 376)

But the earth remains as the best alternative for prostrating and expressing ones submission to the greatness of Allah the glorified. And the Shia Muslims desire to do Sajdah on the earth that is the most blessed and glorified in the whole world. And that is the soil of Karbala, blessed by the presence of Imam Husain (a.s.)'s tomb. And then the soil of Khorasan (Iran) blessed by the tomb of Imam Ali Moosa-ar-Rida (a.s.).

And if the circumstances had allowed we would have had the Turbah of Makkah and Madinah too.

The turbah is considered to be (doubtlessly) absolutely pure and other surfaces may be of doubtful purity. Thus it is best to perform Sajdah on a turbah. And taking of mud from a blessed place is not an innovation in Islam. We see the faqih, Masrooq ibn Ajda (d. 62 AH). always carrying with him a piece of mud of Madinah, and he used to do Sajdah on it. As written in Ibne Abi Shayba's book, "Al Musannif" in the chapter of 'Those who pick up something from boat to do Sajdah.' This tradition is related from two chains of narrators. Whenever Masrooq used to travel in a boat. He used to keep a lump of mud on which he did Sajdah.

(Tabaqaatul Kubra Vol. 6, Pg. 79)

The Trustworthy one Cheated

Sulaiman: When you conclude your prayers, you people raise your hands three times and say, "Khaanal Ameen, Khaanal Ameen, Khaanal Ameen"(That is, the Trustworthy One - Jibraeel (a.s.) cheated.)

Ja'far: Naturally, it is a stupid allegation like the ones mentioned by you in our previous discussion. You do not understand that what you say tantamounts to fighting against the religion of Allah.

Yes! According to the School of Ahle Bayt (a.s.) the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) concluded his prayers by reciting the Takbeer (Allaho Akbar) thrice. The practice is also based on the verdict of scholars and it falls under the class of recommended recitations after obligatory prayers. Like glorifying and praising Allah, reciting invocations and performing the prostration of thankfulness. (Sajdah-e-Shukr). Many verses of the Holy Quran stress upon the recitation of takbeer (Allaho Akbar).

"And your Lord do magnify (fakabbir)"

(Surah Muddathir 74:3)

"...and Who has not a helper to save Him from disgrace; and proclaim His greatness magnifying (Him). (Takbeer)"

(Surah Bani Israel 17:111)

"...you should complete the number (of fasts) and that you should exalt the greatness of Allah for having guided you."

(Surah Baqarah 2:185)

And the Takbeer is also a necessary ritual of many worship-acts. Like the prayers (salaat), at the time of slaughtering an animal and at the Prayers of the dead (namaz-e-mayyat). The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) recited Allaho Akbar at the time of the conquest of Makkah when he, with Ali (a.s.), entered the Holy Ka'aba to clear it of the idols.

As we have said in the beginning of the book, in the chapter of Prophethood and the alleged mistake of Jibraeel (a.s.), these people accuse Shias of believing that Jibraeel made a mistake in conveying the message and instead of revealing to Ali (a.s.) he revealed to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.)!!!

Allah forbid! We seek refuge in Allah! And one who says this will soon be accounted with a difficult accounting by the Lord of the worlds for the false allegations he makes against the Muslims.

Wuzu (Ablution)

Sulaiman: We notice that Shias do not wash their feet during Wuzu. There are also other marked differences from the Sunnis in their method of Wuzu.

Ja'far: We will leave the Sunnat and Mustahab acts of Wuzu and discuss only the Wajib (obligatory) parts.

Yes, the Shia Muslims do not wash their feet during Wuzu. Instead they wipe the top of their feet (masah). With the right hand is performed the Masah of the right foot and with the left the Masah of left foot. As with other religious rituals, this is also based on authentic

traditions of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) and the Holy Ahle Bayt (a.s.). As mentioned in the tradition related by Abil Aswad from Abbad bin Tameem from his father, that he said, "I saw the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) perform Wuzu and wipe his feet."

And from Imam Muhammad ibne Ali ibne Husain ibne Ali ibne Abi Talib, Al Baqar (a.s.) while he was describing the method of the Prophet's wuzu said that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) performed the Wuzu, wiped his head and wiped his feet upto the ankles with the water left on his hands. He did not take fresh (extra) water for it.

Ibne Abbas was describing the Prophet's Wuzu and he too mentions that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) wiped his feet.

Similarly the Shias follow the Holy verse of Quran:

"...and wipe your heads and your feet to the ankles..."

(Surah Maidah 6:6)

According to the interpretation of this verse and the rules of Arabic grammar and also according to the rulings of the majority of scholars the command is to wipe the feet and not to wash them.

Sulaiman: But is not washing the feet a better way of purification?

Ja'far: Indeed, trying to achieve perfection is well and good, but it should conform to the rules of worship. It is also not necessary that the worshipper must understand the reason behind each prescribed ritual. Every act has material as well as spiritual aspects. The spiritual aspects are not known to anybody except the Almighty Allah. A Muslim is expected to perform his worship acts exactly as prescribed by Quran and hadith. It is not allowed to exceed the limits.

Now, as for your saying that washing of the feet purifies them, let me remind you that before the commencement of Wuzu one has to be sure that his face, hands, head and feet are Tahir (pure). Masah on Najis (impure) feet is invalid.

Moreover, if you are talking about extra precaution, you should know that the best way to achieve purification would be to take a bath before every prayer!

And do not forget that everything is to be considered clean (paak) until you learn of its Najasat (impurity). This is a rule agreed upon by all the scholars.

Sulaiman: What are the recommended (mustahab) rituals of Wuzu according to Shias?

Ja'far: The recommended part of Wuzu includes the washing of hands three times unto the wrist, rinsing the mouth thrice, and rinsing the nostrils thrice. After this begins the obligatory Wuzu. That is, washing of the face, then the right hand from elbow to the tip of fingers, then the left hand in the same way. Lastly, we have the masah of the head with the right hand and finally the masah of the feet as explained above. If you require more details, you can refer to books of Shia jurisprudence.

Sighting the New Moon

Sulaiman: We have some Shias in the neighbourhood. They are good people, Alhamdulillah. But sometimes they celebrate the Eid one or two days before us. What is your explanation for this?

Ja'far: All the Muslims agree on the Islamic command "Begin fasting on sighting the new moon and end your fasts upon sighting the moon." The day of Eid-ul-fitr separates the two months of Ramadhan and Shawwal. The Shias have not deviated from this Islamic practice. They believe in the sighting of moon in one of the following ways:

If a person himself sights the new moon.

If a number of people confirm to have sighted the moon and their words assure or satisfy a person.

If two just (Adil) persons say that they have sighted the moon.

If 30 days pass from the first of Shaban, the 1st of Ramadhan will be established, and if 30 days pass from the 1st of Ramadhan the 1st of Shawwal will be established.

According to the Shia school of law if any one of the conditions is fulfilled, it is sufficient to consider that a new moon has been sighted.

When there is no such condition or if one of them is not present, sighting is not proved even if a Shia person claims to have sighted the moon. Yes, sometimes the delay in sighting of moon is the proof that Shias are staunch followers of their laws and emphasise the correctness of their worship acts.

Anyway, ever if there is some disagreement with regard to the new moon it is not confined to Shias. Such differences of opinion are common to all sects of Muslims.

So much so, that there is difference even between Muslim countries as a practice.

Zakat

Sulaiman: Is it correct that Shias do not pay Zakat even though it is mentioned so many times in the Holy Quran? And instead of Zakat they pay Khums that is mentioned only once and consists of a fifth part of spoils of war?

Ja'far: It is not correct that Shias avoid paying Zakat as prescribed by the Holy Quran. Let us however first understand the meaning of Zakat:

According to the dictionary, 'Zakat' mean to purify, to clean or to bless. According to the Shariat, Zakat is a wajib act and it denotes the paying of a certain amount to those who qualify for it. Although every type of Sadqa and Khums are Zakat. But according to Islamic terminology and the belief of Shias, Zakat is one of the five pillars of religion. It is mentioned in the traditions that, Prayers will not be accepted from those who do not pay Zakat.

And if someone avoids giving one carat of Zakat, he will die a death of Jew or Christian.

Zakat is of two types: Zakat of wealth and Zakat of body. (Fitra).

Sulaiman: you said 'Zakat of wealth'. Do you pay Zakat on your wealth?

Ja'far: Yes! We pay Zakat on the following types of wealth:

1. Wheat
2. Barley
3. Dates
4. Raisins
5. Gold
6. Silver
7. Camel
8. Cow
9. Sheep

Whatever has been mentioned is fixed according to defined limits. This is also calculated after passage of one year. Zakat becomes wajib only when the quantity crosses the Sharii limit and a period of one year is over.

It is also recommended to pay Zakat on the wealth earned from business, on horses and all that is mined from the earth, like metals...

Please remember that in Quran whenever there is mention of Zakat it is mentioned as sadaqaat

"Alms are only for the poor and the needy, and the officials (appointed over them, and those whose hearts are made to incline (to truth) and the (ransoming of) captives and those in debts and in the way of Allah and the wayfarer; an ordinance from Allah; and Allah is knowing, wise."

(Surah Taubah 9:60)

We do not consider it Zakat of wealth. Zakat is mentioned as Sadaqat and it occurs only once whereas the word Zakat occurs very often and it implies all the payments that are incumbent on a person.

And in the end Khums is also mentioned only once. Zakat of wealth is mentioned only once in Quran. Wherever it is mentioned as Zakat it includes all types of charity (Sadaqat).

Sulaiman: And what is Zakatul Fitra?

Ja'far: Paying of Zakatul Fitra is wajib upon all. Generally it is to be paid at the end of the month of Ramadhan when we conclude the days of fasting. It is obligatory upon all the people who are mature, sane and self-sufficient to pay Fitra for themselves and for their dependants, like young children or aged parents etc. The prescribed quantity is a Saa. (3 Kg.) of wheat or barley or dates or raisins or rice or millet etc.

If you desire to learn more about Fitra you can study the detailed books of Islamic law.

Khums

Sulaiman: And what is Khums? It is said that it is a thing made wajib on you by your scholars, which is beneficial to them?

Ja'far: Naturally to say something like this is against reason. You should know that Khums is a religious duty, which Allah ordered:

"And know that whatever you gain, a fifth of it is for Allah and for the Apostle and for the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer, if you believe in Allah and in that which We revealed to Our servant..."

(Surah Anfal 8:41)

The above ayat was revealed on a particular occasion. However, it's command extends to all the times. And it is that Muslims must pay one-fifth of the profits (Ghaneemah). Secondly whatever they get without making efforts. For example, the spoils of war. The profits of business is known as ghaneema of business, etc. So how can we say that the ayat restricts khums only to the spoils of war?

It is clearly mentioned in the traditions of the Prophet of Allah (a.s.) and his Household (a.s.) that a person asked the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) to explain to him the articles of faith and he (s.a.w.s.) replied,

"Witnessing that there is no god except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Establishing the prayer, paying Zakat, fasting in the month of Ramadhan and paying one-fifth (khums) of profits."

(Sahih Bukhari chapter of Khums)

In the same way it is mentioned in the letters that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) sent to tribal chiefs to invite them to Islam. As mentioned in his letter to Yemen after they accepted Islam, "The Governor should take the Khums of Allah from the booty. He should also take the Sadaqat which are wajib on Momeneen."

Sulaiman: If the paying of Khums is so clearly established in light of Arabic grammar why do the Sunni scholars not prescribe Khums other than on spoils of war, as an obligatory act?

Ja'far: Of course! Some of the esteemed scholars from our Ahle Sunnat brothers do prescribe khums for the mined wealth, and gold and silver. It is possible these people depend on the traditions recorded on this topic. Shias also give verdict on the Khums being wajib from the excess of profits every year. According to them it is based on authentic traditions. From the interpretation of Quranic Ayats too, khums is wajib.

Sulaiman: I would like to learn about the details of Khums.

Ja'far: Khums means 20% of religious tax that a Muslim pays on profits as mentioned in the Islamic shariat. Or the wealth of mines and whatever extracted in raw, etc. Also the wealth of the sea like pearls and coral. The land that is sold to Kafir Zimmi from a Muslim and that property that is earned from Haraam but not obvious and those mined (metals). On all these after the expenses are deducted, Khums is payable on the balance amount. Total profits of the year minus the yearly expenses also qualify for khums.

Dawood: What you have explained is according to the prescribed law of Khums. Tell me how you calculate the Khums payable by you?

Ja'far: In brief I would say that at the end of a year on an appointed day I calculate as to how much I have saved. And from this amount I take out 20% and pay it as Khums.

Sulaiman: Do you pay khums every year?

Ja'far: It is not necessary. If I do not save anything in a particular year I do not have to pay any Khums.

Sulaiman: Good! Now tell me the method of disposing Khums.

Ja'far: Khums is disposed off in the method prescribed by the verse of Khums (Surah Anfal 8:41). They are six: For Allah the Almighty, and His Prophet (s.a.w.s.), for the near of Kin (of the Prophet), the orphans, the needy and the wayfarer.

On this basis Khums should be divided into two parts. One part is Sahme Sadaat, it should be given to a Sayyid who is poor, or orphan, or who has become stranded without money during his journey. The second part is Sahme Imam (a.s.), and during the present time it should be given to a Mujtahid (jurist), who fulfils all conditions, or be spent for such purposes as allowed by that Mujtahid. As an obligatory precaution, that Mujtahid must be Aalam (the most learned), and well versed in public affairs.

Sahme Imam is usually spent for religious activities like religious propagation and construction of Mosques.

Sulaiman: One last question about Khums. It is said that it is used for violent (terrorist acts) purposes?

Ja'far: Terrorism is employed by intelligence agencies who do not mean good for Islam and Muslims. It is a well-known fact that they work to create discussion discord between nations, destabilise Kingdoms and kill innocent people. Now all this is haraam. Such people are not just, which is a necessary condition for Marja-e-Deen. (Thus he no longer remains a Marja' and could not be paid khums money).

Rather, it is proved beyond all limits that some intelligence agencies of powerful countries use public money collected as tax for subversive activities around the world. All this is in the guise of protecting Human rights.

Mujtahid (Jurist)

Sulaiman: You repeat the words Mujtahid and Marja-e-Deen again and again especially with reference to laws of Shariat. Who is this Mujtahid and Marja-e-Deen?

Ja'far: Mujtahid is derived from Ijtihad. Ijtihad implies the science of deriving the laws of Shariat. An expert in Ijtihad is known as Mujtahid. Ijtihad is a method that is accepted by all the schools of Islamic thought.

One who is unable to do Ijtihad himself must follow a particular Mujtahid. This is known as Taqleed. Among the Ahle Sunnat there were four great jurists viz. Ahmed Ibne Hanbal, Malik bin Anas, Abu Hanifa An-Noa'man and Idris Shafei. After the demise of these four Jurists the doors of Ijtihad were closed forever among the Ahle Sunnat. All the Ahle Sunnat have to follow one of the four jurists.

In the case of the Shias there is slight difference. During the time of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) he was the supreme authority on Islamic law. After him the position was transferred to Amirul Mo'mineen Ali (a.s.) and in succession the Holy Imams of Ahle Bayt (a.s.) till the major occultation of Imam Mahdi (a.s.). Till that time whenever any Shia had a religious problem he used to contact the Imam of his time and obtain the solution. Since the Major Occultation became a barrier between the twelfth Imam (a.s.) and the Shias in the sense they could not meet him at will, the Imam told them:

"And as for the future occurrences, refer to the narrators of our traditions because they are my proof upon you and I am the proof of Allah."

The above command of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) became the foundation of Ijtihad and Taqleed among the Shias.

The Mujtahids in course of their duty are involved in the derivation of religious rules and in welfare of Muslims from that time till the present Age.

Mujtahid to qualify as a Marja must have the following qualities: Justice, Maturity, Male, Sane. He should attain a position of knowledge that is the high stage of Ijtihad. He should be legitimate and alive. But it is allowed to follow a dead Marja on one condition. And it is that the Mujtahid who is alive should give the permission and one must have been in his taqlid while the Mujtahid was alive. Details are mentioned in the concerned books.

Ayatullah. Hujjatulla.

Sulaiman: It is noticed that you liberally use various titles and honorifics for your scholars and Mujtahids. Can you explain them?

Ja'far: It is human psychology that we are thankful to those who have bestowed some favours upon us. One respects such a personality and addresses him in words of respect. Such a phenomenon is especially common among the world of politics where we find the masses addressing the leaders and kings with exaggerated titles. Sometimes they even exceed the limits of decency.

The traditions state that the angels spread their wings beneath the feet of scholars and Allah leads to Paradise those who tread the path of knowledge. The Holy Quran also relates the fear of Allah to knowledge:

"Only the knowledgeable fear Allah from among His servants."

(Surah Fatir 35:28)

The title of Ayatullah (sign of Allah) befits the scholars of religion who have reached the status of Mujtahid. The Holy Quran has used the term Ayatullah even for non-living things and animals:

"...this is (as) Allah's she-camel for you - a sign..."

(Surah Araaf 7:73)

"And of His signs are the night and the day and the sun and the moon..."

(Surah Ha Mim 41:37)

"Therefore We sent upon them widespread death, and the locusts and the lice and the frog and the blood, clear signs."

(Surah Araaf 7:133)

What do think of those who had undergone great labours for deriving the laws of Shariat that are a light and guidance for the world? Ayatullah is that characteristic and sign of these labours.

And Hujjatullah means the Proof of Allah. He is the proof and argument. Verily those who possess piety and knowledge of religion and serve Islam and Muslims clearly deserve to be addressed with the title of Hujjatullah.

Muta' Marriage

Sulaiman: Now I wish to discuss an issue most controversial among the Shias. You call it Muta'. How do you defend your stand when there is hardly any difference between Muta' (temporary Marriage) and Adultery?

Ja'far: I seek refuge in Allah! How can you equate the two?

Sulaiman: Whenever you are confronted with traditions against Muta' you put an end to all arguments and refrain from discussions.

Ja'far: This is not correct. There are no such traditions. However, your equating Muta' to Adultery is a cause of great regret. You label a permissible act to be haraam.

Note that! There are many things in which there is a hairbreadth difference of halaal and haraam. For example, there is difference between Marriage for a period and after divorce is given? Except for a seegha that is recited. Apart from this the presence of witness (as some sects consider it compulsory). But we are accused of permitting adultery because we consider Muta' Marriage halaal.

Sulaiman: I apologise for this unintentional misunderstanding, but I request you to describe to me the details of Muta' Marriage.

Ja'far: Muta' is a fixed-term marriage. The basic difference between Muta' and Nikah (permanent marriage) is that in Nikah there is no time limit. However a Nikah can be terminated by divorce. Muta' is the same as Nikah except that time is stipulated at the outset and it comes to an end at the appointed time. The Maher (dower) and the time limit have to be decided beforehand. Just as in Nikah the seegha (formula) is recited by the bride and accepted by the bridegroom.

Muta' can also be terminated before the time limit by gifting the balance time to bride.

After the Muta' the woman has to observe iddah (a period of time before she can remarry).

Sulaiman: What if there are children from this type of union?

Ja'far: Children of Muta' marriage have the same status and rights as that of permanent marriage. They inherit their parents and command the same position with their siblings. All the rules of Mahramiyat (religious formality) apply to them.

Sulaiman: What about the maintenance of wife and inheritance?

Ja'far: In a Muta' marriage the husband is not obliged to bear the cost of maintaining the wife. Also, the spouses do not inherit each other in this form of marriage.

Sulaiman: Through which law of shariat do you consider Muta' legal?

Ja'far: All the Muslims agree that Muta' was permitted by the Holy Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.s.). They differ as to whether the permission for Muta' was abrogated later or not. The Shias base their argument on the following verse of the Holy Quran:

"Then as to those whom you enjoy (do Muta' with), give them their dowries as appointed..."

(Surah Nisa 4:24)

If we study the biographies of the Companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) we learn that quite a few of them had resorted to this practice. Various traditions recorded in 'Sahih' books of traditions certify this fact. In Sahih Muslim Ata relates:

"Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari came to Makkah for Umrah. We went to see him at his residence. Those present asked him questions and later enquired about Muta'. He replied, "Yes, we practised Muta' in the days of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and acted on this order even in the days of Abu Bakr and Umar."

It has again been quoted thus in another tradition in Sahih Muslim from Jabir, "In the days of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) we practised Muta' for a few days against a small dowry and did so in the time of Abu Bakr till Umar prohibited it in the case of Amr bin Harith."

(Sahih Muslim Vol. 2, Pg. 706-English)

Sulaiman: Does it mean that there is a difference of opinion among Muslims regarding the legality of Muta'?

Ja'far: Some Muslims believe that the permission for Muta' was abrogated later. However, the Shias believe that Muta' was never forbidden and the permission given by the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) is still in force. The traditions quoted above also prove that Muta' was practised in the time of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.), Abu Bakr and the initial period of Umar. Then Umar prohibited it. Shias do not follow the command of Umar because it goes against the established tradition of the Prophet:

"The Haraam of Muhammad will remain Haraam till the day of Qiyamat and the Halaal of Muhammad will remain Halaal till the day of Qiyamat."

(Behaarul Anwaar Vol. 2, Pg. 260)

Sulaiman: I have a last question on this topic. Does it mean that you do not restrain your daughter or sister entering into a Muta' wedlock?

Ja'far: It is not necessary every halaal thing has to be necessarily performed! It is also not necessary that the Islamic Shariat be always according to our needs. Muta' is a special permission allowed by Shariat. It is a facility given for difficult circumstances. The permissibility of Muta' does not motivate people to replace by it the permanent marriage. Like the permissibility of talaq does not make it wajib upon all of us to give talaq to our wives! And as it is the right of the woman and her guardian to insist on a permanent marriage just as she can insist on enquiring about body defects, characteristic, profession of the would be groom and qualification etc. before she offers herself for marriage. If she like she can refuse to marry. In spite of the fact that these factors are not Sharii obstacles from marriage. In the same way all these things are valid for Muta' Marriage.

This can be compared the various professions. Some people are doctors or engineers and some are sweepers. All these are occupations, but generally they have different status. In the same way marriages are of different types. People prefer the better alternative. But if one is compelled to a lower alternative we must not look at it insultingly.

Taqaiyya (Dissimulation)

Sulaiman: After this round let me tell you that our discussion even if it is not interesting, at least it is sober and satisfactory arguments have been presented. But how can I rest assured when I am aware that you people practice taqaiyya and you hide your true views and feelings. Some people have even termed it as nifaq (Hypocrisy).

Ja'far: It is necessary that we must closely examine our subject as I had stated in the beginning of our discussion on Muta'. There was a hairbreadth difference between haraam and halaal. In the same way there is a hairbreadth difference between nifaq (Hypocrisy) and taqaiyya (dissimulation).

Taqaiyya means, to protect, to defend or to be cautious. Hypocrisy implies feigning belief and hiding disbelief. In the case of Taqaiyya, the Shias show whatever they do not hide inside themselves. Also it is not impossible for those who claim such things to go to the Shias and visit their mosques, Imambaras, schools and internet channels, the Hauz-e-ilmia. Are all well-known - there are ulama, maraja and it is easy for everyone to meet them, correspond with them and learn about them. Shias live in every country in the midst of other people. It is easy to meet them and to find what they allegedly hide. It is easy for those who allege as such. But Shias themselves say that they do not have such things and the writers and programme organisers are invited to investigate and publish their findings in the official as well as the private media.

Sulaiman: Then what is Taqaiyya?

Ja'far: Taqaiyya is a religious permission that people use according to fitrat (psychology) when they or others are in danger of belief or of the necessary things in life, like wealth, life or property.

The following ayats of the Holy Quran say,

"And a believing man of Firon's people who hid his faith said: What! Will you slay a man because he says: My Lord is Allah, and indeed he has brought to you clear arguments from your Lord?"

(Surah Ghafir 40:28)

And,

"And whoever does this, he shall have nothing of (the guardianship of) Allah, but you should guard yourselves against them, guarding carefully."

(Surah Aale Imraan 3:28)

Sulaiman: Is Taqaiyya allowed in Islam?

Ja'far: Yes! This was in the early period of Islam when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and his companions used Taqaiyya for hiding their faith. At that time they used to assemble in the house of Arqam. And when Musaylama Kazzab took two Muslims as prisoners and asked one of them to accept that he was the prophet of Allah. He did, and his life was saved. The other did not agree to this and he was killed. The news reached the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). He said regarding the first one, "He has acted upon the permission given by Allah." As for the second one he said, "He is a martyr."

(Refer The Shia Origin and Faith- Ayatullah Kasif al-Ghita)

And quoted the following ayat.

"He who disbelieves in Allah after his having believed, not he who is compelled while his heart is at rest on account of faith, but he who opens (his) breast to disbelief - on these is the wrath of Allah, and they shall have a grievous chastisement."

(Surah Nahl 16:106)

Everyone agrees that the above ayat was revealed for a group of people who were forced to utter disbelief. Some of them were tortured and others killed. Whereas, Ammar Yasir said what they wanted him to say and he was released. Some people said Ammar has become a Kafir. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said, "It is not so. Ammar is filled with faith from the head to toe. Faith is mixed in his blood and flesh."

Ammar came weeping to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). The Prophet (s.a.w.s.) asked him, "What happened to you?"

Ammar said, "O Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.s.)! I was not released till I uttered something about you and remembered their gods in good words."

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) wiped the tears of Ammar and told him, "If these people again compel you, you again say what you have said."

(Tafsir Majmaul Bayan, under tafsir of ayat 16:106)

Then this ayat was revealed. Thus Taqaiyya is a legal permission. Its conditions vary from time to time. Sometimes it is Mustahab, at other times it is wajib and still at some other time it may be haraam. Like when sacrifice is more important than life or property.

It is for this very fact that we see some Shia personalities how they sacrificed their life rather than practice Taqaiyya. And they did not have any deficiency in their sacrifice.

Like Meesam Tammar, Hujr Adi, Amr bin Hamaq al-khuzaae, Rushayd Hijri. Taqaiyya is a natural occurrence, a man takes refuge in it when he feels danger to himself or to his dependants. Then if an army of your enemies comes to you and asks you about what weapons you have. In such circumstances what do you do? Tell the truth or take refuge in Taqaiyya?

Sulaiman: Then why is this Taqaiyya associated only with the Shias when it is an Islamic component?

Ja'far: Yes this is more related to Shias because Shias in history have gone through great difficulties, afflictions and had in their fate many trials and tribulations that were not faced by other people. Especially during the rule of Bani Umayyah. When anyone even doubted to be a Shia was put to death. What was the reason? Just that he was a devotee of Ali (a.s.)? One of the practices initiated by the Umayyad Caliph was the cursing of Ali (a.s.) from the pulpits. And anyone suspected of having love of Ali (a.s.) was put under surveillance. The matter became so serious that people stopped naming their children with such a blessed names and they used to fear uttering the name of Ali (a.s.). They used to say 'Zainab's father said' or 'the Shaykh said' while relating the traditions of Ali (a.s.). The people preferred to be called 'heretics' rather than 'Shias'.

Under those circumstances it became obligatory upon Shias to protect their faith and protect themselves and prevent the obliteration of their individuality. Till the time when by the Grace of the Almighty they were able to transfer their knowledge, religion and Marefat (Recognition) to a situation when it became safe for them. Here Taqaiyya played a great role in protecting the Shias just as the Book (Quran) and the house of Arqam protected Islam in the nascent stages and Prophet's life.

Some Lesser Known Facts

Sulaiman: But what do you say of those traditions that are associated with Imams (a.s.) that prove those things that you refuse in your discussions? Apart from this there are some debates and books. They say the opposite of what you try to justify.

Ja'far: As I had said in the beginning, we do not consider authentic all traditions that are associated with Imams (a.s.) and the Prophet (s.a.w.s.). The authenticity of the traditions is scrutinised by the scholars. They test the tradition on the basis of Quran. Only traditions that are compatible with Quran are taken and the rest discarded. As for the books and sayings, the Shias do not differ from other sects in this matter. Some very rare things are present here and some of the things have come to be included in Shia books from people based on their personal Ijtihad. These have become tools in the hands of those who wish to vile the Shias. As far as beliefs are concerned, there is no Taqleed in it like worship acts and other rituals. Every mature and sane person is under obligation to shape his own belief after satisfying his heart.

But it should not be a hurdle in asking help and guidance from the scholars and jurisprudents. Every person has to be either a Muftahid (That is he should be capable of deriving the laws of Shariat from Quran and Hadith.) Or he should act on precaution. Or he should become the Muqallid (follower) of a Muftahid who is accepted by a great number of people as Maraja, and who fulfills all the conditions.

Tawheed - Confession (Kalimah) of Muslims

Sulaiman: Lastly, I would like to know what in your opinion are the reasons for differences between the Shias and Ahle Sunnat?

Ja'far: As far as I think the following are some of the common reasons:

Baseless allegations against each other.

The refusal of Ahle Sunnat to follow the traditions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) related through the Imams of Ahle Bayt (a.s.).

Lack or absence of dialogue between the Shias and Sunnis to understand each other instead of heaping baseless allegations among themselves and maintaining an illogical stance.

Sulaiman: How can we achieve unity between the two sects?

Ja'far: I suggest implement the following steps:

We must refer to the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) to find the correct Islamic laws. We must refrain from calling the people of Qibla as Kafirs (Infidels) and before forming an opinion about anyone we must see if it is correct.

We must not consider all the narrators of traditions and all the companions of Prophet (s.a.w.s.) to be infallible.

We must open many channels through the various media, public or traditional, so that people may understand each other in a responsible way.

We must beware of the real danger that face the Muslim community. And we must defend ourselves collectively from our common enemies who are always plotting to harm the Muslims.

We must first identify the priorities and take up the challenges facing us.

Accusing a Muslim of Infidelity

Sulaiman: In the end, what will you do if the Sunnis are not satisfied then? In other words do you believe in the infidelity of those people who do not believe in Imamate and other things that you believe? The principles that Sunnis do not believe in?

Ja'far: According to Shias, Ahle Sunnat are brothers in Islam. They only differ on the issues of Imamate, some beliefs and Islamic practical law. There are more points of similarity (agreements) but most important of all they confess to the Oneness of Allah, the Prophethood of the Last Messenger (s.a.w.s.) and face the same Qibla. This much is sufficient for their being Muslims. This is according to the verdict of our Holy Imams (a.s.) and the learned scholars.

But some few Shias oppose those Sunnis (extremists) those who never stop from accusing the Shias of disbelief and polytheism. Actually they are themselves far from true belief and do not know what is disbelief.

In Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim there is a tradition narrated by Uthman bin Affan from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.):

"Allah has prohibited the Fire of Hell upon the flesh of one who knows in his heart that Allah is his Lord and that I am His true Prophet."

(Sahih Muslim Vol. 1, Pg. 22)

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has also said:

"Do not call the people of your community Kafirs (disbelievers) even if they commit greater sins."

(Kanzul Ummal Vol. 1)

And,

"One who accuses a believer of Kufr (disbelief) has actually murdered him. And one who kills a person without an excuse will be punished by Allah as a murderer."

I request you refer to Kanzul Ummal of Muttaqi Hindi (vol. I) for more details. Ibn Hajar says:

"One group believes that no Muslim should be labelled as infidel or transgressor only upon the basis of his/her sayings and verdicts. And if one of them does Ijتهاد, he will be rewarded twice if he is right, and once if he is wrong."

And this is also the opinion of Ibne Abi Laila, Abu Hanifa, Shafei, Sufyan Thawri, Dawood bin

Ali and of all those whom I know. There is nothing in the books of traditions to contradict this.

(Al Fazl vol. 3, pg. 247)

Sulaiman: Communication between Shias and Sunnis should become a reality and you Shias allegedly are aloof from this type of natural interchange of ideas.

Ja'far: This is a shallow accusation. The reality belies it. From the time immemorial all the people are mixed in every field and in every walk of life. There are followers of both the sects in the defence forces and there is no kind of compartmentalisation. This belies the opinion of those who think there is no unity among the people. But some extremism in understanding religious beliefs and ignorance of some facts about Shias have caught some people in the quicksand of accusing a Muslim of infidelity.

Sulaiman: No, I meant in personal dealings.

Ja'far: The Imams (a.s.) used to make bequests to their Shias even during the period when the Muslim community was filled with all sorts of injustices and oppressions, that they should continue to maintain relations with their Muslim brotheren. Imam Sadiq (a.s.) was asked by his Shias, "How should we deal with (Sunni) people who are not on our faith?" He (a.s.) said, "Visit their sick, and attend their funerals..."

(Behaarul Anwaar Vol. 81, Pg. 249)

Sulaiman: But you quote a tradition that 'one who dies without recognising the Imam of his time dies the death of ignorance?'

Ja'far: Let me tell you again. According to the Shias anyone who confesses 'La ilaaha illallaah Muhammadur Rasoolullaah' is a Muslim. All the scholars agree to this. Moreover, it is not necessary that to be a Muslims one has to believe in all the points of belief.

If a Muslim does not believe in a particular aspect he does not become an infidel.

Secondly, the above tradition has been recorded in the books of Shias as well as Ahle Sunnat. In this tradition the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) intends to stress the importance of Imamat. It is not the definition of Kafir.

I can explain this further by quoting a similar type of hadith. The Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said, "He dies a death of a Jew or a Christian, one who is capable of performing Hajj but does not, and dies."

It does not mean that we consider such a Muslim a disbeliever and refrain from attending his funeral etc. No. It was only to highlight the importance of Hajj that the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) used this method.

The hadith of recognising the Imam is especially for explaining the importance of the belief in Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). But one does not become a Kafir if he lacks this belief.

Sulaiman: I thank you and invoke Allah the glorified that He guide us in whatever He loves and is pleased with. I pray that all Muslims unite against their common enemies and the enemies of Allah, and help each other. And keep us safe and sound in our country and remove our difficulties and shower blessings on our martyrs.

Ja'far: Aameen Rabbal A'lameen. (Amen, O the Lord of the worlds.)^{83 84}