

# **Imamah And Khilafah**

# Imamah And Khilafah



**Murtadha Mutahhari**

**Translated by  
Mustajab Ahmad Ansari**

**Al-Islam.org**

**Author(s):**

[Murtadha Mutahhari](#) [4]

**Publisher(s):**

[Islamic Seminary Publications](#) [5]

**Translator(s):**

[Mustajab Ahmad Ansari](#) [6]

**Topic Tags:**

[Imamah](#) [7]

[Caliphate](#) [8]

# Imamah And Khilafah

## [Leadership](#)

The discussion of the question of Imamah may raise certain queries in the mind of our readers. Here we advance our views about these queries. In this respect the main questions are only two.

I. Every nation tries to project the good points of its history, and as far as possible wants to conceal its weaknesses. The events in which an institution or an ideology may take pride are considered to be the signs of its authenticity and veracity, and the unpleasant events of its history create doubts about its genuineness and are regarded as the signs of the weakness of its creative power. Hence the discussion of the question of Imamah and Khilafah, especially the repeated narration of the ugly events of the early Muslim period is likely to diminish the religious zeal and fervor of the new generation, which is already passing through a spiritual crisis. In the past such a discussion might have produced the desired results and diverted the attention of the Muslims from one denomination to another. But in modern times it only weakens faith in the very fundamentals. When others conceal the ugly aspects of their history, why should we, the Muslims try to bring out the ugly aspects of our history and even magnify them?

We do not concur with the above views. We affirm that should the review of history mean to bring out the undesirable events only, the effect will be as disastrous as stated above. But it is also a fact that if we remain contented with portraying only the bright aspects of our history and suppress the unpleasant

events, which would mean a distortion of history, not a review of it.

Basically no history is free from ugly and undesirable events. History of every nation, and basically history of mankind, is a bundle of pleasant and unpleasant events. It cannot be otherwise. Allah has created no people free from sins. The difference between the history of various nations, communities and creeds lies in the proportion of the happy and ugly events and not in the fact that anyone of them has only happy or only ugly events.

The Holy Qur'an has very beautifully expressed the fact that man has good as well as bad points. The summary of what it has said is that Allah informed the angels of His intention to create a vicegerent (Adam). The angels who knew only the weak points of the new being, were astonished and wanted to know what considerations prompted Allah to take such an action. Allah told them that He knew the good and the bad points of that being and that they were not aware of all the characteristics of that being.

If we look at the history of Islam from the view-point of the events manifesting faith and human values, we will find that it has no rival. This history is full of heroic deeds. It is laden with lustre and brilliance and is replete with a display of human qualities. The existence of a few ugly spots does not tarnish its beauty and majesty.

No nation can claim that its history possesses more bright events than the history of Islam, or that the ugly events of Islamic history are more numerous than the ugly events of its own history.

A Jew in order to taunt Imam Ali with the events which took place in the early period of Islam over the question of Khilafah, said: "You no sooner buried your Prophet, than began quarrelling about him. What a beautiful reply Imam Ali gave! He said: *"You are wrong. We did not differ about the Prophet himself. We differed only as to what instructions we had received from him. But your feet had not dried of sea water when you said to your Prophet: "Appoint a god for us like the gods they have."* He said: *"You are ignorant people."*<sup>1</sup>

Imam Ali meant to say: "Our differences did not relate to the principles of Monotheism and Prophethood. What we differed about was whether the Qur'an and Islam foresaw a particular person to be the successor to the Holy Prophet or his successor was to be elected by the people. In contrast you Jews during the very lifetime of your Prophet raised a question which was entirely contrary to your religion and the teachings of your Prophet."

Furthermore, even if it is supposed that in ordinary cases it is permissible to overlook the ugly events of history, how can it be proper to ignore the most basic question affecting the destiny of Islamic, society, which is the question of Islam's leadership. To overlook such a question means overlooking the well-being of the Muslims.

Moreover, if it is a fact that some historical rights have been violated and those to whom these rights were due were the most virtuous personalities of the Muslim Ummah, then overlooking these historical

facts would mean nothing but cooperation between the tongue and the pen on the one hand and the sword of injustice on the other.

II. The second objection to the discussion of these questions is that such a discussion is inconsistent with the duty of ensuring Islamic unity. All the misfortunes of the Muslims have been due to the communal differences. It is communal discord and disturbances which has swept away the Muslim power, damaged the Muslims' dignity and made them subservient to alien nations. The most effective weapon in the hand of colonialism, whether old or new, is the enflaming of these old rancours. In all Muslim countries without exception the lackeys of colonialism are busy with creating dissension among the Muslims in the name of religion and sympathy with Islam. Have we not already suffered enough on account of these old disputes so that we should continue to pursue them? Do not such discussions mean helping colonialism?

In reply to this criticism, we would like to say that there is no doubt that unity is the most important requirement of the Muslims, and that these old rancours are the basic cause of all troubles in the Muslim world. It is also true that the enemy is always ready to exploit these disputes. But it appears that the critic has misunderstood the concept of Muslim unity.

Muslim unity which has been a subject of discussion among the scholars and the broad-minded sections of the Muslims does not mean that the Muslim sects should ignore their principles of faith and articles of acts for the sake of unity, adopt the common features of all the sects and set aside the peculiarities of all. How can this be done when this is neither logical nor practical. How can the followers of any sect be asked to ignore for the sake of preserving the unity of Islam and the Muslims, any of their beliefs or practical principles which they consider to be a part of the basic structure of Islam? Such a demand would mean to overlook a part of Islam in the name of Islam?

There are other ways of persuading people to stick to a principle or to give it up. The most natural of them is to convince others by means of logical argumentation. Faith is not a matter of expedience, nor can it be imposed on any people or taken away from them at will.

We are Shi'ahs and are proud of following the chosen descendants of the Holy Prophet. We do not regard as compromisable any act which has been even slightly commended or condemned by the Holy Imams. In this regard we are not willing to fulfil the expectation of anybody, nor do we expect others to give up any of their principles in the name of expediency or for the sake of Muslim unity. All that we expect and wish is the creation of an atmosphere of good will so that we, who have our own jurisprudence, traditions, scholastic theology, philosophy, exegesis and literature, should be able to offer our goods as the best goods, so that the Shi'ah should no more be isolated and so that the important markets of the Muslim world should not be closed to the fine material of Shi'ah Islamic knowledge.

The adoption of the common Islamic features and the rejection of the peculiarities of all sects is contrary to the compound consensus of opinion among the Muslims and the product of this action will be

something absolutely un-Islamic, for the peculiarities of some sect or other must be the basic part of the structure of Islam. Islam bereft of all peculiarities and distinguishing features has no existence.

The most prominent among those who advanced the noble idea of Islamic unity, in our times, have been the late Ayatullah Burujardi among the Shiah and Allamah Shaykh Abdul Majid and Allamah Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut among the Sunnis. But they never had such a view of Islamic unity in their mind. All that these learned men advocated was that the various Muslim sects in spite of their different theologies should on the basis of the large number of common features existing among them, form a common front against the dangerous enemies of Islam. These learned men never proposed under the name of Islamic unity a religious unity which is not practical.

In fact, there is a technical difference between a united party and a united front. A united party requires that all its members should have a common ideology and a common way of thinking in all matters except their personal affairs, whereas a common front means that various parties and groups, despite their ideological differences should, by means of the common features existing among them, form a common front against their common enemy. The formation of a common front against the common enemy is not inconsistent with defending one's ideology and inviting other members of the front to follow it. The main idea of the late Ayatullah Burujardi was to pave the ground for the dissemination of the knowledge of the Prophet's chosen descendants among his Sunni brethren. He believed that this was not possible without creating good will and understanding. The success he achieved in the publication of some theological books of the Shi'ah in Egypt by the Egyptians themselves, was one of the most important achievements of the Shi'ah scholars.

May Allah reward him for the services he rendered to the cause of Islam and the Muslims!

Anyhow, the advocacy of the thesis of Islamic unity does not demand that we should feel shy of telling the facts. What is to be avoided is to do any thing that may injure the feelings and sentiments of other parties. As for a scientific discussion, it relates to the domain of logic and reason, not to that of sentiments and feelings.

Fortunately in our times there have appeared a good number of Shi'ah scholars who are following this healthy policy, the most prominent of them being Ayatullah Sayyid Sharafuddin Amili, Ayatullah Kashiful Ghita and Ayatullah Shaykh Abdul Husayn Amini, the author of the prominent book, *Al-Ghadir*.

The events of Imam Ali's life and the policy he pursued, which has now been practically forgotten and is rarely mentioned, provide a good example in this respect.

Imam Ali did not refrain from speaking of his right and claiming it, nor did he hesitate to complain against those who snatched it away from him. His keen interest in Islamic unity did not prevent him from raising his voice frankly. His numerous sermons in Nahjul Balaghah are a testimony to this fact. But all his grievances did not impel him to leave the ranks of the Muslims struggling against their opponents. He took part in the Friday and other congregational prayers. He accepted his share of the booty of that time.

He always gave sincere counsel to the Caliphs and was counted as one of their advisers.

During the war of the Muslims against the Iranians the Caliph then intended to take part in the fighting personally. Imam Ali said to him: *"Do not go to the front, for so long as you are in Madina, the enemy thinks that even if the whole Muslim army is wiped out, you will send reinforcement from the centre. But if you personally go to the battlefield, they will say: Here the mainstay of the Arabs is. And then they will concentrate all their forces to kill you, and if they kill you, the Muslims will be totally demoralized".*<sup>2</sup>

That was the regular policy that Imam Ali pursued. But he never accepted any post under the Caliphs. He did not consent to be a military commander, the governor of a province, the Amir of Hajj, nor did he accept any other such appointment for its acceptance would have meant the renunciation of his own well-established claim. In other words, the acceptance of an official post would have been something more than mere cooperation and preservation of Islamic unity. Although he himself did not accept any post, he did not prevent his relatives and friends from accepting such posts, because that did not mean the endorsement of the Caliphate.

Imam Ali's behaviour in this respect was very graceful and a sign of his dedication to the Islamic objectives. While others divided, he united; while others tore apart, he patched up.

Abu Sufyan tried to take advantage of the displeasure of Imam Ali. He pretended to be a well-wisher of him and tried to wreak his own vengeance by showing respect to the Holy Prophet's legatee, but Imam Ali was shrewd enough not to be hoodwinked by him. He with his hand struck Abu Sufyan's chest as a sign of rejection of his offer and turned him away. (See Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 5)

Abu Sufyans and Hayy ibn Akhtabs are always busy with their evil designs. Hayy ibn Akhtabs' finger can be seen in many happenings. It is the duty of the Muslims, especially the Shi'ah to keep Imam Ali's traditions in this respect before their eyes and not to be deceived by Abu Sufyans and Hayy ibn Akhtabs.

These were the objections of those who oppose the question of leadership and this is our reply to them.

What is amazing is that some other people raise objections quite contrary to these objections. This group wants the question of Islamic leadership to become rather a regular pursuit. It wants this question to be discussed in season and out of season and repeated like a slogan. But this group is not interested in its being dealt with in a scientific and instructive way. It wants to keep the feelings strained, but is not interested in satisfying intellectual quest or sharpening wits. And that is what the enemy wishes. Otherwise if the question is discussed in a learned manner, there is no reason why it should become a pursuit?

## **Imamah And Dialectic Logic**

## **An Extract From Notes**

Dialectic logic denies that society needs guidance or leadership. According to this logic at the most society needs an intellectual and leader to bring inequities, contradictions and inequalities existing in society to the consciousness of the masses so that dialectic movement may be initiated. As this movement is compulsive, the passage from thesis and anti-thesis to synthesis is unavoidable. Therefore society automatically traverses its course and in the end attains perfection.

The leaflet<sup>3</sup> – *Leadership, Imamah, Dialectic*, says: "One of the important questions concerning leadership and Imamah, especially the Islamic conception of Imamah is: What is the role of the so-called intellectual? Is his duty and responsibility merely to depict the inequities and inequalities, awaken the consciousness of the exploited classes and inculcate the existence of real class contradiction in the mind of the deprived masses? Is it true that once the masses become conscious of the existing contradictions, society moves forward –automatically and dialectically".

The fact is that above all other things society needs leadership, guidance and Imamah. Development is not the essential result of the contradictions. Development is not possible without guidance and leadership. Dr. Ali Shariati in the last pages of his booklet, *Wherfrom to Begin* has elaborately discussed this question under the heading, Responsibility and Mission of an Intellectual. He says: "Briefly the responsibility of an intellectual is to transmit the inequities within society to the self-consciousness of the people of that society. Then society performs its own movement."

Anyhow, after a few lines he makes some remarks, which are contrary to the above statement, and support society's need of guidance and leadership.

Dr. Shariati says: "It has been supposed that from the point of view of leadership an intellectual has no responsibility. Dialectic contradiction chooses its own way. An intellectual's duty is confined to portraying contradictions and rousing the underprivileged classes against the ruling classes.<sup>4</sup>

"But only after a few lines he talks of "determining a solution and the common ideals of society and of inculcating zeal and a sense of common faith ...." These remarks are contrary to the theory that society performs its own movement. When Dr Shariati speaks of dialectic corollary of the triangle of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis and of compulsory development, he is consistent, but when he makes his subsequent remarks, he speaks against his own postulates.

## **Leadership And Protection Of Faith**

The scholastic theologians have greatly emphasized that Imam is the protector and preserver of faith and religion. Probably it is supposed that he protects religion in the same way as a building is first erected and then it is maintained and protected against a possible damage by rain, wind etc. Hence there appears to be no need that a building built by an unrivalled builder should be preserved by a

person having almost the same degree of skill as the original builder. For example there has never been felt any need that there should exist some persons of the calibre of those who created the Masjid Shah, Ali Qapu, the dome of Masjid Shaykh Lutfullah, the Bayasanqari inscription of Masjid Gowhar Shad, the writings of Meer and Bayasanqar, the hand-written Qur'ans and other master-pieces.

But the fact is that a damage to religion is not a simple affair. According to psychological and sociological principle as soon as a revolutionary movement succeeds and the enemy despairs of continuing his face to face confrontation, he ceases to resist it openly and on the basis of his assessment of his own advantage, he sometimes even joins the movement, not because he has really been converted to it, but purely with a view to exploit its success. He utilizes the movement for his own ends without having faith in its spirit and objectives. That is what happened during the constitutional movement of Iran.

The opponents of the constitutional government joined the movement, and pretended to be its staunch supporters. Ayanuddawlah and Sadr ul Ashraf became prime ministers of the constitutional government. Such people not only preserve the external features of the movement, but also try to furnish it with further adornments. Anyhow, they destroy its spirit, its reality and its core, and empty it from within. In the words of Imam Ali in this process, "*Islam is overturned as a pot is overturned.*"<sup>5</sup>

Thus they divert the movement from its right course, preserving its shape and appearance but altering its content and nature. As most people are only superficial observers and prone to take things for their face value, they remain happy and satisfied, for they find the externalities safe to the utmost extent. They do not realize that the fundamentals have vanished. It is here that mature thinking and deep observation are required. When Imam Ali said: "*In every generation we have irreproachable successors who defend us against the deviation of the fanatics and the pretensions of the liars*", he might have referred to the Holy Imams themselves or to the honest scholars who keep a watch on the people's belief in the Imams.

It may be mentioned that struggle against innovations in religion is not confined to those cases in which a law is openly violated or something that has nothing to do with religion is intentionally introduced into religion. Sometimes people's way of thinking in regard to religion is so perverted that they begin to have aversion to right thinking. What we mean to emphasize is that there is no fear of any harm being incurred by Islam from outside the Muslim world. The Qur'an says: "***Those who disbelieve have now despaired of doing any damage to your religion. Therefore do not fear them; but have fear of Me.***" But there exists a definite threat to Islam from inside. In this connection the greatest threat is posed not by those who commit abominable sins out of lust etc., but by the hypocrisy of those who are afraid of opposing Islam openly.

They wear a mask of Islam on their face and try to achieve their nefarious ends under the cover of Islamic way of life, a very heavy cover indeed. They devoid Islam of its content, leaving intact its shape and appearance by changing its course and its goal and altering its meaning.<sup>6</sup> The simple-minded Muslims must be aware of the fraud of this group.

[1.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Hadith n. 317.

قَالَ لَهُ بَعْضُ الْيَهُودِ: مَا دَفَتُمْ بِنَبِيِّكُمْ حَتَّى اخْتَافُتُمْ فِيهِ. فَقَالَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ لَهُ: إِنَّمَا اخْتَافَنَا عَنْهُ لَا فِيهِ وَلَكُنْكُمْ مَا جَفَّتْ أَرْجُلُكُمْ مِنَ الْبَحْرِ حَتَّى فُلِمْ لَنِبِيِّكُمْ اجْعُلْ لَنَا إِلَهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ إِلَهٌ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ

Some Jews said to Amir al-Mu'minin, peace be upon him; You had not buried your Prophet when you picked up differences about him, when Amir al-mu'minin replied: We did not differ about him but we differed after him (i.e. about his succession); whereas your feet had not yet dried after coming out of the river (Nile) when you began asking your Prophet: Make you for us a god as they have gods of their own. Said he; 'Verily you are a people behaving ignorantly. '(Qur'an, 7:138).

[2.](#) Nahjul Balaghha, Sermon 146.

[3.](#) Please refer to our footnote of the booklet, Wherfrom to Begin, page 39.

[4.](#) In one of his footnotes on the booklet, Wherfrom to Begin, page 39.

[5.](#) Nahjul Balaghha, Sermon 103.

[6.](#) In his papers on "Alteration of the Qur'an" the author says that distortion of meaning indicates the retention of the wording of the Qur'an, but expounding it wrongly as, according to a well-known story Muawiyah did when he misinterpreted the wording of the prediction regarding the death of Ammar ibn Yasir. Another case of the distortion of meaning is the misinterpretation of the verse: "There is no hukm (decision, judgement) except by Allah." (Surah Yusuf 12:90). On the basis of this verse the Khawarij raised the slogan: La hukma illa illah (There is no decision except by Allah). Commenting on this slogan Imam Ali said: "Right words, wrong meaning". (See Nahjul Balaghha, Sermon 40). This intentional or unintentional misinterpretation was disastrous and caused so much damage in the history of Islam. Another case is the misinterpretation of the tradition: "If you know (Allah), do whatever you like."

## Imamah, Leadership

In his papers entitled the *Notes on Leadership and Administration* the author has described very well the difference between Prophethood and Imamah. The first is guidance and the second is leadership. As a religious guide or Prophet is a sort of Divinely appointed guide, the same case is with a leader or an Imam. The Holy Prophet and some other Prophets have been both the guides and the leaders. But the end of Divine guidance does not mean the end of Divine leadership also.

The same notes say that Imamah and Prophethood are two different assignments and two different states. They are often separable. Many Prophets only conveyed revelations. They were not the Imams. Similarly the Imams of the Prophet's House have not been the Prophets. Anyhow, Ibrahim and Muhammad were the Prophets and the Imams both (Peace be upon them). The Qur'an says:

***"I am going to Make you Imam for the people." (Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 124).***

Our contention that Prophethood is guidance and Imamah is leadership has been derived from the Qur'an, which says:

***"The Messenger has only to convey the message of Allah." (Surah al-Maidah, 5:99).***

But we know that the duty of an Imam is to supervise, to lead and to take care of those who accept his

leadership.

According to the Shi'ah belief, as Prophethood is conferred by Allah, Imamah is also granted by Him. In this respect there is no difference between Prophethood and Imamah. The distinguished Prophets have been guides as well as leaders. The end of Prophethood means the end of Divine guidance in the sense of showing the way and delivering the message, but Divine leadership or Imamah shall never come to an end.

## **Difference Between Guidance And Leadership**

According to one definition the leader is he who makes it easy for his followers to achieve the required goal. The guide on the other hand not only shows the way, but also often provides the means of traversing it and reaching the goal.

As a matter of fact a person may hold simultaneously both the assignments of a guide and a leader, or may hold only one of them. As we have already said, Prophethood is a sort of guidance and Imamah is a sort of leadership. It is possible that one person may be both a guide and a leader. It is also possible that someone may be only a guide and not a leader like all our genuine preachers. (Those whose preaching is not proper are out of question.) They themselves stand aside and show the pitfalls to others. Their responsibility ends there. In contrast, it is also possible that someone may be a leader, not a guide. That happens when the way is known and the goal has already been determined. In this case a leader is required to awaken the dormant forces, to mobilize them and to push them forward. Similarly it is also possible that one person may be a leader and a guide both.

## **Imamah Of The Holy Imams And The Tradition Of Thaqlayn**

The tradition (Hadith) of Thaqlayn is an authentic tradition reported by numerous authorities both the Shi'ah and the Sunnis. According to it the Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "*I leave among you two heavy trusts: the Book of Allah and my chosen descendants.*" [1](#)

This tradition has been usually used as a prelude to the narration of the misfortunes of the Holy Prophet's Chosen descendants. The preachers say: "This was the Holy Prophet's direction, but no sooner than he died. . . ." This description gives the impression that the members of the Holy Prophet's House were crushed and made totally ineffective. Though it is true that their services were not utilized as they should have been, yet it must be admitted that their presence was extraordinarily effective in the preservation of Islamic heritage. Of course the then government as well as Islamic politics deviated from their original course and the members of the Prophet's House could render no service in that field, but they so protected and kept alive the spiritual heritage of Islam and the Holy Prophet, which it remained safe even after the gradual decline and extinction of the Islamic caliphate.

Islam is a code of life which covers all affairs temporal and spiritual. It is not like the school of a moral

teacher or a philosopher which can deliver to society nothing more than a few books and a few pupils. Islam besides being a moral and cultural school and a social and political system, is a new code of life and a new way of thinking. It practically brings new arrangements into existence. Islam preserves the spirit in the matter, the invisible in the visible, the life Hereafter in this world and finally the kernel in the husk and the husk in the kernel.

The deviation of the government from its original course rendered the institution of caliphate into mere husk. Outward formalities were kept intact, but the spirit of piety, truthfulness, justice, sincerity, love, equality and patronage of science and knowledge did not exist, especially during the Umayyad period when true knowledge was despised and discouraged.

The only thing which was encouraged was poetry, pre-Islamic customs and boasting of one's ancestry. The result was that politics was separated from religiousness. In other words those who represented spiritual heritage of Islam were not allowed to take part in political affairs and those who held political power were alien to the spirit of Islam, and carried out only its outward formalities such as congregational prayers and the appointment of the officials to perform Islamic duties.

They were caliphs and the commanders of the faithful only in name. At last even this duality disappeared and the outward formalities were also gone. Even the form of government officially became pre-Islamic. Spirituality and religiousness were totally separated from politics. From here it can be understood that the biggest blow which was dealt to Islam began from the day that religion and politics were separated from each other. Though during the days of Abu Bakr and Umar religion and politics still to a certain extent went together, the seeds of their separation were sown during that period. The things so developed that Umar made repeated mistakes and Imam Ali corrected them. Fortunately Imam Ali was his regular adviser. The separation of religion and politics being the greatest threat, the well-wishers of Islam wanted to keep them together. The relation between these two is that of spirit and body.

The body and spirit and the husk and kernel should remain united. The husk is required to protect the kernel from which it draws its strength. Islam gives importance to politics, government, political laws and jihad only for the purpose of protecting and preserving its spiritual heritage, which is monotheism, supremacy of spiritual and moral values, social justice, equality and regard for human sentiments. If this husk is separated from its kernel, the latter will be damaged and the former will become of no use.

The bold action which the Imams took was the protection of the spiritual heritage of Islam. They separated from Islam the institution of caliphate as it existed. The first Imam who took this action was Imam Husayn (AS). His uprising made it clear that Islam meant piety, recognition of Allah and self-sacrifice for His cause, not the values introduced by the Umayyad Caliphate.

Now let us see what the spiritual heritage of Islam means and how the Holy Imams have protected it. The Holy Qur'an says:

***"The Prophet reads out to them Allah's verses, purifies them and teaches them the Book and***

*wisdom*" (*Surah al-Jumu'ah*, 62:2).

*"So that the people may establish justice."* (*Surah al-Hadid*, 57:25).

*"We have sent you as a witness, a bringer of good tidings, a warner and one who calls to Allah with His permission."* (*Surah al-Ahzab*, 33: 45).

The Imams first of all urged people to do what is good and abstain from that which is evil. The most extreme example of this sort of action is Imam Husayn's uprising. Secondly the Imams paid attention to disseminating knowledge. An example of this action is Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq's school, which produced such eminent scholars as Hisham, Zurarah and Jabir ibn Hayyan.

The same purpose was served by the Nahjul Balaghah, the Sahifah Sajjadiyah and the disputation of all Imams, especially those of Imam Al-Ridha'. Above all the Imams showed practical piety, asceticism, selflessness and benevolence. They passed their nights in worshipping Allah and helped the poor and the weak. They possessed the noble Islamic qualities of forgiveness, beneficence and humility. Their very sight reminded the people of the moral and spiritual qualities preached by Islam and the Holy Prophet. Imam Musa Kazim observed vigils in close vicinity to Harun's palace. Imam Al-Ridha', when he was still the heir apparent, declared: *"Allah of all the people is the same, their father is the same and their mother is the same. None is superior to others except by virtue of piety."* He took meals with the barber and the door-keeper and mixed freely with them.

The spiritual philosophy of Islam is the preservation of its moral and spiritual heritage and the retention of its kernel in contradistinction of its husk. The separation of spirituality from politics amounts to the separation of the kernel from its husk.

## **Imamah And Hadith Of Thaqalayn**

(i) The substance of this tradition is *mutawatir*, which means that it has been reported by numerous irreproachable authorities. Its wording may vary, but according to most of the reports it is as under:

*"I am leaving among you two heavy trusts: The Book of Allah and my chosen descendants. So long as you adhere to them, you will never go astray. They will not be separated from each other till they come to me at the fountain."*

Once in an article published in an issue of the magazine, *Risalatul Islam*, the organ of the Dar ut-Taqrib Baynal Mazahibul Islamiya this tradition appeared thus: "I am leaving among you two heavy trusts: the Book of Allah and my Sunnah." Immediately, at the instance of the late Ayatullah Burujardi, a scholar of Qum, named Shaykh Qiwamuddin Wishnawahi wrote a treatise entitled *Hadithuth Thaqalayn* and sent it to the Darut-Taqrib which published it as a separate treatise.

In that treatise the sources of this tradition have been traced in the books of traditions, the commentaries

of the Qur'an, biographies, historical books and dictionaries, in which this tradition has been mentioned for different reasons. For example it is mentioned in the commentaries of the Qur'an in connection with the verse: "*We will dispose of you O you Thaqlayan.*" and in connection with the verses of '*'Itisam'* (3:103), '*Mawaddat'* (42:23) and '*Tathir'* (33:33). In dictionaries it is mentioned in connection with the root-word, *thaqal* etc.

(ii) In the Holy Qur'an the word, *thaqalayn* has been used to signify the men and the jinn. Let us see what it signifies in this tradition.<sup>2</sup>

In connection with the tradition there are a few points worth mentioning. The first point is: Why have the Chosen descendants of the Holy Prophet been called *thaqal*?

The second point is: Why has the Qur'an been called the major *thaqal* and the chosen descendants of the Holy Prophet the minor *thaqal*? Some reports have these words: "One of them (the *thaqals*) is greater than the other."

The Holy Prophet was asked as to what he meant by the *thaqalayn*. He said: "*The Book of Allah, the one end of which is in Allah's hand and the other end of which is in your hand, and my descendants who are the minor *thaqal*.*"

According to a certain report, he added: "*They are the two ropes which will not break off till the Day of Resurrection.*"

(iii) The third important point in this connection is that the Holy Prophet has said that these two will not be separated. He did not mean to say that they will not part company with each other or that they will not be displeased with each other or that they will not quarrel. What is meant is that adherence to one of them is inseparable from adherence to the other. They cannot be separated by saying that the Qur'an is enough for us as Umar said in the early days of Islam or by saying that what has been reported to us from the Prophet's House is enough for us as the Akhbarists say. Incidentally some of the Shi'ah scholars are of this opinion.

(iv) The fourth point is that the Holy Prophet has guaranteed that those who really adhere to these two *thaqals* would never go astray and would not feel miserable.

The decline and deviation of the Muslims began when they tried to thrust a wedge between these two *thaqals*.

Now let us discuss why the law-giver has chosen to append something else to the revealed Book brought by him.

This question is related to the profundity and subtlety of the Qur'an, the law of which requires an interpreter and commentator. To illustrate this point it may be said that sometimes we import from a foreign country such simple goods as cloth, shoes or utensils. In this case we do not need any persons

to come along with the goods to direct us how to use them. We can sew garments out of cloth, can use the utensils and put on the shoes. But sometimes we import a complete manufacturing plant. In that case it is necessary that some experts should come along with it to install it and operate it for a fairly long time till our own technicians are ready to operate it independently. Similarly when modern war equipment is imported, it should definitely be accompanied by technicians to teach its use.

We have heard that recently France has sold mirage aircraft to Libya, but it is said that the Libyan pilots will not be in a position to fly them at least for two years.

Hence the question of leadership in the sense of religious authority, to which the Holy Prophet has referred in this authentic tradition, is nothing but a stress on the fact that it is not enough to know Arabic in the ordinary sense to be able to interpret the Qur'an, to understand its aims and to explain its injunctions and moral rules. We know how the literal interpretation of the tradition which says that you will see your Lord on the Day of Resurrection as you see the moon when it is full, led to gross deviation and anthropomorphic conceptions.

To say that the Book of Allah is enough for us culminates in either Ash'arism or Mu'tazilaism, each of which was a heretical school of thought.

Our twelve Imams are the Qur'anic technicians. Their knowledge does not belong to the world of senses. It is Divinely inspired or at least especially acquired knowledge. Imam Ali once addressing Kumayl said: *"Knowledge with real insight came to them unexpectedly. They experienced the satisfaction of conviction. They found easy what those living in luxury considered to be difficult, and they were on intimate terms with that, of which the ignorant were afraid."* [3](#)

Imam Ali says: *"The chosen descendants of the Holy Prophet keep his trust and abide by his orders. They are a treasure of his knowledge, a sanctuary of his wisdom, an archive of his Books and a support of his religion. With their help he straightened his back and gained his composure. None from among his ummah (followers) can be compared to them. Those who received their favours cannot be equal to them. They are the basis of religion and the pivot of faith. To them return those who go astray and those who lag behind, join them for guidance and salvation. They are efficiently capable and fit for the status of leadership; they have been and are even now rightful heirs of the Holy Prophet who had entrusted them Imamahe."* [4](#) ()

*"Through us you were guided in the darkness and were able to set your foot on the highway. With our help you came into the light of the dawn from the darkness of the late night. Deaf be the ear that does not listen to the cry (advice) of the guide."* [5](#)

*"You will not be observing the covenant of the Qur'an unless you know who violated it and you will not be adhering to it unless you know who threw it away. Therefore seek this information of those who have it, for they are the life of knowledge and the death of ignorance. It is they whose judgement will tell you of their knowledge, whose silence will tell you of their speech and whose outward appearance will tell you*

of their inward feelings. They do not do anything that is against religion nor is their opinion divided about it. Therefore religion is their true witness and a silent speaker."<sup>6</sup>

(The words "that they do not do anything against religion", indicate the infallibility of the Imams and the words, "their opinion is not divided" show that the Imams possess profound knowledge.)

*"They are life of knowledge and death of ignorance. Their gentleness speaks of their knowledge and their silence of the wisdom of their speech. They neither oppose the truth (as they are infallible) nor have they divided opinion about it, (as their knowledge is sound and correct). They are pillars of Islam and the place where it is safe. Through them the truth was restored to its position, the falsehood was displaced and its tongue was cut off. They understand religion and take care of it. They do not merely hear it and pass it on. The transmitters of knowledge are many, but its adherents are very few."*<sup>7</sup>

*"A time will come after me when nothing will be more hidden than truth and more manifest than falsehood. At that time the Qur'an and the people of the Qur'an will be the rejected outcasts. The Qur'an and its guardians (Ahlul Bayt) which are like two companions going together in the same path, will not be accommodated by anyone. At that time they will be among the people, but no one will seek guidance from them, and they will be with the people, but not really with them."*<sup>8</sup>

1. In this connection a reference may be made to Shaykh Qawam Wishnawahi's treatise appended to Risalatul Islam and to the Biharul Anwar, an account of the Prophet's life.

2. Shaykh Qiwamuddin says that this tradition has been reproduced in Sahih Muslim, Vol. VII, p. 122, Sunan Tirmizi, Vol. II, p. 307, Sunan Abu Da'ud, Vol. V, pp. 182, 189; Mustadrak Hakim, Vol. III, pp. 14, 17, 26, 59, Vol. VI, pp. 366, 371, Vol. V, pp. 182, 189; Mustadrak Hakim, Vol. III, p. 109, Tabaqat of Ibn Sa'd, Vol. IV, p. 8; Usudul Ghabah, Vol. II, p. 12, Vol. III, p. 147 and Ibn Abil Hadid.

3. Nahjul Balagha, Saying 146.

4. Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 2.

5. Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 4. This sermon was delivered by Imam Ali after Talhah and Zubayr were killed.

6. Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 147.

7. Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 239.

8. Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 147.

## Significance Of Imamah

The subject of our present discussion is Imamah. We know that for us, the Shi'ah though it is a question of extraordinary importance, other Muslim sects do not attach so much importance to it. The reason is that the conception of Imamah which we have is different from that conception of it which other sects have. There is no doubt that there are some common features too, but those features of Imamah, which have given extraordinary importance to it, are peculiar to the Shi'ah creed. For example when we, the Shi'ah want to enumerate the cardinal principles of religion according to the Shi'ah doctrine, we say that

these principles are Monotheism, Prophethood, Divine Justice, Imamah and the Hereafter.

We regard Imamah as a cardinal principle of religion. In a sense the Sunnis also do not reject the idea of Imamah totally, but according to their belief, Imamah is not a cardinal principle of religion. They regard it only as a collateral matter. In fact there exists a basic difference of opinion with regard to Imamah. We believe in one sort of Imamah and the Sunnis believe in another sort of it. The reason why the Shi'ah regard Imamah as a cardinal principle of religion whereas the Sunnis regard it as a collateral matter, is that the Shi'ah conception of Imamah is quite different from the Sunni conception of it.

## **The Meaning Of Imam**

Imam means a leader or one who goes in front. The word Imam in Arabic does not imply any sense of sanctity. And Imam is the person who has some followers irrespective of the fact whether he is virtuous or depraved. The Qur'an itself has used the word in both the senses. At one place it says:

***"We appointed them Imams who guide with our permission." (Surah al-Anbiya, 21:73).***

At another place it says:

***"The Imams who invite people to the Hell." (Surah al-Qasas, 28:41).***

In respect of Fir'awn the Qur'an has used a phrase which conveys a sense similar to that of an Imam or a leader. It says:

***"On the Day of Judgement he will lead his people down into the Hell fire." (Surah Hud, 11:98).***

Thus Imam literally means simply a leader. But at present we are not concerned with a bad leader. Let us now discuss the conception of Imamah.

The word *Imamah* is applied to several cases. Some concepts of it are acknowledged by the Sunnis also. But they differ with us as to who is an Imam and what qualities he must possess. They totally disbelieve in certain concepts of Imamah. It is not that they believe in Imamah in the sense in which we believe but disagree as to the person who holds this assignment. The Imamah in which they believe is nothing but social leadership and this is the sense in which this word has been used in the books of the old scholastic theologians.

Khwaja Nasiruddin Tusi in *at-Tajrid* defines Imamah as general charge of society. Here it seems necessary to mention another point also:

## **Various Aspects Of The Holy Prophet**

The Holy Prophet in his lifetime by virtue of his special position in Islam had several aspects as is indicated by the Qur'an and his own life account. At one and the same time he held several

assignments. In the first instance he was a Prophet of Allah and in this capacity he conveyed, Allah's message and commandments to the people. The Holy Qur'an says:

***"Whatever the Messenger gives, take it, and whatever he forbids abstain from it." (Surah al Hashr, 59:7)***

In other words, whatever instructions and orders the Prophet gives to the people, he gives them on behalf of Allah.

From this point of view the Prophet communicates only that which has been revealed to him. Another assignment of the Holy Prophet was that he held the post of the supreme judge, by virtue of which he administered justice among the Muslims. According to Islam every Tom, Dick and Harry cannot be a judge, for from the viewpoint of Islam arbitration is a Divine affair. Allah has enjoined justice and a Judge is the person who administers it in cases of disputes and differences. This assignment was also expressly conferred on the Holy Prophet by the Qur'an, which says:

***"By your Lord, they will not believe in truth until they make you judge of what is in dispute between them and find within themselves no dislike of that which you decide and submit to your decision whole-heartedly." (Surah an-Nisa, 4:65).***

The Holy Prophet was appointed a judge by Allah and hence this assignment was not an ordinary one; it was Divine. Practically also he was the Prophet-judge. The third assignment which he officially held and which was conferred on him by the Qur'an was that of the head of the State. He was the head of the State and leader of Muslim society. In other words in Muslim society he was the policy maker as well as the administrator. It is believed that it is this aspect of the Holy Prophet which is visualized by the Qur'anic verse:

***"Believers, obey Allah, and obey His Messenger and your (qualified) leaders." (Surah an-Nisa, 4:59)***

In fact, the three positions held by the Holy Prophet were not merely formal or ceremonial. The directions which we have received from him are basically of three kinds.

- (i) The first kind comprises Divine revelations, in regard to which the Holy Prophet could do nothing of his own accord. His sole function was to convey to the people what was revealed to him.
- (ii) In the field of religious instructions, for example, he told the people how to offer prayers and keep fast. But when he administered justice his judgements were not revealed. In the case of a dispute between two persons, he decided the matter according to the Islamic standards and judged who was right and who was wrong. In such a case Jibra'il did not bring any revelation to him. Exceptional cases are a different matter.

On the whole he decided all judicial cases on the basis of available evidence in the same way as others

do. At the most it may be said that his judgements were better than those of others. He himself said that he had orders to pronounce judgement on the basis of what appears to be specious. Suppose a plaintiff and a respondent appear and the plaintiff produces two irreproachable witnesses. The Prophet would decide the case on the basis of their evidence. Evidently this judgement will be the Prophet's own judgement and not a judgement revealed to him.

(iii) In this third capacity also when the Prophet issued an order as the leader of society, the nature of this order of his was different from the nature of what he conveyed as Divine revelation. Allah appointed the Holy Prophet the leader of society and authorized him to work as such. In this capacity he sometimes consulted others also. We see that he consulted his companions on the occasion of the Battles of Badr and Uhud and on many other occasions. Evidently there can be no consultation about a Divinely revealed order. The Holy Prophet never consulted his companions as to how the dusk time (Magrib) prayers should be offered. There have been occasions when the Holy Prophet said about certain questions referred to him that Allah had commanded thus and hence he had to abide by His command.

But on matters in which he had received no Divine injunction, he often consulted others and asked for their opinion. If in such cases he issued his own orders, he did so because he was authorized by Allah to do so. In a few cases connected with social administration also he received revelation, but those were exceptional cases. Otherwise as a rule he did not receive any detailed instructions on social and political questions and he did not work as a mere messenger in respect of these questions. It is an undisputed fact that the Holy Prophet worked in all these capacities concurrently.

## **Imamah In The Sense Of Leadership Of Society**

The first meaning of Imamah as mentioned above is the general charge of society. One of his assignments which fell vacant on the demise of the Holy Prophet, was the leadership of society. There is no doubt that society needs a leader. Who was the leader of society after the Holy Prophet? Both the Shi'ah and the Sunnis agree that society is in need of a leader and a supreme commander. It is here that the question of *Khilafah* arises. The Shi'ah say that the Holy Prophet himself nominated his successor and announced that after him Imam Ali would take the reins of the affairs of the Muslims in his hands.

The Sunnis who have a different logic do not accept this view at least in the form in which the Shi'ah accept it. According to them the Holy Prophet did not designate any particular person as his successor and it was the duty of the Muslims themselves to elect their leader. The Sunnis accept the principle of Imamah when they say that the Muslims need a leader. All that they say is that the leader was to be chosen by the Muslims. In contrast, the Shi'ah claim that the Holy Prophet himself appointed his successor by Divine revelation.

Had the question of Imamah been merely that of political leadership after the Holy Prophet, we the Shi'ah also should not have regarded it as a cardinal principle of religion. It would have been fit to

include this question in the collateral matters. We could say that the question of Imamah in which the Shi'ah believe is confined to declaring that Imam Ali was one of the companions of the Holy Prophet like Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and so many others or even like Abu Dharr and Salman, but he was better, more learned, more pious and more capable than all of them and that the Prophet designated him to be his successor. But the Shi'ah do not stop here. They believe in two tenets in which the Sunnis do not share with them at all. One of these two tenets is Imamah in the sense of religious authority.

## **Imamah In The Sense Of Religious Authority**

We have said that the Holy Prophet conveyed the Divine revelations received by him to the people who were at liberty to ask him whatever they wanted to know about the teachings of Islam. Similarly they asked of him what they did not find in the Qur'an. Now the question is whether what the Qur'an contains and what the Holy Prophet has told the general people is all that Islam wanted to convey of its instructions; teachings and knowledge? Evidently the Holy Prophet did not have time enough to convey all the teachings of Islam.

Therefore, he trained Imam Ali, his successor as an extraordinary scholar and taught him everything about Islam, at least all the principles and the general rules of it. Imam Ali was the most outstanding of his companions. He was infallible like himself, and knew even that which was not expressly told by Allah.

Introducing him, the Holy Prophet said: "*O' People, after me refer all religious questions to Ali and ask him and my other successors whatever you want to know.*" In this respect Imamah is a sort of specialization in Islam, but an extraordinary and Divine specialization, far above the degree of the specialization which a *mujtahid* (jurist) can acquire. The Imams are experts in Islam but their special knowledge of it is not derived from their own thinking and reason which are liable to commit mistakes.

They receive their knowledge in a mysterious and secret way unknown to us. Imam Ali received his knowledge of Islamic sciences direct from the Holy Prophet and the subsequent Imams received it through him. In the case of each Imam this knowledge was infallible and impeccable. It was handed down by each Imam to the subsequent Imams.

The Sunnis do not believe that anybody holds such a position. In other words they do not believe in the existence of any Imam in this sense. It is not that they do not accept Ali as an Imam but say that Abu Bakr is an Imam instead of him. In fact they do not admit that any of the companions of the Holy Prophet, neither Abu Bakr, nor Umar nor Uthman, holds such a position. That is why they attribute so many mistakes in religious matters to Abu Bakr and Umar. In contrast the Shi'ah believe their Imams to be infallible, and will never admit that any of their Imams has ever committed a mistake. But the Sunnis in their books say that on such and such occasion Abu Bakr said so, but he was wrong. When he realized his mistake he said that he had a Satan (Devil) who overwhelmed him from time to time. Similarly the Sunnis say that once Umar made a mistake and then referring to certain women declared that they were more learned than him.

It is said that when Abu Bakr died the women of his family, including his daughter – the Holy Prophet's wife, 'Ayishah began to weep and cry. When Umar heard the din of their lamentation, he sent a message to the women, asking them to be quiet, but they did not comply with his request. He again sent a message and then threatened to punish them. At last 'Ayishah was told by some women that Umar was threatening them and asking them to become quiet. She sent for Umar and when he came to her asked him what he wanted to say and why he was sending a message after message. Umar said that he had heard the Holy Prophet saying: "If any one died and his people wept over him, he would be punished."

'Ayishah said: "You haven't understood. You are mistaken. That's a different matter. I know what's that. Once, a wicked Jew died. His folk were weeping over him. The Holy Prophet said that they were weeping and he was being punished. The Holy Prophet did not say that he was being punished because they were weeping. He said that they were weeping over him, but didn't know that he was being punished. What connection has it with this question? Even if weeping be prohibited, why should Allah punish an innocent person for the sin which we commit?" "Strange!" said Umar. "Was that the case?" "Yes", said 'Ayishah, "that was the case". Umar said: "Hadn't these women been there, Umar would have been ruined."

The Sunnis themselves say that on seventy (very many) occasions Umar said: *"Had there not been Ali, Umar would have been ruined."* He himself confessed on so many occasions that Ali often rectified his mistakes, and Umar used to confess his mistakes.

In short, the Sunnis do not believe in any Imam in the sense in which we believe. Anyhow it is an indisputable fact that it was the Holy Prophet alone who received the celestial revelation. We do not say that revelation is received by the Imams also. The message of Islam was delivered to mankind by the Holy Prophet alone and to him alone Allah revealed all the necessary teachings of Islam. There are no injunctions of Islam which were not revealed to him.

But the question whether all injunctions of Islam were conveyed to the people at large, is a different matter. The Sunnis say that the Holy Prophet conveyed all Islamic injunctions to his companions. But still the Sunnis find themselves in a fix when they face problems about which nothing has been reported from the companions of the Holy Prophet. To resolve this situation they have introduced the law of analogy, by means of which they claim that they complete what is missing. In this connection Imam Ali says: *"Do you mean to say that Allah's religion was incomplete and you have come to complete it?"*<sup>1</sup>.

The Shi'ah on the other hand say that neither Allah revealed the Islamic injunctions incompletely to the Holy Prophet, nor did the Holy Prophet convey them incompletely to the people. He conveyed them completely but he did not say everything to the general people. In fact many questions did not arise during his lifetime. Anyhow, he conveyed all injunctions which he received from Allah to his special disciple, Imam Ali and asked him to pass them on to the people as and when necessary.

It is here that the question of infallibility arises. The Shi'ah say that just as the Holy Prophet could be

neither intentionally nor unintentionally wrong in what he said, similarly his special pupil Imam Ali also could not go wrong, for just as the Holy Prophet was backed by Divine support in many ways, this special pupil of his also enjoyed Divine support. This was one more feature of Imamah.

## **Imamah In The Sense Of Wilayat**

This is the third sense of Imamah and the highest sense for that matter. Great stress is laid on this sense in the Shi'ah doctrine In a way *Wilayat* is a common point between Shi'ism and mysticism (*tasawwuf*). But when we say so, we should not be misunderstood, for you may come across what the orientalists have said in this respects. They say that Wilayat is a question in which the mystics are greatly interested and which has been of interest for the Shi'ah also from the early days of Islam. I remember that some ten years back an orientalist interviewed Allama Tabatabi. One of the questions he put was whether the Shi'ah had borrowed the idea of Wilayat from the mystics or the mystics had taken it from the Shi'ah. The fact is that the doctrine of Wilayat existed among the Shi'ah even when mysticism had not emerged yet.

If it is supposed that either of these two have borrowed the idea from the other, it must be said that the mystics have adopted it from the Shi'ah. The question of Wilayat is analogous to the questions of the perfect man and the master of the time. The mystics have laid great stress on this point. Moulavi says that in every age there exists a *wali*, *qa'im* or the master of the age. In every age there exists a perfect man possessing all human qualities. There is no age in which, a perfect wali, often described as '*qutb*' (pole, pivot, authority) is not present. The mystics believe that a perfect wali is also a perfect men.

They ascribe to him many positions some of which are unintelligible to us. One of his positions is his control of the hearts in the sense that he is the universal spirit transcending all spirits. Moulavi hints at this position in his story of Ibrahim Adham. This story is no more than a fictitious tale. But Moulavi narrates tales to make his points clear. His aim is not to narrate history. He tells a story only to press his point. Moulavi says that Ibrahim Adham went to the river and threw a needle into it. Afterwards he recalled the needle. The fish put their heads out of the river. Each fish had a needle in its mouth. Continuing, Maulavi says: 'O you having no endowments, take care of your heart in the presence of those who are gifted with the qualities of heart.'

Continuing further he says: "That Shaykh (spiritual guide) became aware of that which was in the heart of the other people. The Shaykh could know that because he was like a lion and the hearts of other people were his dens."

The Shi'ah generally use the word Wilayat in its most exalted sense. They believe that the Wali and Imam is the master of the time, and there has always been and there will always be one perfect man in the world. In most of the *ziyarats* (homages) which we recite, we acknowledge the existence of Wilayat and Imamah in this sense, and believe that the Imam has a universal spirit. In the ziyarats which we all recite and which we regard as a part of Shi'ah doctrine we say: "I testify that you see where I stand; you

hear what I say and return my salutation." It is to be noted that we address that to an Imam who is dead. From our point of view in this respect there is no difference between a dead and a living Imam. It is not that we say so to a dead Imam only. We say: "Peace be on you, Ali ibn Musa al-Riza. I admit and testify that you hear my salutation and return it."

The Sunnis with the exception of the Wahhabis, believe that only the Holy Prophet is endowed with this quality of knowing and hearing. According to them nobody else in the world occupies such a high spiritual status and has such a spiritual comprehension. But we, the Shiites believe that this position is held by all our Imams. This belief is a part of our religious principles and we always acknowledge it.

In short the question of Imamah has three degrees and if we do not make a distinction between these degrees, we may be faced with difficulties in respect to certain inferences in this connection. Based on these degrees Shiism has three groups. Some Shiites believe in Imamah only in the sense of social and political leadership of society. They say that the Holy Prophet designated Imam Ali to the leadership of society after him, and that Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman could not claim this position. These people are Shiites only to this extent.

They either do not believe in the two further degrees or keep quiet about them. Some others believe in the second degree also but do not believe in the third one. It is said that the late Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Dурchal who was Ayatullah Burujardi's teacher in Isfahan, disbelieved in this third degree. Anyhow, the majority of the Shi'ah and the Shi'ah scholars believe in the third degree also.

If we want to discuss Imamah, we should discuss it in three stages: Imamah according to the Qur'an, Imamah according to the tradition and Imamah according to reason. First of all let us see whether the Qur'anic verses relating to Imamah indicate that sense of Imamah in which the Shi'ah believe. And if they do so, do they indicate Imamah in the sense of political and social leadership only, or do they indicate it in the sense of religious authority and spiritual Wilayat also. After explaining this we should see what the Prophetic traditions do say about Imamah.

Finally we should analyse Imamah from the viewpoint of reason and see what reason says about each stage of it. Is the Sunni point of view that the Holy Prophet's successor should be elected by the people more reasonable or is it a fact that the Holy Prophet himself has nominated his successor? Similarly what is agreeing to reason in regard to the other two sense of Imamah.

## **A Tradition About Imamah**

Before mentioning the verses of the Qur'an in regard to Imamah, we would like to quote a tradition which has been reported by the Shi'ah as well as the Sunnis. Normally a tradition upon which both the Shi'ah and the Sunnis agree cannot be ignored, because this agreement shows that the tradition is substantially authentic, though its wording may differ in different reports. We the Shiites usually report this tradition in the following words: *"He who dies without recognizing the Imam of his time, would die a*

*pre-Islamic death.*" These are very serious words, for in the pre-Islamic period people neither believed in the unity of Allah (monotheism) nor in Prophethood. This tradition (hadith) is found in most of the Shi'ah books of traditions including the Kafi which is regarded as the most reliable collection of the Shi'ah traditions.

The important fact is that this tradition is found in the Sunni books also. According to one report they quote the following wording: "*He who dies without an Imam, will die a pre-Islamic death.*" Another wording is this: "*He who dies and has no bayah (oath of allegiance) in his neck, will die a pre-Islamic death.*" Still another text says: "*He who dies and has no Imam, will die a pre-Islamic death.*" There are several other versions, and that shows the great importance which the Holy Prophet attached to the question of Imamah.

Those who take Imamah only in the sense of social leadership say that the Holy Prophet has attached utmost importance to the question of leadership because the implementation of the Islamic injunctions depends on the presence of a virtuous and sound leader and the strong allegiance of people to him. Islam is not an individualistic religion. Nobody can say that as he believes in Allah and His Prophet, he has nothing to do with anybody else. Everybody must know and understand who the Imam of his time is, and must carry out his activities under his leadership.

Those who take Imamah in the sense of religious authority, say that he who is interested in his religion, must recognize his religious authority and must know whom he should follow in religious matters. It is absolutely un-Islamic to believe in the religion but to acquire it from a source which is contrary to it.

Those who believe in Imamah in the sense of spiritual Wilayat say that this tradition shows that a man who is not under the care of a perfect *wali* (guardian) is just like him who died in pre-Islamic days. As this tradition is a *mutawatir* hadith (reported by continuity of numerous authorities) we mentioned it first so that you may keep it in mind while we discuss the question of Imamah further. Now we look at the verses of the Qur'an.

## **Imamah In The Holy Qur'an**

Several verses of the Qur'an are cited by the Shi'ah in connection with Imamah. One of them is the verse which begins with the words, "***Your guardian can be only Allah***". Incidentally in all these cases there exist Sunni traditions which support the Shi'ah point of view. In the Qur'an this verse runs as follows:

***"Your guardian can be only Allah and His messenger and those who believe, who establish prayers, pay the zakat while bowing." (Surah al-Mai'dah, 5:55).***

The word used in this verse is *Wali*, which means a guardian. Hence Wilayat means guardianship. According to the teachings of Islam zakat is not paid while bowing in prayers. Hence the payment of zakat while bowing cannot be called a general rule applicable to many individuals. This verse refers to a

particular incident, which took place only once and which has been reported both by the Shi'ah and the Sunnis. Once Imam Ali was bowing while offering prayers when a beggar appeared and began to ask for alms. Imam Ali beckoned and called his attention to his finger. The beggar promptly drew Imam Ali's ring from his finger and left the place. In other words Imam Ali did not wait till his prayers were finished.

He was so particular to give alms, which while he was still praying he told the beggar by gesture that he might pull out his ring, sell it and spend the money to meet his needs. Both the Shi'ah and the Sunnis agree that Imam Ali did so, and that this verse was revealed on this occasion. It may be noted that giving alms while bowing in prayers is not included in the teachings of Islam. It is neither an obligatory nor a commendable act. Hence it cannot be said that several persons might have done so. Therefore (those who do so) is an obvious reference to Imam Ali. The Qur'an at several places has used the expression, 'they say. . .', while that thing was said by only one individual. Here also 'those who do so' means the individual who did so. Therefore by means of this verse Imam Ali was appointed the guardian of the people. Anyway, this verse needs further discussion, which we are going to undertake later.

There are other verses which concern the event of Ghadir. This event itself is a part of the Islamic traditions, but we are going to discuss it later. One of the verses revealed in connection with the event of Ghadir says:

***"O Messenger! Make known that which has been revealed to you from your Lord, for if you do it not, you will not have conveyed His message." (Surah al-Mai'dah, 5:67).***

The tone of this verse is as serious as that of the tradition: *"He who died and did not recognize the Imam of his time, died a pre-Islamic death."* Briefly it may be said that the verse itself shows that its subject is so important that if the Prophet does not make it known, which would mean that he has not conveyed the message of Allah at all.

The Shi'ah and the Sunnis agree that Surah al-Mai'dah is the last surah (chapter) revealed to the Holy Prophet, and this verse is one of the last verses of this surah. In other words it was revealed when the Holy Prophet had already conveyed all other injunctions and teachings of Islam during his 13 years' stay in Makkah and 10 years' stay in Medina as the Prophet. This verse was among the last instructions of Islam. Now the Shi'ah ask what that instruction could be which was so important that if it was not conveyed all that the Holy Prophet did in the past would become void.

You cannot indicate any subject connected with the last years of the Holy Prophet's life which may be so important. But we say that it is the question of Imamah, which is so important that if Imamah is lost, nothing remains. Without Imamah the whole structure of Islam would crumble down. Moreover, the Shi'ah cite the reports and the traditions of the Sunnis themselves in support of their claim that this verse was revealed in connection with the Ghadir Khum event.

In Surah al-Maidah itself there is another verse which runs as follows:

***"This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour to you and have chosen Islam for you as religion." (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:3).***

This verse shows that on that day something happened, which was so important that it perfected religion, completed Allah's Favour to mankind and without which Islam could not be as Allah wanted it to be. The Shi'ah argue that the stringent tone of the verse shows that the thing to which it refers is so important that the very existence of Islam as a true religion depends on it. Now the question is what that thing can be. The Shi'ah say that they can point out that thing; whereas others cannot. Furthermore, there are reports which confirm that this verse was revealed in connection with the question of Imamah. We have put forward these three verses as the gist of the Shi'ah arguments.

1. Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 18.

## **Imamah And Expounding Of Religion**

We have already discussed the different aspects of Imamah, in the course of which we pointed out that in order to be able to discuss the question of Imamah in its true perspective, it was necessary to understand those aspects very clearly. One aspect of Imamah, as we have already said, is the question of government. Following the demise of the Holy Prophet whose duty was it to choose his successor? Was it the responsibility of the people themselves to elect their ruler from among themselves or did the Holy Prophet himself designate his successor? Lately this question has been put in such a way that at first sight the Sunni point of view in this respect appears to be more normal and natural.

Usually the question is set forth in this way: We want to see what form of government has been suggested by Islam. Is it hereditary in which every ruler designates his successor, and the people have no right to intervene in the government affairs? Is it that the Holy Prophet designated a particular person as his successor, which person designated his successor and that successor again designated his successor, and thus the constitution of government was to be based on designation and nomination till the Day of Resurrection?

Naturally this process cannot be applicable exclusively to the Imams, for according to Shi'ah belief the number of the Imams is confined to twelve, and this number can neither be increased nor decreased. According to this view the general rule in respect of the government will boil down to this procedure. The Holy Prophet, who was the head of the State also, was to appoint his successor and that successor also in his turn was to appoint his successor and so on till the Day of Resurrection. In this case if Islam dominated the whole world as it once dominated the half of it and it so happened that the injunctions of Islam were observed in all parts of the world, the same rule would be operative whether there be one government in the world or several governments.

According to this view, it was on the basis of the general rule that the Head of the State should be a designated person, which the Holy Prophet nominated Imam Ali as his successor. But in the light of this philosophy it is not necessary at all that the Holy Prophet should have designated Imam Ali on receiving a commandment from Allah, for only he and the Imams, inspired and endowed with Divine knowledge through the Holy Prophet, could receive such a Divine commandment, but that could not be the case subsequently. Therefore if it is admitted that from the viewpoint of Islam the government is to be based on the principle of designation, it was not necessary for the Holy Prophet to nominate Imam Ali by revelation.

He could appoint him at his personal discretion. The Imams also could use their discretion similarly. On this basis Imam Ali's designation to Khilafah was similar to the appointment of a Governor of Makkah or the appointment of an Amirul Hajj. In such cases nobody says that the Holy Prophet on receiving revelation appointed such and such person the Governor of Makkah or, for example, sent Mu'az Ibn Jabal to Yemen for the propagation of Islam. In contrast everybody admits that the Holy Prophet was entrusted by Allah with the charge of the administration of people, and so he was authorized to act according to his own discretion in all matters in which he did not receive a revelation. In the case of Imam Ali's designation to Khilafah also it may be said that this was the Holy Prophet's personal decision.

If we advance the question of Imamah in such a simple way, it becomes a question of worldly government and ceases to be the question of Imamah that we are discussing. If this be the nature of the question, really there is no need that Divine revelation should intervene in it. At the most Divine revelation can tell the Prophet that it is his duty to appoint as his successor whomsoever he deems fit, and that his successor also has to choose his successor in the same way.

And so on till the Day of Resurrection. If Imamah simply means government or rulership, then what the Sunnis say appears to be more attractive than what the Shi'ah say, for the Sunnis hold that a ruler has no right to choose the next ruler and that his successor should be chosen in a democratic way by the people, especially by those who have right to choose. But the question is not so simple. On the whole the belief of the Shi'ah in the designation of Imam Ali and other Imams to Khilafah is an offshoot of another question which is more basic.

Here an important question arises. The question is that the number of the Imams was not more than twelve. As such who was supposed to take charge of government after these twelve Imams. Let us suppose that Imam Ali had become the ruler exactly in the manner he was designated by the Holy Prophet and had been followed by Imam Hasan, then by Imam Husayn and so on till the twelfth Imam. In this case on the basis of the philosophy which we, the Shi'ites have, there would have been no reason for the occultation of the present Imam. He also like his forefathers would have had a short span of life and then would have passed away.

What would have happened after him. Could the number of the Imams be increased? Take another question – the question of the normal government in the present circumstances. Obviously the Imam of

the Age cannot assume the political leadership of the Muslims during his occultation. Hence the question of political leadership and worldly government still remains unsolved.

## **Government Is A Branch Of Imamah**

When the question of Imamah is discussed from the Shi'ah point of view, we should not make a mistake of simplifying it and saying that Imamah means administration of government, for it is such oversimplification that creates the above-mentioned difficulties. If it is admitted that Imamah means rulership, the question arises whether it is necessary that a candidate for becoming the Head of the State should be the best of all. Is it not enough that he should be the best only relatively. In other words, is it not enough that he should be a good statesman, a good administrator and an honest man, though he may be inferior to some people in some other respects? Is it necessary that a ruler should be infallible? What is the need of his being so?

Is it necessary that he should be offering night prayers? If so, why? Is it necessary that he should be well-versed in the rules of Islamic law? Cannot he consult others whenever necessary? A man who is relatively the best should be good enough. All these questions arise when we consider the problem from a narrow angle. It is a big mistake to think that Imamah and rulership are identical. Some early scholars, especially some scholastic theologians, made this mistake. Now-a-days again this mistake has become too common. When one speaks of Imamah, at once rulership comes to mind, while in fact the question of rulership is a minor part of the question of Imamah, and these two questions must not be confused. Then what is Imamah?

## **Imam Is The Successor Of The Holy Prophet In Expounding Of Religion**

What is most important in connection with the question of Imamah is the question as to who succeeded the Holy Prophet for the purpose of explaining and expounding religion. There is no doubt that it was the Holy Prophet alone who received revelation which was totally discontinued with his passing away. Now the question is who after the Holy Prophet was responsible for expounding celestial teachings which admitted no personal opinion or private judgement.

Did this responsibility devolve on any one particular individual to whom all queries could be referred as they were referred to the Holy Prophet, whose answers were always perfectly right and about whom it could not be suspected that he would even give an answer based on his personal opinion or would ever make a mistake and rectify it later? About the Holy Prophet we cannot say that any of his answers was ever wrong or influenced by his personal whim. Such an allegation would mean not to acknowledge his Prophethood. Once it is established that a particular thing was said by the Holy Prophet, we cannot say that it is wrong or that the Holy Prophet might have made a mistake. In contrast, in the case of a legislator to whose edicts people adhere, it is possible to say that in respect of such and such question

he made a mistake or that he did not pay full attention to that particular question or that he was influenced by extraneous considerations. But it is not possible to say so in respect of the Holy Prophet, just as we cannot say about any verse of the Qur'an that there is a mistake in it or that it has been affected in any way by some selfish motive.

Was there any person after the Holy Prophet who could really be regarded as a competent authority for all religious matters and who could expound religious law in the same way as the Holy Prophet used to do? Did there exist a perfect man with all these characteristics. We say that such a man did actually exist. The only difference between him and the Holy Prophet was that what the Holy Prophet said was based on direct revelation from Allah and what the Imams said was based on what they learned from the Holy Prophet, not in the sense that they were instructed by him in the usual manner, but in the sense in which Imam Ali said that the Holy Prophet had opened to him a door of knowledge because of which a thousand other doors had been opened to him. We cannot say how it happened just as we cannot explain revelation and say how the Holy Prophet used to receive Divine knowledge direct from Allah.

We cannot say what kind of spiritual relationship existed between the Holy Prophet and Imam Ali, but it is certain that the Holy Prophet taught Imam Ali all realities fully and completely and that he did not impart that knowledge to anyone else. Imam Ali says that he was with the Holy Prophet in the cave of Hira when he heard a piteous sound as if someone was wailing. He said to the Holy Prophet:

*"Messenger of Allah, I heard the Satan's wailing when revelation was descending on you."* He said: *"Ali, you hear what I hear and you see what I see, but you are not a Prophet".<sup>1</sup>*

Had there been somebody else in that place with Imam Ali, he would not have heard that voice, because that hearing was not the catching of sound waves reverberating in the space so that anybody having ears could hear it. It was a different sort of perception.

## **The Tradition Of Thaqalayn**

In regard to Imamah the basic question is its spiritual aspect. The Imams are spiritual leaders below the Prophet in rank. They know and acknowledge Islam spiritually. They are infallible like the Prophet himself. An Imam is an absolute authority on religion. There is no question of any mistake or any intentional deviation in what he says. That is what we mean by infallibility. In this connection the Shi'ah declare that the Holy Prophet has said: *"I leave among you two heavy trusts: the Book of Allah and my descendants."*<sup>2</sup>

In fact, it cannot be denied that the Holy Prophet has actually said so. This is not a tradition reported by the Shi'ah only. In fact it has been reported by more Sunni sources than the Shi'ah.

When we were staying at Qum a magazine named *Risalatut Taqrib* was started by *Darut Taqrib* of Egypt. In one of its issues a Sunni scholar quoted the tradition of Thaqalayn in these words: "I am leaving among you two heavy trusts: the Book of Allah and my Sunnah." The late Ayatullah Burujardi,

who was a scholar and divine in the real sense, dealt with such questions very prudently. One of his pupils was Shaykh Qawam Wishnawah'i, a nice man, much interested in studying books and collecting references.

The Late Ayatullah asked him to trace the sources of this tradition in the Sunni books in which this tradition might be found. Accordingly he collected such references and cited more than 200 reliable Sunni books, which had reported that the Holy Prophet had said: "*I am leaving among you two heavy trusts: the Book of Allah and my descendants.*" It is certain that the Holy Prophet expressed this point in this form on numerous occasions and at several places.

But we cannot rule out the possibility of his having said on some occasion that he was leaving two things: the Book of Allah and his Sunnah. There is no inconsistency between the Holy Prophet's descendants and his Sunnah, for his Sunnah is explained by his descendants only. It is not that we can refer our problems either to the Holy Prophet's descendants or to his Sunnah, for these two do not exist independently of each other. It is the Holy Prophet's descendants who are the expounders and custodians of his Sunnah. When the Holy Prophet mentions his descendants along with the Book of Allah, he means to say that his Sunnah is to be acquired from his descendants.

Furthermore, even the statement that the Holy Prophet has said: "I am leaving among you two heavy trusts: the Book of Allah and my descendants", itself is a Sunnah. As such there is no inconsistency between the Holy Prophet's Sunnah and his descendants. If at one place and even that is not certain, the Holy Prophet has said: "I am leaving among you two heavy trusts: the Book of Allah and my Sunnah", at so many other places he has used the other expression. If in one book this tradition is written in one form, in two hundred other books it is written in the other form.

Anyway, Shaykh Qawam prepared a treatise and sent it to Darut Taqrib of Egypt. Darut Taqrib too was not unfair. It printed and published it. Being authentic it could not be turned down. Nobody could raise any objection against it. Had the late Ayatullah Burujardi done what others usually do in such cases, he would have raised great hue and cry, would have called the people of Darut Taqrib dishonest and would have accused them of intriguing against the Prophet's chosen descendants.

The expounding of religion is the true spirit of Imamah. Islam is a comprehensive and bright religion. But the question is whether the teachings of Islam are limited to the principles and the general rules mentioned in the Qur'an and further elaborated and explained in the Holy Prophet's sayings. Was Islam only this much? There is no doubt that Divine revelation ceased with the Holy Prophet's demise. Islam was completed.

But had every article of Islam been enunciated by that time? Or were there many questions of law which were in the custody of Imam Ali and which were still to be made known to the people and explained either gradually or on some suitable occasions? In the latter case this tradition proves the infallibility of the Imams, for the Holy Prophet has directed the Muslims to get their religion from two sources, the

Book of Allah and his descendants. As one of these sources, which is the Qur'an is infallible and free from all errors, the other source must also be infallible. It is impossible that the Holy Prophet would ask his followers to acquire religion from a person who is liable to commit mistakes.

It is here that the Shi'ah doctrine basically differs from that of the Sunnis in respect of gathering and expounding religion. The Sunnis say that just as revelation ceased with the passing away of the Holy Prophet, similarly the authentic expounding of religion also has come to an end. Now there is nothing except what is deduced and inferred from the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions.

## **Prohibition Of Recording Of Traditions**

The Sunnis themselves have created a situation which has weakened their case. Umar disallowed the writing of traditions (*Ahadith*). This is a historical fact, not a story invented by any hostile Shi'ah. It is admitted by the European Orientalists also who are neither the Shi'ah nor the Sunnis. Even the most sympathetic Orientalists say that Umar disallowed the writing of traditions because of his fear that tradition would divert the attention of the people from the Qur'an, which he wanted to be the sole source of law.

This is definitely a historical fact and not an allegation of the Shi'ites. During the days of Umar nobody could venture to write a Prophetic tradition and show his writing to others. Oral transmission of traditions was of course allowed. This situation continued till the time of Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz, who became Caliph in 99 A.H. and died in 101 A.H. He issued instructions that Prophetic traditions should be collected and put down in writing. Thus he changed Umar's policy. It is to be noted that immediately following Umar ibn Abdul Aziz's instructions those who were so far transmitting Prophetic traditions orally, undertook the work of writing them, but in the meanwhile a part of them had already been lost.

We know that the rules of Islamic law mentioned in the Qur'an are very brief. The Qur'an mostly mentions general rules only. For example, the Qur'an lays great stress on prayers. But still all that it says about them does not go beyond saying: "***Establish prayers, prostrate and bow down.***" (*Surah al-Baqarah, 2:43*). Even it has not been explained how prayers are to be offered. Similarly there are so many rites connected with pilgrimage.

The Holy Prophet personally observed them. Had not the Prophetic traditions assumed the present practical form, the Muslims could not know anything about them. But the question is what opportunities the Holy Prophet had to enunciate all the Islamic injunctions. During his 13 years' stay in Makkah because of stern opposition and very tight situation there, the number of those who were converted to Islam could not probably exceed 400. People used to meet the Holy Prophet only secretly. Some 70 families which constituted half or even more than half of the total population of the Muslims, had to migrate to Ethiopia.

From this point of view Medina was a better place, but there the Holy Prophet had so many other

commitments. Even if he worked like a whole-time teacher, during all these 23 years he did not have enough time at his disposal to impart all the teachings of Islam, especially in view of the fact that Islam is a complete code of human life particularly in our present age.

## **Use Of Analogy**

As a result of what they hold in this connection, the Sunnis had to face many practical difficulties in regard to the rules of Islamic law. They came across questions about which nothing was mentioned in the Qur'an. They checked the collections of traditions which they had, but there also they did not find the answer. What to do then? To solve the problem they resorted to analogy which means to extend on the basis of some existing similarity the rule of a text to a case not provided for in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. For example we say that the law says so in that case. As this case is somewhat similar to that, the same rule should apply to this case also. Possibly, in that case the Holy Prophet gave that particular order for such and such reason and as that reason exists in this case also, the same order should apply to it also.

As may be seen, the analogical deduction is based on possibilities only. The cases where Prophetic traditions were not available, were too many. The world of Islam greatly extended during the Abbasid period. Many countries were conquered. Consequently new problems arose everyday, the solution of which was not found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The result was that analogical deduction became a regular practice. The Sunnis were divided into two groups. The first group which included Ahmad ibn Hambal and

Malik ibn Anas, looked at analogical deduction with suspicion. It is said that Malik ibn Anas resorted to this process only in two cases. The other group which included Abu Hanifah made use of analogy on a too wide scale. Abu Hanifah used to say that the sayings attributed to the Holy Prophet were not reliable. He declared that he found only fifteen Prophetic traditions trustworthy. In all other cases he resorted to analogical deduction. Shafi'i had a midway position. In some cases he relied on Prophetic traditions and in others he applied analogy, with the result that he produced a sort of hotchpotch code of law. It is said that Abu Hanifah made so much use of analogy because he was of Irani origin and the Iranians by nature tend to take much interest in mental exercises, and because he lived in Iraq which was far away from Medina, the centre of the traditionalists. Anyhow, he indulged too much in analogy.

A Sunni writer says that one day Abu Hanifah went to a barber. His beard had a mixture of black and grey hair but the number of the grey hair was not very large. He asked the barber to pull out the grey hair. The barber said: "If grey hair is pulled out, it tends to grow more copiously." Abu Hanifah said: "Then pull out the black hair, for my analogy says that in case grey hair grows copiously if it is pulled out, the same thing should happen in the case of black hair also." But the fact is that if there is any such rule, it applies to grey hair only, not to black hair. Anyhow, Abu Hanifah made similar deductions in the case of jurisprudence also.

## **Analogy From The Shi'ah Point Of View**

When we refer to the Shi'ah traditions we find that according to them the need of analogy is felt only because of the wrong notion that the Qur'an and the Sunnah are not enough to provide all the necessary rules of law. The fact is that this notion is totally wrong. We have received such a quantity of Prophetic traditions either directly or through the chosen descendants of the Holy Prophet, which if we refer to the principles laid down therein, we need not resort to analogical deduction at all. That is the spirit of Imamah from religious point of view.

Islam is not merely a creed or a doctrine. It cannot be said that after its ideology has been enunciated by its founder it only requires a government to implement that ideology. It is a complete code and that position of it must be kept in mind.

## **No Question Of Election In The Presence Of An Infallible Imam**

From the viewpoint of leadership and rulership the position is that Imam Ali the Holy Prophet's successor who is as infallible as the Prophet himself and who has been designated by him to be his successor, cannot be placed at par with other people. His position is exceptional like that of the Prophet himself. Therefore in his case there is no room for any election, consultation or any other such thing. In the case of the Prophet nobody ever said that he was only the Messenger of Allah and the people were at liberty to choose him or anybody else to be their ruler. Everybody knew that as he was superhuman and had contact with the Divine world, in his presence there could be no question of any election or selection.

After the Holy Prophet, also there was no room for any such thing, for he had designated twelve successors to strengthen Islam during the next two or three centuries and to expound it in a way free from every error. In the presence of such persons capable of explaining all the injunctions of Islam, there could be no question of any election etc. Is it reasonable to choose someone else in the presence of a person absolutely infallible and extremely competent and learned in every sense of the word?

Furthermore, when Imam Ali had been appointed an Imam in the sense mentioned by us, worldly leadership was also naturally due to him. In fact the Holy Prophet designated Imam Ali to this assignment because Imam Ali was an Imam and infallible. Anyhow, the case is different during the occultation of the present Imam, for there exists no infallible Imam free to exercise his worldly authority.

Similarly the case would have been different if the events of the early period of Islam had not taken place and. Imam Ali had become Caliph immediately after the Holy Prophet and had been succeeded by Imam Hasan, then by Imam Husayn and so on till the times of the last Imam. In this case there would have been no reason for occultation. After the demise of the last infallible Imam the question of rulership would have assumed a different shape. Then it could be asked how this question is to be solved. Is it or is it not necessary that a jurist fulfilling all the prerequisite conditions should be the ruler? Can people elect their ruler?

As such from the very beginning we should not regard the question of Imamah as a simple question of worldly government. It would be wrong to ask at this stage whether Islam wants a government based on nomination or a government based on election, and then to ask why the Shi'ah advocate a particular form of government. The question is not so simple. It must be admitted that in the presence of an infallible Imam, nobody else can have a claim to the rulership in the same way as in the presence of the Holy Prophet nobody else could be the ruler. The Holy Prophet had appointed Imam Ali the Imam and as such it was his privilege to be the ruler also. Besides, on several occasion the Holy Prophet made it clear that Imam Ali was to succeed him as the ruler of the Muslims. Anyhow, it is to be remembered that he made this nomination on the basis that Imam Ali was the Imam after him.

## **Question Of Spiritual Wilayat**

Earlier I mentioned a point in which I believe persona and consider it to be a basic doctrine, though it might not be a cardinal principle of Shi'ism. The question is what the special characteristics of the Holy Prophet's position were? What was revealed to him, did it only confine to Divine injunctions; and the fundamental principles and collateral teachings of Islam? Was his knowledge confined to the realities of Islam, or was any other information also communicated to him by Allah? Is his excellence in regard to piety confined to his being infallible and immune from all errors? Almost the same questions arise in respect of the Imams also. Though they received no revelation from Allah, yet they received thorough knowledge of Islam, through the Holy Prophet and their knowledge was as free from the possibility of any error as that of the Holy Prophet himself. As regards piety, the Imams are also infallible.

Now the question is whether a Prophet or an Imam has besides these features some other, special features or qualities also reposed in his person. Besides religious knowledge what are the other branches of knowledge with which he is endowed? Is it true that the reports about the deeds performed by his Ummah (followers) are presented to the Holy Prophet, and similar reports are also presented to each Imam during his lifetime. Now the present Imam knows, hears and sees everything that happens in the world. He watches the deeds not of the Shi'ites only but of all people. In this respect there is no difference between a living and a dead Imam. As stated earlier, when you visit the grave of Imam Al-Ridha', and greet him, this action takes place as if you are calling on a person living in this world. When you greet the Imam, he hears you and looks at you. That is a manifestation of spiritual *Wilayat*.

We said earlier that the question of Wilayat is the point where mysticism and Shi'ism meet each other. Their ideas in this respect are very close. The mystics say that in every age there must exist a perfect man whom they call the *qutb*. The Shi'ah hold that in every age there must be an Imam and religious authority, who is a perfect man. As this question is not a matter of dispute between the Shi'ah and the Sunnis, we do not propose to dwell on it further at this stage. The disputed points are two, namely Imamah in the sense of expounding religion and Imamah in the sense of worldly leadership of the Muslims.

## **Importance Of The Tradition Of Thaqalayn**

In regard to the question of Imamah, you should not ignore the importance of this tradition. If by chance you have to face a Sunni scholar or even a non-scholar, you should ask him whether the Holy Prophet did or did not utter such a sentence. If he says that he did not, you can put before him so many books of the Sunnis themselves. In fact the Sunni scholars cannot, and generally do not, deny the existence and veracity of such a tradition.<sup>3</sup>

Then say to him: "The Holy Prophet has designated the Qur'an as the authority No. 1 and his 'descendants' as the authority No. 2. Now tell us who these descendants are."

It may be noted that the Sunnis make no difference between the Holy Prophet's descendants and others. They narrate Prophetic traditions more often on the authority of other companions than on the authority of Imam Ali. Even when they quote Imam Ali, they quote him as a transmitter of a Prophet's tradition, not as an authority.

## **The Tradition Of Ghadir**

As we have said, he who is the authority for a religion must also be the leader of that religion. Further, as far as leadership is concerned, the Holy Prophet expressly designated Imam Ali to that. The tradition of Ghadir is an instance of such a declaration. The Ghadir declaration was made by the Holy Prophet on the occasion of the farewell pilgrimage at a place called Ghadir al-Khumm. This pilgrimage was the last Hajj performed by the Holy Prophet. In all probability he did not perform more than one Hajj after the conquest of Makkah, but he performed one 'Umrah before his farewell Pilgrimage. On the occasion of the farewell Pilgrimage he issued a general invitation to all the Muslims to attend that Hajj.

When all of them assembled, he delivered sermons on different occasions in the Masjidul Haram, at Arafat, at Mina, outside Mina and at Ghadir al-Khumm. After mentioning some other points at Ghadir al-Khumm he finally mentioned a point which he greatly emphasized. In our opinion he made it the last point because of this verse which he recited there:

***"O Messenger! Make known that which has been revealed to you from your Lord, for if you do it not, you will not have conveyed His message." (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:67).***

The Holy Prophet mentioned many principles of Islam and collateral matters in his sermons which he delivered at Arafat, Mina and Masjidul Haram. On all these occasions he dealt with important matters. But at Ghadir al-Khumm he made an announcement about which he said that if he did not make it, all that he had said would become void. Then he said: *"Am I not closer to you than your own selves?"* He was referring to a Qur'anic verse which says:

***"The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves." (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:6).***

He continued to say "Do I not have more authority over you than you yourselves have?" All those who were present said: "Yes, Messenger of Allah, you have." Then the Holy Prophet announced: "This Ali is the master (Maula) of him, whose master I am."

A comprehensive summary of the question of Ghadir was published a few years back at Mashhad in the form of a book by the Society for Publication of Islamic Truths. I have not yet read this book, but those friends of mine who have read it, say that it is a very good book, at least worth reading.

It will require too much space if we attempt to study all the sources of the tradition of Ghadir which we claim to be a *mutawatir* tradition or the tradition of Thaqalayn, the sources of which Mir Hamid Husayn, the author of the 'Abaqatul Anwar has traced in 400 pages of large size. While dealing with the crux of the problem of Imamah, we would like to make only a brief mention of the authorities on which the Shi'ah base their claim in this regard, although the question might need rather a more elaborate discussion.

1. Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 192.

2. Sahih Muslim, Vol. VII, p. 122.

3. Some preachers have made a gross misuse of this tradition, for they invariably use it as a prelude to narrating the misfortunes of the Prophet's chosen descendants. One may think that when the Holy Prophet said that he was leaving two things behind him: the Qur'an and his descendants, what he meant was only that those two things were to be held in high respect and were not to be insulted at all. In fact what the Holy Prophet meant was that he was living behind two authorities to which all religious and social questions were to be referred. In the concluding part of this tradition the Holy Prophet has said: "So long as you adhere to them, you will not go astray." So the question is that of adherence. The Holy Prophet has declared his descendants equal with the Qur'an. He himself has said that the Qur'an was the major 'thaqal' and his descendants the minor 'thaqal'.

## Scholastic Study Of Imamah

With a view to make clear the basis of the arguments which the Shi'ah scholars advance in support of their conception of Imamah and to show what others say in this respect, we deem it fit to reproduce with some explanatory remarks a passage written by Khwaja Nasiruddin Tusi. This passage is very precise and the Shi'ah and the Sunni scholars alike have been commenting on it since it was written.

You must have heard the name of a book, *Tajrid*, written by Khwaja Nasiruddin. A part of this book deals with logic and is called the logic of *Tajrid*. Another part of it deals with scholastic theology and discusses such questions as Monotheism, Prophethood, Imamah, the Hereafter etc. The tone of that section which discusses Monotheism is rather philosophical for in this section Khwaja Nasiruddin has followed the style of the philosophers. A commentary on both the parts of this book has been written by Allama Hilli, whose name also must be familiar to you. He was not only one of the greatest Shi'ah jurists but also one of the greatest jurists of Islam. In logic, scholastic theology, philosophy, mathematics etc, he was a pupil of Khwaja Nasiruddin.

He learned jurisprudence from Muhaqqiq Hilli, the author of *Sharaya*, who was also one of the most distinguished Shi'ah jurists. Allama Hilli and Khwaja Nasiruddin are counted among the most talented scholars. Khwaja Nasiruddin is considered to be one of the world class mathematicians also. Recently newspapers have announced that some parts of the moon have been named after certain Iranian mathematicians, such as Umar Khayyam, Ibn Sina and Khwaja Nasiruddin, who centuries ago advanced some very sound theories about the moon. There is no doubt that Allama Hilli is a genius in his own field, which is jurisprudence. He is the author of many books, including one in two volumes named *Tazkiratul Fuqaha*. When one studies this book, one marvels at the mastery of its author.

Muhammad Qazwini says that when he was in Tehran he used to attend the lectures of Mirza Ashtiyani. Later when he went to Europe, and had a chance to meet several European scholars who were specialists in their subjects, he felt that Mirza Ashtiyani was a specialist in the real sense of the word.

The *Tazkiratul Fuqaha* is a book that deals not only with Shi'ah jurisprudence, but in regard to every rule of law it also mentions the opinion of the Sunni schools founded by the four Sunni Imams, namely Abu Hanifah, Shafi'i, Malik and Ahmad Ibn Hambal, as well as the verdicts of the most prominent jurists preceding the formation of these four Sunni schools. Dealing with every question, it says that Abu Hanifah says so, Shafi'i says so and we the Shi'ites hold such and such opinion. Sometimes he refutes an opinion. Sometimes, for example, he says that Shafi'i first said so and then changed his opinion and said so.

Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Qummi used to say that when it was decided to publish the *Tazkirah*, an expert of every Sunni school was called. These experts were astonished to find that Allama Hilli knew more than what they themselves knew about the teachings of their schools. Such an extraordinary man Allama Hilli was!

He compiled a commentary on the *Tajrid*. That part of it which deals with logic is known as *al Jawharun Nazid*. It is one of the best books on logic. The scholastic part of the book is named *Kashful Murad* and is now known by the name of *Sharhut Tajrid*. Both the parts of Allama Hilli's commentary on the *Tajrid* are quite brief in expression. That is why they have again been commented upon subsequently and explanatory notes written on them. Perhaps no book in the Muslim world ever attracted so much attention of the scholars as the *Tajrid*. This book has been refuted by some and supported by others.

No other book has been furnished with so many commentaries and annotations as this book. The reason is that when Khwaja Nasiruddin wants to describe a question from the Shi'ah point of view, he touches it only briefly. In most cases he hurriedly refers to it and then passes away. In the concluding part of the book he has described the question of Imamah in a manner that has been approved by all Shi'ah scholars, and hence from his description of the question it is easy to understand how the Shi'ah scholars think about this subject.

The book which I have at my disposal at present is Mulla Ali Qushchi's commentary on the *Tajrid*. Mulla

Ali Qushchi is an eminent Sunni scholar. Naturally he puts forward the Sunni point of view and in most cases refutes that of Khwaja Nasiruddin. Thus in this book the Sunni view has been reflected side by side with the view of Khwaja which of course is the Shi'ah view.

## **Definition Of Imamah**

The first thing to be mentioned about Imamah is its definition, about which there is no difference of opinion. It is said that Imamah is the general charge of the religious as well as the secular affairs.

Khwaja Nasiruddin uses a scholastic expression and says that the Imam is a Divine favour (*Lutf*). What he means is that like Prophethood the question of Imamah is also beyond human control. Hence an Imam cannot be selected by a human decision. Like a Prophet he is to be appointed by Divine ordinance. The only difference is that the Prophet has a direct contact with Allah, whereas an Imam is appointed by the Prophet on receiving Divine instructions.

## **Rational Argument Of The Shi'ah**

In this connection Khwaja Nasiruddin does not put forward more than one sentence. Anyhow the basis of the explanation given by the Shi'ah scholars is the same as mentioned by us earlier. They first advance a historical argument and say if Imam Ali's Imamah is proved, which of the other Imams' can be based on the authority of a declaration made by the preceding Imam. The Shi'ah scholars say that they know that Islam is the final religion and that it would not be followed by any other religion.

It is the most comprehensive religion and a complete code of human life. Then they put a question and ask whether the account of the Holy Prophet's life shows that he got enough opportunity to impart all the teachings of Islam to the people in general. When we study Islamic history we find that during the 23 years of his Prophethood he did not get such an opportunity. Although he did not miss any chance which he could avail of and taught many things to the people, yet in view of his special circumstances and his preoccupations in Makkah and Medina, it is certain that a period of 23 years was not enough for him to pronounce all the laws of Islam to all the people.

At the same time it was also not possible for him to give in complete information about such a perfect religion. Therefore there must be one or more persons among the companions of the Holy Prophet who might have obtained complete knowledge of Islam from him and be in a position to explain the teachings of Islam after his demise exactly in the same manner as he himself would do, with the only difference that he received Divine revelation direct, whereas they were to acquire this knowledge through him.

The Shi'ah scholars say that the Sunnis do not acknowledge the existence of any person to whom all questions regarding Islam could be referred, which means that they regarded Islam as imperfect. That is the reason why they had to resort to the theory of analogy, which they have put forward because they say that in the case of the questions which have not been provided for in the Sunnah, they have no

alternative but to compare one question with another and to depend on hypothetical similarities for the purpose of deducing rules of law. The Shi'ah naturally do not share such a view. Imam Ali in Nahjul Balagha has denounced such a view and so have all other Imams.

Imam Ali says: "*Has Allah revealed an incomplete religion?*"<sup>1</sup>. Does it need private judgement to complete? All the Imams have emphatically said that there is no question of Islam being imperfect and incomplete, and therefore no rule of law can be based on a personal opinion, a private judgement or conjecture.

There is a chapter in al-Kafi which is entitled: "There is nothing Permitted or Forbidden that is not provided in the Qur'an or the Sunnah". At least the general principles covering every rule of law, have been provided. All that is to be done is to apply these principles to the particular cases. That is what is meant by ijtihad from the Shi'ah point of view. In other words, there is an adequate number of general laws in Islam, and the mujtahid (jurist) has only to provide details in their light. In contrast the theory of analogy implies that the number of the general laws is inadequate and therefore rules of law must be deduced on a hypothetical basis.

The Shi'ah scholars say that both the Shi'ah and the Sunnis admit that during the 23 years of his Prophethood the Holy Prophet could not make known to the people all the rules of Islam even in a general manner. The Sunnis say that the Holy Prophet left the matter as it was and departed this life. But the Shi'ah hold that it was not so. In order to complete his mission he selected certain persons who were inviolable and made known all the truths of Islam to the first one of them, namely Imam Ali. All these persons were fully equipped and competent to answer any question put to them. Imam Ali often said that he would answer any question put to him regarding Islam.

## **Imam Means An Expert In Religious Matters**

Let us now explain this point in modern language. The Shi'ah scholars say that those who deny the existence of Imams with all their characteristics, in reality belittle Islam. An expert invariably accompanies a technical equipment when it is sent somewhere. When a country like America or the Soviet Union dispatches a technical equipment like a phantom or a combat aircraft to a country the people of which are not conversant with that equipment, it always sends some experts also along with it.

Of course in the case of such simple arms as the textiles experts are not required. Now what do you think about Islam which has come from Allah? Do you consider it to be a simple thing for which no experts are required or regard it as a complex equipment which when issued, is always accompanied by technical experts who train people at the receiving end till they become conversant with it.

An Imam means an expert in religious affairs – a real expert who does not make a mistake and does not fall into any error. The Holy Prophet brought Islam to the people. It was necessary that at least for some time Divine experts should be present among the people to acquaint them with it. The Holy Prophet

appointed a competent person to undertake this responsibility. The Shi'ah scholars call this appointment a Divine favour, for it was beneficial for humanity. As humanity must proceed towards Allah, His benevolence requires that He should show His favour to it. Just as Prophethood is a Divine favour, similarly Imamah also is a Divine favour. This may be called a rational proof of Imamah, a cardinal principle of the Shi'ah creed.

## **Infallibility**

Here the question of infallibility arises. The Shi'ah believe that an Imam is the custodian and protector of Islamic law. It is through him only that people can know Islam.<sup>2</sup> The Shi'ah believe that an Imam is as infallible as the Holy Prophet, whose infallibility is beyond all doubts. If we know for certain that the Holy Prophet has made a particular statement, we can never doubt its veracity. We can never say that the Holy Prophet has made a mistake.

It is unimaginable that one sent by Allah for the guidance of the people needing guidance would ever make a mistake or commit a sin. A Prophet cannot disobey Allah knowingly and intentionally. For example, if Allah wants a Prophet to convey a certain message to the people, the Prophet cannot change it on the plea that it does not suit his personal interest. To do so would be against the very nature of Prophethood. If it is admitted that Imamah is something supplementary to Prophethood for the purpose of expounding religion, then it becomes certain that the existence of an Imam is a must, and that an Imam is infallible for the same reason for which a Prophet is infallible.

If somebody says that the infallibility of an Imam is not so essential, because if an Imam makes a mistake, it is possible that some other person brings the mistakes to his notice, we would say that in that case that other person would again require somebody else to keep a watch on him, and so on. At the final end we would certainly need a protector of Islamic law who may be infallible. Further, should an Imam do something wrong, it would be the duty of others to guide him aright, while the people's duty is to follow him, not to guide him. These two things are not consistent with each other.

## **Divine Designation**

The question of infallibility leads us to the question of Divine designation. The Shi'ah scholars say that Imamah is a favour of Allah, and as such it must exist. As this favour entails infallibility, an Imam must necessarily be infallible and for this very reason should be Divinely designated, for it is beyond the power of the people to determine who is infallible. As the people cannot choose a Prophet, they cannot choose an Imam also.

As a Prophet is appointed by Allah, similarly an Imam is also appointed by Him. The only difference is that a Prophet is recognized by means of the signs which he shows and the miracles which he works, whereas an Imam is introduced by the Prophet. That is what we meant by designation. An Imam is to be designated by the Prophet and not appointed by the choice of the people. Thus the Shi'ah scholars have

advanced from the question of infallibility to that of designation. Now the fourth step is the Imamah of Ali.

Khwaja Nasiruddin says that infallibility and designation are the two characteristics which are applicable to Imam Ali only. There is no difference of opinion about the fact that the Holy Prophet did not designate any other person. It is not that we say that the Holy Prophet designated Imam Ali and others say that he designated someone else. In fact the question is whether he did or did not designate anybody. If he did, the designated person can be none but Imam Ali.

All that we say is that the Holy Prophet must have designated someone to be an Imam after him, and if so, he cannot have designated anyone else, for no counter claim exists. The Sunnis deny the very designation. Even the caliphs did not claim to have been designated by the Holy Prophet. Their followers also make no such claim. Therefore this is not the point at issue.

The same is true of infallibility. Neither the caliphs claimed to be infallible, nor do their followers say that they were infallible. In contrast, the caliphs expressly confessed that they made mistakes. As we have already pointed out, according to the Sunni point of view the question of Imamah is exclusively tantamount to that of the administration of government. As such according to them the question of infallibility does not arise.

The Sunnis believe that although the caliphs were not infallible and made many mistakes, they were irreproachable to the humanly possible extent and were quite fit to lead prayers. The Sunnis do not claim that the caliphs held any position higher than this. They report, as affirmed by Mulla Ali Qushchi, which Abu Bakr used to say that he had a Devil which seized him occasionally. He asked the people to guide him aright if they found him going astray. Umar on many occasions, some say on 70 occasions, admitted that he would have been ruined if there had not been Ali. It is not a disputable point between the Shi'ah and the Sunnis that he said so many a time. On numerous occasions it so happened that he issued a wrong order and Imam Ali pointed out his mistake which he admitted. As such neither the caliphs ever claimed that they were infallible, nor do others claim that they were so.

If the question of Imamah is considered from this high level, which is the level of Divine favour, infallibility and Divine ordination, nobody other than Imam Ali can claim to be on this level. This is the scholastic form of the question, and in this case we begin from the top. We have said that as Prophethood is indispensable and at the same time a Divine favour, so should be Imamah also. Now let us see whether in actual practice also it is so, and whether the Holy Prophet has or has not designated Imam Ali. For this purpose let us look into the texts.

In this connection there is one more point worth mentioning. The question is why we should after all adopt a scholastic method and should begin from the top. Why should we not begin from the bottom, and discuss the position as it actually exists? The scholastic theologians begin from the top and then gradually come down to the position as it exists on the ground. But in this case the question arises what we have to do with such points as to whether Imamah is a Divine favour, and if so, an Imam should

naturally be infallible and designated. These should actually amount to prescribing a duty for Allah.

Therefore we should better go after what actually exists. If it is proved that the Holy Prophet has made a designation, which is enough for us. It is not necessary to prove rationally that Imamah is a Divine favour and that an Imam must be infallible and designated. Let us see what arguments the Shi'ah have in this connection. It may be noted in this connection that the Sunnis either do not accept that such texts exist or interpret them differently. In many cases they do not deny the reports totally, but allege that they are isolated reports, not continuous or *mutawatir*.

## **Prophetic Texts Relating To Imamah Of Imam Ali**

Once the Holy Prophet addressing his companions said: "*Greet Ali and address him as "Commander of the Faithful"*". He said so on the occasion of Ghadir, but somehow or other this sentence is reported separately from the event of Ghadir. The Sunnis do not accept this report as continuous one but the Shi'ah scholars have proved that it is so. The *Tajrid* does not make any further comment on this tradition which it describes as reliable though disconnected in its chain of transmission. Mulla Ali Qushchi says that this tradition cannot be accepted as continuous, and that it must be an isolated one, for it has been quoted only by some, not all.

The books like the '*Abaqat*' and *al-Ghadir* have concentrated their efforts on proving that all the reports relating to Imam Ali's Imamah are continuous and *mutawatir*. In these two books, especially in *al-Ghadir* the transmitters of the tradition of Ghadir in every generation till the 14th century have been enumerated. It names more than 60 companions of the Holy Prophet who have reported this tradition. It is interesting to note that all these names have been collected from the Sunni books. Similarly this book mentions the transmitters of this tradition from among the successors of the companions. All these approximately belong to the first century. Then in the same way it names the transmitters of this tradition in every generation and every century.

A special feature of *al-Ghadir* is that it has cited literary sources also in support of this tradition. While '*Abaqat*' and other books have only mentioned the names of those persons who transmitted it in each age and century. The poets in every age reflect the main ideas current among the people during that age. Had it been true that the event of Ghadir was invented in the fourth century, it would not have been mentioned in the verses composed by the poets of the first, the second and the third centuries. In every century we find that the question of Ghadir is a part of the literature of that century.

Then how can we deny this tradition from historical point of view? We often go after men of letters to ascertain whether a subject existed over history. If it is found that many men of letters have referred to it in each century, it becomes certain that the idea has existed during their times. The author of the '*Abaqat*' has devoted a whole book to one single tradition and has critically examined all its transmitters. Seeing what a gorgeous bouquet he has arranged, one is filled with wonder.

There is another tradition which the Holy Prophet is reported to have pronounced addressing Imam Ali. He is reported to have said: "*You will be the Caliph after me.*"

Besides these two there are several other such traditions too.

*Sirah Ibn Hisham* is a book written in the second century. Ibn Hisham himself probably belonged to the third century, but this book was originally written by Ibn Ishaq, who lived in the second century. It was later summarized by Ibn Hisham in whose authorship it has come down to us. This book which is considered to be reliable by the Sunnis, recounts two events which have not been mentioned by the *Tajrid*. Anyhow, the events are relevant and as such we reproduce them here.

## **The Event Of The Day Of Warning**

One of these events relates to the Day of warning, a name taken from the Qur'anic verse revealed in the early days of Islam:

***"Warn your close relatives" (Surah ash-Shu'ara 26:214).***

Till then the Holy Prophet had not begun to propagate Islam openly. As we know, at that time Imam Ali was still a boy, and lived in the Holy Prophet's house. That is itself an event. The Holy Prophet asked Imam Ali to arrange some food and invite the descendants of Hashim and Abdul Muttalib to it. Imam Ali prepared a meal of meat and arranged some milk as a dessert. After the guests had taken food, the Holy Prophet said: "I am a Prophet of Allah, raised by Him as such. If you accept what I say, you will be happy in this world and the Hereafter." As soon as the Holy Prophet's uncle, Abu Lahab heard these words, he was enraged, and said: "Have you invited us to tell us all this nonsense?" Abu Lahab raised so much hue and cry that the meeting ended in a fiasco.

The Holy Prophet asked Imam Ali to arrange another meeting. Imam Ali himself says that the number of the persons who attended the second meeting was more or less forty. The Prophet said to the audience: "*Whosoever of you accepts my call first, he will be my legatee, vizir and successor.*" He made this announcement several times, but nobody responded. At last Imam Ali rose from his place and accepted the offer. The Holy Prophet said: "*You will be my legatee, vizir and caliph after me.*"

## **Meeting Of The Head Of A Tribe With The Holy Prophet**

This is another event found in the *Sirah Ibn Hisham*. It is still more significant. The Holy Prophet was still in Makkah. The Quraysh were not allowing him to propagate Islam. The situation was very tense. Anyhow, during the sacred months [3](#) the Quraysh stopped harassing the Holy Prophet or at least did not harass him to the extent of inflicting any bodily injury, although even during these months they did not allow him to pursue any activity connected with the propagation of Islam. Anyhow the Holy Prophet always took advantage of this temporary truce. He called upon various tribes who assembled at the

'Ukaz fair and at Arafat, (The pre-Islamic Arabs also performed Hajj, although they had their own style of it.) and invited them to Islam. While the Holy Prophet went round the tribes, Abu Lahab chased him, and contradicted and belied him. The head of a tribe was very shrewd.

He talked with the Holy Prophet for a little while and they said to his people: "Had this man been of my tribe, I would have devoured the Arabs with his help." What he meant was that the Holy Prophet was so multi-talented that with his help all the Arabs could be subdued. Then that man turned to the Holy Prophet and said: "I and my people are ready to have faith in you provided you give us your word to appoint me or one of my people to be your successor." The Holy Prophet said: "*It is not up to me to say who would succeed me. It is with Allah.*" This is an event mentioned in the books of the Sunnis.

## **The Tradition Of Ghadir And Its Continuity**

Another argument of the Shi'ah is the tradition of Ghadir. Khwaja Nasiruddin says that the Tradition of Ghadir is *mutawatir*. *Mutawatir* is a technical term. A tradition may either be *mutawatir* (continuous) or *khabar wahid* (isolated). An isolated tradition does not mean that it has been reported only by one person. It is a tradition which has not been reported in a convincing way. It is immaterial whether it has been reported by one person or by ten. For example, somebody says that he has heard such and such report from the radio.

You think that he is right, but you still want to see what others say. If the report is confirmed by someone else, you are a little more convinced. When you see that many others say the same thing, you become sure that there is no chance that all of them may be telling a lie. The number of the reporters of a continuous tradition must be so large that there should be no possibility of their conspiring. In the above example it is possible that ten persons conspire to say that they have heard the particular report from the radio. Even 200 persons may comlbne. But there are cases in which there is no such possibility. For example, you go to South Africa and find a person saying that the radio has broadcast such and such report.

Then you go to East Africa and again find some persons reporting the same thing. Then you go to West Africa and the same story is repeated. In this case you cannot say that all these persons have conspired to tell a lie. This is called *tawatur* or continuity. The Shi'ah claim that the tradition (hadith) of Ghadir has been reported by so many people that any conspiracy is out of question. For example in the case of the tradition of Ghadir we cannot say that 40 companions of the Holy Prophet had conspired to tell a lie, especially when we see that many of them were hostile to Imam Ali, or at least were not friendly with him.

Had these reporters been of the type of Salman, Abu Dharr and Miqdad, who dearly loved and followed Imam Ali, it would have been possible to suspect that because of their excessive attachment to Imam Ali they comlbned to invent a story. The people like Qushchi allege that this tradition is an isolated report, but the Shi'ah say emphatically that it is continuous. According to this tradition, the Holy Prophet

addressing the audience, said: "Do I not have more authority over you than you yourselves have?"<sup>4</sup> All said: "Yes, you have." Then he said: "**This Ali is the master of him, whose master I am**". The Holy Prophet wanted to affirm that Ali was as superior to others as he himself was.

There is another tradition, which is also continuous according to Khwaja Nasiruddin, but Mulla Ali Qushchi says that it is isolated, although even he does not deny its substance. Regarding this tradition also scholars like Mir Hamid Husayn, the author of the '*Abaqat*' and Allama Amini, the author of *al-Ghadir* have paid much attention. Mir Hamid Husayn has devoted one full book to it. This tradition is known as the tradition of *Manzilat*. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said to Imam Ali: "*In relation to me you occupy the same position as Harun occupied in relation to Musa with the exception that there will be no prophet after me.*"

The Holy Prophet said that when he was proceeding for the Tabuk operation, which was only a campaign, not a battle. It took place after the Battle of Mu'tah, which was the last battle fought by the Arabs against the Romans during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. This battle took place to the east of Medina. Istanbul (Constantinople) was the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire. Syria was also under the Romans. Brisk preparations were going on there to launch an attack against Medina. The Holy Prophet deemed it advisable to take troops up to the border of the Romans and he successfully accomplished that mission.<sup>5</sup>

The Holy Prophet, as the politicians put it, wanted to make a show of his power. The Muslims went up to the Roman border and then came back. In this expedition the Holy Prophet did not take Imam Ali with him. He left Ali as his successor in Medina. The Shi'ah scholars say that this action of the Holy Prophet shows that he knew that fighting was not going to take place. Naturally Imam Ali did not like the idea of being left behind. As he felt dejected, he said to the Holy Prophet: "Would you not take me with you? Do you leave me here with the women and the children?" The Holy Prophet said: "*Do you not like to occupy the same position in relation to me as Harun occupied in relation to Musa, except that there would be no prophet after me?*" The Holy Prophet meant to say that whatever relationship Harun bore to Musa, Imam Ali bore to him with the exception of Prophethood. Now let us refer to the Qur'an to find out what relationship existed between Harun and Musa. We find that the Qur'an reports that in the beginning of his mission Musa asked Allah:

**"My Lord! Relieve my mind and ease my task for me; and elaborate my tongue, so that they may understand my saying. Appoint for me a Vazir from my folk, Harun, my brother. Strengthen my back with him. And let him share my task, so that we glorify you much, and much remember you."** (Surah Ta Ha, 20:34).

The word *Vazir* is derived from the root, *Vizr* which means a burden or a responsibility. A Vazir is the person who relieves the burden of his master and shares his responsibility. Later this word, came into use in the sense of the minister of a king.

Hence, Prophet Musa asked Allah to appoint a person to help him and share his task. For this purpose he suggested the name of Harun. At another place in the Qur'an we see that Prophet Musa says to Harun:

***"Harun, take my place among my people." (Surah al-A'raf, 7: 142).***

Thus we find that according to the Qur'an Harun was Musa's Vazir, his chief supporter, his partner in his task and his successor among his people.

That was the relationship between Prophet Musa and Harun and the same should be the relationship between the Holy Prophet and Imam Ali. Had the Holy Prophet not said, *"Except that there would be no prophet after me"*, We could say that the Holy Prophet had some particular likeness in mind, but when he excluded Prophethood, it became clear that this relationship existed in all other fields (of course social, not physical). It appears as if the Holy Prophet wanted to say to Imam Ali: You occupy the same position in relation to me as Harun occupied in relation to Musa in all Divinely appointed fields.

The answer which the Sunnis give to this argument is that they could accept this tradition, if it had been continuous, but it is an isolated one. But as we said earlier, the scholars like Mir Hamid Husayn have proved in their books that this tradition is continuous.

## **Questions And Answers**

### **Question 1**

The impression which I have gathered from the foregoing discussion is that there exists to a certain extent a frontier between Imamah and the administration of government. You have (Ayatullah Mutahhari) said that Imamah involves certain duties and functions, and the administration of government is only one of them. I do not know what the other duties are which do not imply administration in any way.

What so far we know of Islam shows that there is no frontier between this world and the Hereafter or between this worldly and the next worldly activities. The deeds relating to the Hereafter have a bearing on this worldly life and the deeds relating to this world are meant to improve and perfect social life and to help establishing a just system of government. We see that the Qur'an puts forward as a model the life of those whose devotional acts were directed to improving this worldly life and establishing just administration. It attaches greatest importance to Jihad.

We find that all the efforts and the life style of the Imams were directed to regaining their right of rulership and administering the government. In this respect there was no difference between those who made open struggle and those who organized their campaign secretly in their prison or their hiding places. I am not aware of any duties other than the administration of government which can justify the institution of Imamah, for it is the administration of government alone which can justify all the activities relating to Imamah.

## **Answer 1**

The question of frontier has been raised by you only. I never used this word and I do not think that it is proper to use it. As I have said the Shi'ah believe that the level of Imamah is higher than that of the government, which is only one of its functions., Another function which is of a higher level is the duty of an Imam to expound and explain Islam. Furthermore, an Imam is the infallible authority on religious laws.

We say that one of the functions of the Holy Prophet was the administration of government. But the right to administer government was not given to him by the people. It was a right given to him by Allah, by virtue of his being superior to all other men. In other words the Holy Prophet ruled because he was the expounder of the Divine laws and had a spiritual contact with the hidden world. I never wanted to say that there was a frontier between this world and the Hereafter, nor did I mean to set apart the functions of an Imam and a ruler. I did not say that an Imam looks after those affairs of the people which relate to the Hereafter and a ruler looks after those affairs of the people which relate to this world. If I had said so, your criticism would have been justified. The Shi'ah have a theory. If it is proved, the question of rulership, is automatically settled.

We believe that Imamah is next to Prophethood. As in the presence of a Prophet, the question of the rulership of anybody else does not arise, similarly in the presence of an Imam also this question does not arise. The question of the form of government in the modern sense arises only when we suppose that no Imam exists or when the Imam is in occultation as the position is during our times. Otherwise in the presence of an Imam of that level in which the Shi'ah believe, the position is quite clear.

## **Question 2**

Which of the two reports according to Sunnis is isolated, the report relating to the Ghadir al-Khumm or the report which you have quoted and according to which the Holy Prophet has said: "Greet Ali; he is your Amir"?

## **Answer 2**

Perhaps even the Sunnis cannot deny the continuity of that part of the tradition of Ghadir which says: "*Ali is the master of him whose master I am*", although Mulla Ali Qushchi says that even this part is an isolated report.

Anyhow it has been reported by so many traditionalists that it is not possible to deny it.<sup>6</sup> A very large number of persons have even reported the first part of this tradition, which says: "*Do I not have more authority over you than you yourselves have.*" The Shi'ah believe this part of the tradition also to be continuous. But as far as the other tradition: "*Greet Ali and address him as the Commander of the Faithful*", is concerned, the Sunnis do not at all admit that it is a continuous report. Perhaps we also cannot prove that it is continuous. Anyhow that makes no difference. From our point of view the

continuity of the following tradition, which is of basic importance, is obvious: The Holy Prophet said: '*Do I not have more authority over you than you yourselves have?*' The people said: "Yes, you have." Then the Holy Prophet said: "*This Ali is the master of him, whose master I am. My God! be friendly to him who is friendly to Ali and be hostile to him who is hostile to Ali.*"

Furthermore, the Sunni scholars are not unanimous as to whether this tradition is continuous or isolated. Some say it is isolated and others admit that it is continuous, but say that it does not mean what the Shi'ah claim. The Holy Prophet has only said: "Whoever is my friend, let him be Ali's friend also." We say that it does not make sense that the Holy Prophet assembled people at Ghadir al-Khumm only to ask them to make friends with Imam Ali, especially in view of the fact that he also added: "Do I not have more authority over you than you yourselves have." It also may be noted that the word *Mawla* is not used in the sense of friend.

### **Question 3**

Was the verse: "***This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour to you, and have chosen Islam for you as religion***"(5:3) revealed after the event of Ghadir al-Khumm?

### **Answer 3**

No, it was revealed at Ghadir al-Khumm.

1. Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 18.
2. The Shi'ah attach great importance to the religious aspect of Imamah. As we said earlier in our times Imamah who mostly considered to be tantamount to the administration of government, but that was a wrong notion. Imamah is mostly a religious question and the administration of government is only a function which it involves. In a sense Imamah and administration of government are two terms which in certain respects overlap each other. But basically Imamah is one question and administration of government, although a part of the functions which an Imam should discharge, a different question.

It is funny that during the period of occultation we talk about the administration of government, but keep quiet about the real significance of Imamah, which must not be considered to be equivalent to the administration of government. According to the terminology of the Shi'ah scholars an Imam is in charge of religious as well as secular affairs. Being in charge of religious affairs, he automatically holds the charge of worldly affairs also, just like the Holy Prophet, who being the religious head, was the head of the government too. If we suppose hypothetically that no Imam existed at any time or if we know that the Imam is in occultation, in both these cases no religious head would be present. Therefore in these cases the question would of course arise how should be the head of the government.

3. The months of Zil Qa'dah, Zil Hijjah, Muharram and Rajab are the sacred months, during which fighting was kept suspended and vengeance was not sought. Routes were safe during these months and coming and going of persons and goods normal. An annual fair was also held at a Place near Makkah named 'Ukaz.
4. The Holy Prophet referred to the following verse, "The Prophet has more authority over the believers than they themselves have." (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:6). Being a Prophet of Allah, the Holy Prophet had authority over the life, property and everything of the people. He had more authority over the people than the people themselves had. Of course he never exercised this authority for his own selfish ends. Allah appointed him the representative of the whole Muslim society and as such he had authority over the life and property of the Muslims on behalf of Muslim society as a whole.

5. Last year we had a chance to go to Khayber. Till then we had no idea how far Khayber and Tabuk were from Medina by the direct route via Shusa. The whole distance was found to be exactly 600 kilometers. By the ancient routes the distance might have been greater. The distance between Medina and Khayber is 360 kilometers. We were really astonished by the courage and resolution of the Muslims who traversed this long distance with the poor means available to them at that time.
6. The reason why it has been reported by a very large number of transmitters is that at that time the sayings of the Holy Prophet were only remembered and not written. Naturally the traditions containing Imam Ali's name could be remembered by more people than any other traditions.

## Imamah And The Verse Regarding Despair Of Unbelievers

We have already discussed that the doctrine of Shi'ah regarding the question of Imamah is basically different from that of the Sunnis. Hence it is not correct to say that both the Shi'ah and the Sunnis believe in Imamah alike, and differ in regard to its conditions only. In fact the Imamah in which we believe is absolutely different from the Imamah in which the Sunnis believe.

It is equally incorrect to put the question whether the Imam is to be designated by the Holy Prophet or elected by the people, for the Imam of the Shi'ah concept appointed by a Prophetic ordinance, is quite different from the Imam of the Sunni concept, who is appointed by consultation and election.

We have already discussed the various stages and the conditions of Imamah, and pointed out that the Shi'ah begin the consideration of this question from the top and then come down to the facts as they exist to make sure that their theory is not merely hypothetical. They ascertain if the Qur'an has said something in this respect and whether the Holy Prophet has actually designated someone to this high office.

First we intended to discuss the relevant points in the order in which they have been mentioned by Khwaja Nasiruddin, but as the Eid al-Ghadir (festival of Ghadir) is going to be celebrated shortly, we deem it better to explain first the verses connected with that occasion. The Holy Qur'an says:

***"Today, the unbelievers have lost hope of ever harming your religion; so fear them not and have fear of Me! This day I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favour to you, and have chosen Islam as your religion." (Surah al-Ma'ida 5:3).***

The two parts of this verse begin with "this day". Both these parts are naturally interlinked with each other. In this verse this day may mean 'to-day' or may refer to some other day mentioned earlier. When we say that such and such person has arrived this day, which means that he has arrived today. Allah says that this day (we will explain afterwards which day) those who disbelieve are in despair of harming your religion. Having lost all hope of their success, they have stopped their hostile activities against

Islam. So do not fear them.

The next sentence is very astonishing. Instead, fear Me. It may be noted that the question involved is that of religion. Does Allah mean to say that 'the disbelievers can no longer do any harm to your religion. If any harm is to be done to it, it will be done by Me? We will explain later, what the verse actually means. Continuing Allah says: This day have I perfected your religion and completed my favour to you. In this part of the verse two words, perfected and completed have been used. These two words approximately mean the same thing, but with some difference.

## **Difference Between Perfection And Completion**

A thing, the various parts of which should appear successively is called incomplete so long as its final part does not appear. When its last part appears, we say that it has been completed. A building is still incomplete even when its pillars have gone up and it has been roofed. It is complete only when all parts of it get built up and it is finally fit for occupation. That is not the case with perfection. A thing may be called imperfect even when all its parts are complete, but not fully developed. A foetus is completed in the womb of its mother. In other words all its parts get built up. But even when it is delivered, it is not a perfect man. That means that it is not as mature as it should be. To become fully developed and mature is different from being complete. In fact the difference between completion and perfection is the same as between quantity and quality.

The Qur'an says: "***This day I have completed for you your religion***", and then adds: "***perfected My favour to you and chose for you Islam as a religion.***" In other words, Islam is now what Allah wanted it to be. Evidently the intention is not that Islam is still what it was, yet Allah has changed His view about it. What is meant is that now Islam, the chosen religion of Allah, has reached the stage of completion and perfection.

That is what the verse means. Now the question is to which day the phrase 'this day' refers. Which is the day on which according to the Qur'an, the religion of the Muslims was perfected and favour of Allah completed? That day on which such an extraordinary event took place must be a very important day. To this point both the Shi'ah and the Sunnis agree.

It is astonishing that the preceding and the following verses give no indication as to which day is that day. The context provides no verbal indication. In the preceding verses no important event has been mentioned, to which 'this day' may be referring. Very simple rules of law regarding the meat of certain animals, carrion, blood and pork have been mentioned in the verses immediately preceding this verse.

Then all of a sudden the Qur'an says: This day the disbelievers have lost hope of ever harming your religion; so fear them not, fear Me. This day I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favour to you, and have chosen Islam for you as a religion. Then the Qur'an again turns to previous theme and says: But he who is forced to eat the forbidden meat by hunger, not by will to sin, for him

Allah is forgiving, Merciful. These verses have been so placed that if the intervening verse is taken out, the other verses run smoothly and the subject matter is not disturbed. The subject of meat has been repeated at two or three other places in the Qur'an, but there this intervening verse is not found.

## **Which Day Is Meant By This Day?**

Both the Shi'ah and the Sunni commentators of the Qur'an have tried to ascertain what 'this day' signifies. There are two ways of doing this.

One way is to find out its significance from the context and the other is to refer to history and tradition in order to find out on what occasion this verse was revealed. Those who have chosen the first course are indifferent to all that which history and the Sunnah say about the background of this verse. They look only to the substance of verse, and claim that it relates to the day on which the Holy Prophet was raised. According to them 'this day' means that day, not today.

It may also be mentioned that this verse belongs to the Surah al-Maidah, which is the fifth chapter of the Qur'an beginning with the following verse:

***"Believers stand by your contracts (obligations)". (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5: 1).***

All commentators of the Qur'an agree that this chapter is the last one revealed at Medina. It was revealed even later than the Surah an Nasr. It is true that one or two verses placed in other surahs were revealed subsequently, but not a complete surah. Thus the Surah al-Ma'idah is the last Surah revealed to the Holy Prophet.

## **Various Views Regarding What Is Meant By 'This Day'**

### **A) The Day The Holy Prophet Was Raised**

We have said that according to some people this day means that day, not this day. The question is what that indicates? They say that as this day has been described as the day on which Allah chose Islam as His religion for people. Naturally this day should be the day on which Islam commenced. But this argument is based on the words: I chose Islam for you as a religion. It could be valid had these words not been preceded by the sentence which says: This day I have completed for you your religion and perfected My favour to you. The day Islam was incepted is the day of the beginning of Allah's favour, not the day of its perfection. Hence 'this day' cannot be the day on which the Holy Prophet was raised to Prophethood.

### **B) The Day Of The Conquest Of Makkah**

Another possibility is that 'this day' means the day of the conquest of Makkah. This is also a mere possibility without any evidence in support of it. It is argued that another day of great importance in the

history of Islam is the day when Makkah was conquered, as on that day the following verses were revealed:

***"Surely Allah has given you a signal victory, so that Allah may forgive you of your sin, which which is past and that which is to come." (Surah al-Fath, 48: 1-2).***

There is no doubt that 'that day' was of great importance. In the Arabian Peninsula Makkah spiritually had a unique position. Since the attack on the Ka'bah by the People of the Elephant and their defeat in an astonishing manner, all Arabs held the Ka'bah in great reverence and regard it as the most sacred place of worship. Following this event the Quraysh felt proud of themselves. They said that the Ka'bah was so sacred that a formidable army attacking it was afflicted by a celestial catastrophe and annihilated to the last man. The Quraysh believed that the event showed their importance. It had a psychological impact on other Arabs also, who began to respect and obey the Quraysh.

Since that time the Arabs had begun to believe that no body could overpower them and seize the Ka'bah. But against all their calculations and expectations the Holy Prophet conquered Makkah easily without any bloodshed. During that operation nobody received the slightest injury. Perhaps the Holy Prophet had this point in view besides the sanctity of Makkah when he took special care of ensuring that Makkah was occupied without any bloodshed. If fighting had taken place somewhere else, and a hundred Muslims had been killed, nobody would have attributed the loss to any special cause.

But had the Muslims suffered any loss on the occasion of Conquest of Makkah, the pagans would have said: "Look, the companions of Muhammad have had the same fate as the People of the Elephant." So the Holy Prophet arranged the things in such a way that there were no casualties on either side. Only Khalid Ibn Walid killed out of malice two or three persons in the outskirts of Makkah, where a few persons were showing resistance. When the Holy Prophet heard the news, he denounced Khalid's action and said: *"Allah, I do not hold myself answerable for what he has done. I am not happy with his action."*

This was the reason why from psychological point of view the Conquest of Makkah produced an extraordinary impact on the people of Arabia. They were tremendously impressed by the fact that the Holy Prophet was able to occupy Makkah and that too without suffering any loss. Consequently other people of the Arabian Peninsula also surrendered themselves. They began to come to Medina in large number and embraced Islam. The Holy Qur'an says:

***"Those who spent and fought before the victory are not upon a, level with the rest of you. Such are greater in rank than those who spent and fought afterwards." (Surah al-Hadid, 57: 10).***

As before the Conquest of Makkah the Muslims were still a small community, they performed all good deeds because of their strong faith. But after the conquest the situation underwent a change. People were pouring in and embracing Islam. Anyhow, their Islam did not have the same value as the Islam of those who embraced it before the conquest. Therefore there is no doubt that the Conquest of Makkah was a great victory of Islam. We also do not dispute this fact.

As we have said, some people hold that it is the day of the conquest to which Islam has attached so much importance and said: *"This day those who disbelieve are in despair of ever harming your religion; so fear them not and have fear of Me! This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour to you, and have chosen Islam for you as a religion."*

But as we have pointed out there is nothing in the text or in history to prove that this verse refers to the Conquest of Makkah. Further, a part of this verse does not support the contention of these people. The words, 'I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favour to you, show that by then everything about religion had been revealed and nothing was left unsaid, but we know for certain many religious instructions were revealed subsequent to the Conquest of Makkah.

This position does not tally with the words, I have completed My favour to you. When somebody says that he has completed a building, he does not refer to a building that is still incomplete. Many verses of the Qur'an, including those of the Surah al-Ma'idah, which is a lengthy surah, and contains a good number of rules of law, were revealed after the Conquest of Makkah. How can this verse which is a part of the Surah al-Maidah relate to the Conquest of Makkah which took place in the eighth year of the Hijra while this surah was revealed towards the end of the tenth year. Even if we say that the verse under review alone was revealed on the occasion of the Conquest of Makkah, the perfection of Divine favour still does not tally with this event.

There is another difficulty in interpreting 'this day' by the day of the Conquest of Makkah. The verse says: This day the unbelievers lost hope of harming your religion. Now the question is whether it is a fact that the disbelievers lost every hope of resisting Islam on the day of the Conquest of Makkah. It is true that the Conquest of Makkah was a victory of far reaching effect, but is it also a fact that the disbelievers on that day lost every hope that Islam would ever be vanquished? That does not seem to be the case.

### **C) Recitation Of Surah Al-Baraat By Imam Ali**

There is another day which is regarded very important, and so it was. It is said that 'this day' possibly means the day on which the Surah al-Bara'at was recited by Imam Ali at Mina in 9 A.H. The conquest of Makkah was a military victory. It established Islam as a military force and even as a moral power. But the Holy Prophet still lived under the terms of the Peace Treaty which he had concluded with the infidels. Under this treaty the disbelievers had the right of entering Makkah, circumambulating Ka'bah and even of participating in the Hajj ceremonies. The Muslims performed Hajj according to Islamic law and the disbelievers performed it according to their own rites. In 9 A.H. Surah Bara'at was revealed. At that time it was decided that Imam Ali should go to Mina, and recite this Surah there, publicly proclaiming that thenceforth the pagans had no right to take part in the Hajj ceremonies, which were an exclusive privilege of the Muslims.

Generally it is said that the Holy Prophet first dispatched Abu Bakr at the head of the Hajj caravan. He was still on his way when the verse banning pilgrimage to Makkah by the pagans was revealed. There is

a difference of opinion among the commentators of the Qur'an as to whether Abu Bakr took Surah Baraat with him or he went only as the Amir of Hajj. In any case it is unanimously held by the Shi'ah and the Sunnis and is considered to be a point of excellence going in favour of Imam Ali, which the Holy Prophet on his own personal camel sent him to Mina as his special envoy.

The Holy Prophet said to him: "*You must go because I have been Divinely instructed that this surah is to be recited by none except you or someone related to you*". Imam Ali proceeded and met Abu Bakr while he was still on his way. The story goes that Abu Bakr was in a tent when the Holy Prophet's special camel uttered a loud cry. Abu Bakr, who was familiar with this cry, came out to find that Imam Ali had come. He was set aback, and thought that there must be something very important. He said to Imam Ali: "Is there any special news?" Imam Ali said: "I have been detailed to recite Surah Bara'at to the people." Abu Bakr said: "Has anything been revealed against me?" "No", said Imam Ali. Here there is again some difference of opinion. The Sunnis say that Imam Ali proceeded on his way and recited the surah according to his plan.

In the mean-time Abu Bakr continued his journey, though he had lost one of his assignments. But the Shi'ah believe, and many of the Sunnis also as mentioned in al-Mizan the commentary on the Qur'an that Abu Bakr returned from there, called on the Holy Prophet and said: "Messenger of Allah, has anything been revealed in this surah against me?" The Holy Prophet said: "No".

The day on which Surah Bara'at was proclaimed, was an extraordinary day for the Muslims, because on that day the infidels were debarred from taking part in Hajj ceremonies and entering the holy precincts. It was made clear to them that they could no longer be allowed to lead a polytheistic life. Islam does not tolerate polytheism.

It accepts co-existence with Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism, but not with paganism. Some people say that perhaps 'this day' means the day on which surah Bara'at was revealed. In reply to them it may be said that this presumption is not in consonance with the words of the Qur'an which says: I have completed My favour to you, for many religious instructions were received subsequently. This day must be one of the last days of the Holy Prophet's lifetime after which no fresh religious instructions should have been received.<sup>1</sup>

These explanations of 'this day' have no textual indication or historical evidence to support them.

### **Shi'i Explanation**

In this connection there is another explanation about which the Shi'ah claim that it is supported by the contents of the verses in question as well as history. Therefore let us consider this explanation in two parts. First let us see what history says and then what the Qur'anic verses say.

(i) If we consider this question from historical point of view, we can find a great deal of evidence in favour of our explanation. Most of the books written on this subject emphasize that history and traditions both

agree that the following Qur'anic verse was revealed at Ghadir al-Khumm: This day the unbelievers have lost hope of ever harming your religion; so fear them not and have fear of Me! This day I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favour to you; and have chosen for you Islam as a religion.

The research work, al-Ghadir has proved this point. Apart from the books of traditions, the books of history also tell us the same story. The *History of Ya'qubi* is one of the oldest and the most reliable books on Islamic history, and is regarded as authentic both by the Shi'ah and the Sunnis. It consists of two volumes both of which have been translated into Persian by the late Dr. Ayati. The book is superb and was written in the early third century, apparently during the period between the end of Mamun's reign and the early period of that of Mutawakkil. This book which is a book of history, not of tradition, is one of those books which have mentioned the event of Ghadir al-Khumm. Many other books including those written by the Sunnis also have mentioned this incident.

As the tradition says, when the Holy Prophet returning from his farewell pilgrimage [2](#) reached a place situated near Juhfah [3](#) and known as Ghadir al-Khumm he asked the caravan to halt and announced that he wanted to talk to the people on a subject. Then he ordered that a pulpit be arranged for him.

Accordingly a raised platform of pack saddles etc. was prepared. The Holy Prophet mounted it and talked in detail. He said: "Do I not have more authority over you than yourselves?" All those present said: "Yes, you have." Then the Holy Prophet said: "This Ali is the master of him whose master I am." This was the occasion when this Qur'anic verse was revealed: This day the unbelievers lost all hope of ever harming your religion; so fear them not and have fear of Me! This day I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favour to you.

If we want to discuss this question from historical point of view, we should study those books which have mentioned this event, especially those written by the Sunnis. Quotations from these books can be found in the books like al-Ghadir, which was published in Mashhad a few years back and is an excellent worth-reading summary of this question.

The argument of the Shi'ah is based on the historical background of this verse. They say that they find that the phrase, 'this day' does not mean today. Then what day does it mean? When a reference is made to the occasion for the revelation of this verse, it is found that not one or two but tens of continuous reports say that this verse was revealed at Ghadir al-Khumm on the day the Holy Prophet appointed Imam Ali as his successor.

#### **D) Internal Evidence Existing In The Verse**

In the verse itself there are internal indications which corroborate what is confirmed by history. The verse in question says: This day unbelievers lost all hope of ever harming your religion. Let us compare this verse to a number of other verses which warned the Muslims and said that the believers including the

People of the Book and others were always intriguing against them and loved to turn them away from their religion:

***"Many of the people of the Book long to make you disbelievers after your belief, through envy on their own account." (Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 109).***

Thus we see that while several other verses of the Qur'an say that the disbelievers long to destroy the religion of the Muslims, the verse under discussion says that now they have lost all hope of harming it and their hostile activities against the Muslims have come to an end. So fear them not and have fear of Me. Allah says: Have fear of Me. What does that mean? Is Allah an enemy of His own religion? No. This verse stipulates the same basic principle regarding Allah's favour that has been mentioned in so many other verses. One such verse says:

***"Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in their hearts." (Surah ar-Ra'd, 13: 11).***

Giving the reason for this another verse says:

***"That is because Allah never withdrawn the grace He has bestowed on any people until they first change that which is in their hearts." (Surah al-Anfal, 8:53).***

Allah says that He does not withdraw any favour bestowed by Him on a people unless they themselves by their own doings want it to be withdrawn. This is one of the basic principles mentioned in the Qur'an.

## **Specific (Muhkamat) And Ambiguous (Mutashabihat) Verse**

In connection with this verse it appears to be necessary to mention a point which may be found useful on many occasions. As a tradition says, some verses of the Qur'an explain some other verses. The Qur'an is a Book which is manifest and manifesting. It itself says that its verses are of two types: specific and ambiguous. It calls the specific verses the mother verses, which is of course a queer expression:

***"Allah is He who revealed the Book to you, some of its verses are specific and they are the mother of the Book, and others ambiguous." (Surah Ale Imran, 3:7).***

The ambiguous verses are those which can be interpreted in different ways, while a specific verse can be interpreted only in one way. The Qur'an calls the specific verses mother verses because with their help the ambiguous verses can be interpreted. In case we come across a verse of the Qur'an which can be interpreted in several ways, we have no right to fix its meaning. We should refer to other verses to find out how it can best be expounded. An ambiguous (*Mutashabih*) verse does not mean a vague or an unintelligible verse. It only means a verse that can be interpreted in more than one ways resembling each other.

For example there are several verses in the Qur'an relating to Absolute Divine Will which state that everything depends on the Will and Pleasure of Allah. They make no exception. One of such verses is the following verse which is ambiguous for this very reason:

***"(Muhammad) Say: O Lord! Owner of sovereignty! You bestow sovereignty on whomsoever you Will and withdraw sovereignty from whomsoever You Will. You exalt whomsoever You Will and You abase whomsoever You Will. In Your Hand is all that is good. No doubt You are able to do everything." (Surah Ale Imran, 3:26).***

This verse is ambiguous or *mutashabih* because it can be interpreted in more than one ways. It says only that everything depends on the Will of Allah. This is possible in two way: One way is to say that Allah's Will is absolutely unconditional. Some people have interpreted this verse in that way and have inferred from it the wrong conclusion that it is possible that in the presence of all the conditions conducive to honour, disgrace appears and similarly it is possible that all the conditions conducive to humiliation are followed by honour and power.

According to them, success in this world and the Hereafter has no pre-requisite conditions, for everything depends on the Will of Allah. As a result it is possible that a people or an individual attains complete success in his worldly affairs without any pre-requisite conditions or fails utterly without any tangible reason. Similarly a people may be taken to the peak of Paradise or to the lowest level of Hell for absolutely no reason. Unfortunately some Muslims called Asharites have drawn this conclusion from this verse.

They say that it would not be something impossible if the Holy Prophet goes to Hell or Abu Jahl goes to Heaven. But this is a wrong interpretation of the verse, which only says that everything depends on the Will of Allah, but is silent as to how this Will on which success and failure, honour and disgrace depend, actually operates. That is why it can be interpreted in several ways.

But when we refer to other verses of the Qur'an, they serve as its mother verses and explain what this verse actually signifies. For example one verse expressly says:

***"That is because Allah never changes the grace He has bestowed on any people until they first change that which is in their hearts." (Surah al-Anfal, 8:53).***

Another verse says:

***"Surely Allah changes not the condition of a people until they change that which is in their hearts." (Surah al-Ra'ad, 13:11).***

Each of these two verses says something which the other verse does not say. The second verse says that Allah does not change the condition of a people whether it is good or bad, unless they themselves take action to change it.

Otherwise Allah neither withdraws His favour nor disfavour. Only people themselves change their condition. The first verse is not concerned with the unhappy condition. It talks only of Allah's grace. But it mentions an additional point. It says: That is because Allah never changes... Allah is not such as to withdraw His grace from any people for no reason, because that would be against His wisdom, His perfection and His Divinity.

These are the mother verses in relation to the verse under discussion. The verses relating to Allah's Will say only that everything depends on His Will. Other verses explain how this Will operates and what law it has. This point has been expressed in the Qur'an at several places in the form of a firm principle. According to it those who are grateful to Allah for His bounties, which is those who put them to a proper use, will continue to enjoy them, but those who are ungrateful and abuse His bounties, will be deprived of them.

So the verse, This day the unbelievers have lost all hope of ever harming your religion; so fear them not, and have fear of Me, means that the unbelievers do no longer pose any threat to the Muslim world. 'Have fear of Me.' means: be afraid of yourselves, for if there is any danger now, which lies in your being ungrateful to Allah and not taking full advantage of His bounties. Should the Muslim not act properly, the law is bound to come into force against them. Surely Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change that which is in their hearts. Henceforward no danger from outside threatens Muslim society, but danger from inside does threaten it.

## **Questions And Answers**

### **Question 1**

We absolutely agree with you that Imamah is a supreme leadership that covers this worldly as well as the next worldly affairs. The arguments advanced by you show that it was the exclusive right of Imam Ali to assume this leadership. Then why did he decline to do so when people offered to take their allegiance to him after the assassination of Uthman?

### **Answer 1**

This question has been discussed in the book, *Khilafah and Wilayat* which has been published lately. The answer to your question is clear from what Imam Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, himself said. When people came to him to pledge their allegiance to him, he said: "*Leave me alone and look for somebody else, for we are looking forward to a many-sided situation.*" It is a wonderful expression! What he meant was that the situation was complicated, and it was necessary to study it from various angles. He continued to say: "*The atmosphere is overcast and the route has changed beyond recognition.*" In the end he said: "*If I rule over you, I would follow the way I know and would not act as you want.*"

What Imam Ali said shows that he fully realized that since the time of the Holy Prophet the situation had

deteriorated a great deal and undergone a complete change. Imam Ali made his position quite clear. He wanted the people to give him an undertaking that they would follow him because it was that what the pledging of their allegiance meant. He did not say that his Khilafah would be void if they would not pledge their allegiance to him. He wanted them to make a sincere promise that they would give him an unflinching support and follow his dictates.

All Shi'ah and Sunni historians agree that Umar appointed a six-member council for the selection of his successor. Imam Ali himself was one of its members. Three members of this council withdrew in favour of three others. Zubayr withdrew in favour of Imam Ali; Talhah in favour of Uthman and Sa'd ibn Waqqas in favour of Abdur Rahman ibn 'Awf. Out of the three remaining persons Abdur Rahman said that he was not a candidate. Now two persons remained. The choice was with Abdur Rahman. Whomsoever he selected, he would become the Caliph. First he came to Imam Ali and said: "I am ready to pledge my allegiance to you provided you give me a word that you would act according to Allah's Book, His Prophet's Sunnah and the policy pursued by Abu Bakr and Umar."

Imam Ali said: *"I am willing to accept the condition that I would follow Allah's Book and His Prophet's Sunnah (path), but leave aside the policy of Abu Bakr and Umar."* Then Abdur Rahman went to Uthman and said the same thing to him. Uthman willingly agreed to act according to Allah's Book, His Prophet's Sunnah and the policy followed by Abu Bakr and Umar. Although Uthman readily promised to follow the policy of Abu Bakr and Umar, but as Muhammad Taqi Shariati has pointed out, he actually did not act accordingly. If we make a comparison, we will find that Imam Ali behaved exactly like the Holy Prophet.

His conduct was closer to that of the *Shaykhayn* (Abu Bakr and Umar) also, as far as they followed the Holy Prophet's style. Imam Ali did not accept the condition that he would act as the *Shaykhayn* acted, because to do so would have meant the endorsement of their deviations also, and as such he could not oppose those deviations any more. For example, disparity and discrimination between the *Muhajirs* (immigrants) and the *Ansar* (helpers) was introduced during Umar's time. Imam Ali was severely against this policy. Had he said that he would follow the policy pursued by Abu Bakr and Umar, he would have been compelled to affirm the actions taken during Umar's time. Imam Ali did not want to tell a lie nor could he go back on his word. That was the reason why he said that he did not want to become the Caliph.

We know that Abu Bakr and Umar had some deviations. Still after Umar's death Imam Ali was not willing to make a promise that he would act as Abu Bakr and Umar did. As such it was but natural that after Uthman's death when the condition had immensely deteriorated, and in his own words the future was many-sided, Imam Ali told those who wanted him to act as they desired, which if he took over the government, he would do what he himself deemed correct not what they wanted.

These words of Imam Ali do not mean that he rejected the offer of government. He only explained his position.

## **Question 2**

We find that the Qur'an has laid great stress on the question of unity. How did it happen that in spite of its importance the question of Imam Ali's Imamah was not expressly mentioned in the Qur'an, nor did the Holy Prophet refer to this subject on as many occasions as he should normally have?

## **Answer 2**

Here two points have been raised. The first point is: Why has this question not been expressly mentioned in the Qur'an? The other point is whether the Holy Prophet has or has not referred to this subject on several occasions and whether the Holy Qur'an has or has not mentioned this subject at several places. As far as the second point is concerned. We say that it is a historical question. Even many of the Sunnis admit that the Holy Prophet referred to it on several occasions, not only at Ghadir al-Khumm, but other places also. The details are in the books on the question of Imamah.

On the occasion of Tabuk addressing Imam Ali, he said: *"You are to me what Harun was to Musa, although there will be no prophet after me."* On the occasion of the Battle of Khayber he affirmed Imam Ali's position by saying: *"I will give the flag tomorrow to a man who loves Allah and His Prophet and whom Allah and His Prophet love."* Even during the early period of Islam addressing the Quraysh he said: *"Whosoever of you pledges his allegiance to me first, he will be my legatee and Vazir* (according to a report he said: *will be my legatee, Vazir and caliph*). Such a person was Imam Ali only.

The same case is with the Qur'an. This question has been mentioned not only at one or two but at several places. The only question is why the Qur'an has not mentioned Imam Ali by name. Incidentally this question has been dealt with in the book, *Khilafah and Wilayat* also. As we believe that there has been no alteration in the Qur'an and nothing has been added to it or subtracted from it, we are sure that Imam Ali's name has not been mentioned anywhere in it.

Two reasons of it have been given. One of them, which has been fully explained in Muhammad Taqi Shariati's book is that the Qur'an has its own style. It always deals with such subjects in the form of a principle, and not as an individual case. This is in itself a merit of the Qur'an. When the verse, Today I have completed your religion for you, was revealed, the unbelievers were disappointed because they were always saying that so long as that man (Prophet) was alive, nothing could be done, but as soon as he died everything would be finished. But their last hope was foiled when they saw that the Holy Prophet had taken a step to ensure the continued existence of his community and had appointed a successor of him.

Another point which the Sunni writers also have mentioned is that during the last days of his life the Holy Prophet was worried about the future of his followers and had that fear which has been expressed in the Qur'an by the words, 'And have fear of Me'. According to a report which the Sunnis have also related, Abu Muzayhabah, a slave of 'Ayisha, says: "During the last days of the Holy Prophet's life once I saw

him coming out of his room and going towards the Baqi' graveyard at midnight. I said to myself that I would not leave him alone. So I followed him. From a long distance I saw him praying for the forgiveness of Allah for those who were buried in the Baqi'. I heard him saying what meant: "You are fortunate to have gone away and achieved salvation. Bad times are imminent like pieces of dark night." This report shows that the Holy Prophet visualized the impending ugly events, the dispute about Khilafah being one of them no doubt.

In reply to the question why the Qur'an has not mentioned Imam Ali's name, two explanations have been given: Firstly it is the special style of the Qur'an to describe various problems in the form of principles; and secondly the Holy Prophet and Almighty Allah did not like to mention his name expressly because they knew that in any case the question of Khilafah was going to be distorted and misinterpreted out of selfishness. As Prophetic sayings have been misinterpreted, so a Qur'anic verse expressly naming Imam Ali also would have been misinterpreted. The Holy Prophet said: *"This Ali is the master of him whose master I am."* Can there be any thing more express than this?

Anyhow there is a lot of difference between violating an express saying of the Holy Prophet and violating a verse naming Imam Ali on the day very next to the demise of the Prophet. That is why I have quoted the following event in my preface to the book, *Khilafah and Wilayat*:

A Jew with a view to upbraid the Muslims for the ugly events of the early period of Islam once during his caliphate said to Imam Ali: "As soon as you buried your Prophet you began to quarrel about him." The Imam gave a wonderful reply. He said: *"We were not at variance with him. We disagreed only about the instructions we received from him. But your feet were still wet with sea-water, when you said to your Prophet: 'Appoint for us a deity similar to the deities our opponents have.'* Thereupon your Prophet said: *"Surely you are an ignorant people."* So there is much difference between what happened to the Muslims, and what happened to the Jews. In other words, the Muslims did not differ about the Prophet himself. They differed about the meaning and significance of his instructions only. Hence what they did could be explained away by saying that they misunderstood what the Holy Prophet had said. (Though actually that was not the case).

Anyhow, there is a great deal of difference between misunderstanding or misinterpreting a saying of the Prophet and between ignoring or altering an express verse of the Qur'an.

### **Question 3**

The above question may be expressed in this way. It is true that the Qur'an must lay down principles only. But the principle of succession and government in Islam is certainly of great importance. A name may not be mentioned by the Qur'an. But the procedure must have been laid down in very clear terms. For example it could be revealed to the Holy Prophet that he should designate his successor, and that successor also should designate his successor, and so on till the end. Similarly it should also have been laid down clearly whether the question of succession is to be decided by designation or election.

In short, the question of succession should not have been left vague, because it is not such a simple question for Islam which is a religion that has come to rule. The problem is not whether the name of Imam Ali should have been mentioned or not. But in view of the difference of opinion in regard to the method of succession and the form of government it was necessary that a clear procedure was laid down. At least it could be revealed to the Holy Prophet that it was his duty to designate his successor. Even in that case the people might not have agreed as to who was the successor. But it would have been clear that the Holy Prophet himself had appointed his successor and that there was no question of any sort of election by the Muslims.

Similarly there was another question, whether the Holy Prophet's direct successor should nominate his successor or the next Imam, or should leave the question to the choice of the people. As far as I know this problem also has been left vague in the Qur'an. In any case no procedure has been expressly laid down.

The second point is that some time back I read a book relating to the system of government in Islam. In that book many sayings of Imam Ali and others were quoted, all to the effect that the question of Khilafah depended upon the Muslims and that it was up to them to express their opinion about it. For example Imam Ali said on various occasions: "*A Caliph was to be appointed by the Muslims and selected by the people concerned.*" He also said that the question of Khilafah was not to be decided by him, and it was up to the Muslims to hold consultation and express their opinion about it. In this book many arguments have been collected in support of the view that the question of government was an elective question and no individual was authorized to designate his successor. What is your opinion in this regard?

The third point is: If we presume that the twelve Imams have succeeded one another, what is the permanent procedure now for the appointment of the head of Muslim society? Does there a Divine ordinance exist in this respect? Will the future appointments be based on the principle of election or some other principle? Was it stipulated that the twelve infallible Imams would be appointed by a Divine ordinance and then, for example, during the occultation of the twelfth Imam, election would be held. Has it been expressly laid down anywhere? Is it our own inference that a qualified mujtahid fulfilling all the necessary conditions should be the head of the government during the occultation of the twelfth Imam?

In fact the Qur'an should have given a constitutional law to the Muslims directing them that the first twelve Imams following the Holy Prophet would be appointed by a Divine ordinance and then the Muslims would be free to elect their ruler, or it should have been expressly said that then the jurist of the Muslims would be their ruler. But, anyhow the issue remains unsolved since the death of the eleventh Imam, and has caused dissension and disputes. How is this problem to be resolved from our point of view?

## **Answer 3**

We have already dealt with some of these points, but you have again turned the question of Imamah into a question of the government only. As we have already pointed out the question of Imamah is different from that of government and the question of government in the presence of an Imam is exactly like that in the presence of the Prophet. In other words both the cases involve a situation governed by a special law. Just as the question as to who should be the head of the State does not arise during the lifetime of the Prophet, similarly in the presence of an Imam of those characteristics in which the Shi'ah believe, this question is only secondary and hypothetical.

The questions of the form of government can be considered only with reference to the times when no Imam is present, for we do not have any time when no Imam is in existence; but there can be a time when no Imam is present, and that is why we do not deny the significance of the Qur'anic verse saying that the affairs of the Muslims are settled by consultation. But obviously only those affairs are to be settled by consultation which are not covered by any Divine law or command, not those in respect of which some Qur'anic ordinance, or instruction exists.

As for the points mentioned in the book, *Government in Islam*, I have not studied this book thoroughly. Anyhow, this book has unfortunately been unilateral to a great extent. It has produced only a certain set of arguments and totally missed the arguments going contrary to them. This is a big defect, for one should give all the arguments and then should see which of them are stronger and more reliable.

Another defect of this book is that many quotations in it have been taken out of their context. I have not made a thorough study of the book, but those who have made, say that the heads and tails of many sentences reproduced in this book, have been cut off, with a result that their meanings have been distorted. If these missing parts were added to these sentences, they would have quite a different significance. Furthermore, no Imam is present, regarding which there is no dispute.

1. The first part of the book, *Khilafat and Wilayat*, which has recently been published, contains Muhammad Taqi Shari'ati's lectures which he delivered at Husayniyah Irshad some four years ago. In his lectures he dealt with the same subject with which I am dealing. Therefore the two books maybe considered to be supplementary to each other.
2. The Holy Prophet performed his farewell pilgrimage during the last year of his life, some two months before his demise. He died on 28 Safar or according to the Sunnis on 12 Rabi'ul Awwal. He reached Ghadir al-Khum on 18th Zil Hijjah, that is two months and 10 days before his demise or two months and 24 days according to what the Sunnis say.
3. Some of you might have been to Juhfah. I visited the place during my second Hajj journey. Our visit to Medina was delayed. So we took an opportunity to visit Jeddah. There is some difference in the juristic opinion whether or not one can assume the ritual state of ihram at jeddah. Actually it may be said that this is not a juristic difference but a geographical one. The ritual state of ihram can be assumed from any point lying parallel to any of the miqats.

A man who is well-versed in the geography of Arabia, may be able to say definitely whether or not Jeddah fulfils this condition. In the beginning we ourselves did not believe that it did, but later when we obtained maps of Arabia in Makkah and Medina, we found that Jeddah was parallel to one of the miqats, provided those maps were accurate. If those who proceed from Jeddah to Makkah, want to assume the ritual state of ihram from one of the actual miqats, they come from Jeddah to Juhfah, which lies on the way to Medina and is the miqat of the people of Syria. Ghadir al-Khum is situated near

Juhfah. It is the place at which the Muslims returning from Makkah after performing pilgrimage disperse. Some go to Medina and others to their respective places.

## Imamah In The Qur'an

In the previous meeting we discussed the verse,

***"Today I have perfected your religion and completed My favour to you and have chosen Islam for you as a religion" (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:3).***

and said that the internal and external evidence relating to this verse showed that, as reported by the Shi'ah and the Sunnis both, it was revealed in connection with the Ghadir al-Khumm event.

As at present we are discussing the Qur'anic verses on which the Shi'ah arguments about Imamah are based, We propose to quote two or three more verses in order to elucidate the trend of the Shi'ah arguments.

One of these verses is a verse of the Surah al-Maidah which comes some 60 verses after the above quoted verse. The verse runs as follows:

***"O Messenger! Make known that which has been revealed to you from your Lord, for if you do it not, you will not have conveyed His message." (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:67).***

It is necessary to make a few preliminary remarks which will be helpful to understand this verse and the previous one.

### **Special Position of the Verses Relating to the Prophet's Progeny**

A point that is really somewhat mysterious is that the Qur'anic verses relating to the Prophet's progeny especially the verses which from our Shi'ah point of view relate to Imam Ali, have a special way of expression. Though these verses have enough internal evidence to indicate what they signify, yet they have been inserted in between some other verses dealing with some other points. That is why effort has to be made to get at their significance.

This special feature has been admirably dealt with by Muhammad Taqi Shariati in his book, *Imamah and Khilafah*. Others have also mentioned this point, but he is perhaps the first to deal with it in Persian. This feature also provides an answer to those who ask why Imam Ali's name has not been expressly mentioned in the Qur'an.

## The Verse Of Tathir (Purification)

For example, we have a verse known as the verse of Tathir (purification):

***"O People of the house, Allah wants to remove all kinds of uncleanness from you and to purify you thoroughly". (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:33).***

Here purification means a particular kind of purification that has been mentioned by Allah. It does not mean an ordinary or a medical cleansing. That is not what is meant. In fact it means the removal of all that is regarded by the Qur'an as *rijs* or *rujz*, which is all kinds of dogmatic, moral and practical sins. That is why it is said that this verse indicates the infallibility of the members of the Prophet's Household and their being far above all sorts of impurities.

Suppose we are neither the Shi'ah nor the Sunnis but are some Christian orientalists who want to see what the Divine Scripture of the Muslims says. We come across this verse in the Qur'an and then when we refer to Islamic history and the Muslim traditions, we find that not only the partisans and followers of the Prophet's progeny, known as the Shi'ah, but even the members of that sect which is not a special supporter of the Prophet's progeny while mentioning the occasion of the revelation of the above verse, state in their most authentic books that it refers to Imam Ali, Fatimah Zahra', Imam Hasan, Imam Husayn and the Holy Prophet himself. There is a Sunni tradition which says when this verse was revealed, Umm Salamah [1](#) one of the Holy Prophet's wives came to him and asked him if the verse was applicable to her also. The Holy Prophet replied that she was blessed but she was not included among those to whom the verse applied. The authorities which have reproduced this tradition are more than one or two. Many reports to this effect are found in the books of the Sunnis.

We find that the above-quoted verse is mixed with some other preceding and following verses relating to the Holy Prophet's wives. ***"O you wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other women. (Surah al-Azhab, 33:32).***

Of course the verse does not mean to say that the Prophet's wives are superior to other women.

***O you wives of the Prophet! Whosoever of you commits a sin, the punishment for her will be doubled. (Surah al-Azhab, 33:30).***

The punishment will be doubled, because she not only commits that particular sin, but also violates the sanctity of her husband and is guilty of sacrilege.

Similarly:

***"Whosoever of you is submissive to Allah and His messenger and does right, We shall give her double reward".(Surah al-Azhab, 33:31).***

She will be doubly rewarded because a virtuous act of hers actually consists of two acts. This case is similar to that of the sayyids who are said to be doubly rewarded for their good deeds and doubly punished for their evil ones. That is not because a sin committed by them is different from that committed by others, but is due to the fact that their sin is twofold. For example, if a sayyid, God forbid, drinks wine, he besides committing that sin, is guilty of sacrilege also, for he is a descendant of the Holy Prophet, and any person who sees him acting openly against the Holy Prophet's teachings, gets a very wrong impression of Islam.

In these verses all the pronouns are of the feminine gender. O you wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other women if you have fear of Allah. Obviously the wives of the Holy Prophet are being addressed here. After two or three verses the pronouns suddenly change into the masculine gender and we arrive at this verse: People of the house, Allah wants to remove all kinds of uncleanness from you and to purify you thoroughly.

Then again the feminine pronouns are used twice. The Qur'an does not do anything haphazardly. In this verse we notice two changes. Firstly here the expression, *People of the House* has been used, whereas previously the *Wives of Prophet* were addressed all along. Secondly the feminine pronouns have been replaced by the masculine pronouns. These changes are not without a reason. Actually this verse deals with a subject different from that which was dealt with by the previous verses. The verses preceding and following this verse prescribe certain duties for the wives of the Holy Prophet and *inter alia* imply threat, fear, hope and command. Addressing them the Qur'an says:

***"And stay in your houses and do not display your embellishments in the pre-Islamic way." (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:33).***

This instruction implies an order as well as a threat. The Holy Prophet's wives have been told that if they would behave well, such and such would be the result, but if they would behave differently the consequences also would be different. As such this passage of the Qur'an implies fear as well as hope.

This verse, which is the verse of tathir or purification is more than a simple eulogy. It signifies that the members of the Prophet's progeny are infallible and free from every sin and error. It is an independent statement and has no connection with the verses preceding and following it. Those verses were addressed to the Holy Prophet's wives, and this verse is addressed to the '*People of the Prophet's progeny*'. In those verses the feminine pronouns were used, but in this verse the pronouns are masculine. Anyhow, this verse which has no connection with the verses preceding or following it, has been inserted into the midst of them.

It may be called a parenthetical sentence. We all know that sometimes it happens that a speaker speaking on a subject makes a sudden digression and then again resumes the subject on which he was speaking. That is why our Imams have emphatically stated that it is possible that some verses of the Qur'an deal with one subject in the beginning, with another in the middle and with a third in the end. A

great deal of stress has been laid on this point in connection with the interpretation of the Qur'an.

Not only do our traditions and our Imams say that this verse is not connected with the verses preceding and following it and that it deals with quite a different subject relating to these to whom it is addressed, but all the Sunni sources also have reported this fact.

Another example of a parenthetical verse is:

***"On this day I have perfected your religion." (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:3).***

Here also we find the same case, rather a little more amazing. The verses preceding this verse deal with very simple and ordinary rules of law:

***"The beast of cattle is made lawful to you... Forbidden to you are carrion and blood and swine-flesh and that which has been dedicated to any other than Allah and the strangled and the dead through beating and the dead through failing from a height and that which has been killed by the goring of horns ... " (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5: 1-2).***

Then all of a sudden the topic changes and we come across the following verses:

***"Today the disbelievers have despaired of harming your religion; so fear them not and fear Me. On this day I have perfected your religion, completed My favour on you and have chosen Islam as your religion." (Surah al-Ma'ida, 5:3).***

Then the theme which was being discussed earlier, is once again resumed. Basically these two verses are not in keeping with the verses preceding or following them. Evidently they have been inserted in the midst of the verses dealing with a totally different point. The same was the case with the verse we were just talking about. We find that it was inserted between other verses in such a way that if it was removed, the other verses would not get disjointed. Similarly if the verse: ***On this day I have completed....*** is taken out, the harmonious flow of the verses preceding and following it will not be disturbed.

It is a verse inserted in the midst of other verses in such a way that it is neither a tail-piece of the verse preceding it, nor a prelude to the verse following it. It deals with an entirely different subject. The internal indications of the verse itself as well as the reports of the Shi'ah and Sunni sources, all support the view that it is an independent verse. But why has this verse after all been inserted in between the verses with which it does not have any connection? There must be some reason for that and a good reason too.

## **Reason**

The reason to which our Imams also have alluded can be inferred from the Qur'an itself. Hence, out of all Islamic precepts, the divine commands, relating to the special position of the Holy Prophet's progeny and the question of Imam Ali's Imamah, had the least chance of being implemented. Owing to their deep-rooted prejudices the Arabs seemed to be the least prepared to accept these ideas. Although the

Holy Prophet had received Divine instructions regarding Imam Ali, he apprehended that if he made them known, he would be accused of nepotism by the hypocrites mentioned in the Qur'an, in spite of the fact that he never gave preference to himself over others. In keeping with the Islamic teachings it was his habit not to make any discrimination, and this quality of his was a very important factor in his success.

To proclaim Imam Ali as his successor was a Divine command, but he knew that the people of weak faith would as usual say that he wanted to distinguish himself. We have seen that in the above verse, the words on this day I have perfected your religion, were preceded by the words, this day the disbelievers are in despair of ever harming your religion; so fear them not and fear Me. What is meant is that the disbelievers have lost every hope of their success against Islam, and so fear them not and fear Me. As pointed out earlier, it is a Divine way of Allah to withdraw His bounties and favours, from those whose inner condition goes bad. Such people may be deprived of even Islam, which is also a Divine favour. To say: fear Me is a way of saying: fear yourselves. In other words, the Muslims no longer faced any external danger, but they were threatened by an internal one.

It may be noted that this verse is a part of the Surah al-Ma'ida, the last surah revealed to the Holy Prophet, and it was revealed sometime during the last two or three months of the Holy Prophet's lifetime. By that time Islam had gained a good deal of power.

The idea that the Muslims face a danger only from within, not from without, is conveyed by another verse as well, which we have quoted earlier. That verse said:

***"Messenger! Make known that which has been revealed to you from your Lord, for if you do it not, it would be as though you have not conveyed My message. Allah will protect you from men."***  
***(Surah al-Maida, 5:67).***

It may be mentioned that in the Qur'an there is no other verse urging the Holy Prophet to undertake a particular task. It appears from the tone of this verse as if somebody was being impelled to do a thing, but he was wavering. In this verse the Holy Prophet is being asked to make known what has been revealed to him. He is also being threatened that if he did not do so, he would be regarded to have failed in his apostleship.

At the same time he is being assured that he will be protected and therefore he need not have any fear. In the previous verse the Muslims were told not to fear the disbelievers. As such the Holy Prophet could not be expected to have any fear of them. But this verse shows that he was still apprehensive and uneasy about something. Naturally he could not be afraid of the disbelievers, he was actually only conscious of the danger of turmoil on the part of those who were not willing to accept Imam Ali's succession. I cannot say whether these people were also disbelievers in their hearts, but somehow they were unable to swallow the idea of Imam Ali's Imamah.

## **Historical Evidence**

Incidentally the historical events also tell the same story. In other words the sociology of the Muslims shows the same thing. We see that Umar said: "We did not elect Ali as a precautionary measure in the interest of Islam." The Quraysh could not tolerate Imam Ali. Therefore they did not accept him.

Quraysh did not deem it proper that Prophethood and Imamah both should be in the same family." What he meant to say was that Bani Hashim had secured a distinction because of Prophethood. Should Khilafah also be in that family, all the distinctions would go to one house. That was the reason why the Quraysh disliked Imam Ali's Imamah. Ibn Abbas gave a very convincing reply to what Umar said and quoted many a Qur'anic verses in support of his argument.

It appears that the same situation that existed in Muslim society, has been expressed in different ways, by the Qur'an in one way and by Umar in another. For example, a report says Imam Ali was not considered fit to be the Caliph because he had killed so many prominent Arabs in the battles of Islam.

The

Arabs being malicious by nature the descendants of those who were killed by him bore malice against Imam Ali even after they had been converted to Islam. Some Sunnis also advance this plea, and say that although Imam Ali was superior to others and better qualified, yet he was not chosen because he had a large number of enemies.

Thus during the Holy Prophet's time the atmosphere was charged with a feeling of anxiety; and a revolt against the announcement of Imam Ali's succession was apprehended. Perhaps that is the reason why the Qur'an has mentioned the question of Imamah in these verses in such a way that every unbiased man could understand their significance, but still it has avoided to put this question in a way that its rejection by those who were bent upon rejecting it, could become a revolt against Islam and an outright rejection of the Qur'an.

In other words the Qur'an has allowed the opponents to conceal their rejection under a thin cover. The same is the reason why the verse of *Tathir* has also been inserted in the midst of other verses. But every sensible and honest man can detect its real meaning and can see that it is an independent verse. The same is the case with the verse, On this day I have perfected your religion and with the verse, Messenger! Make known what has been revealed to you from your Lord.

## **The Verse 'Your Guardian Is Only Allah'**

There are some other verses relating to this subject which are thought-provoking. They make man feel that these verses have some special meaning, which can be comprehended with the help of the continuous reports only. One such verse is as follows:

**"Your guardian is only Allah, His Messenger and those who believe, establish prayers and pay the zakat while they are bowing in prayer." (Surah al-Ma'ida, 5:55).**

The payment of zakat while bowing is not a usual or normal procedure. Hence it cannot be said that this thing has been mentioned as a general rule. Therefore it is certain that this verse refers to some particular event, but it hints at this event in such a way that its denial may not be regarded as a revolt against the Qur'an. Still every unbiased person can easily come to the conclusion that the verse refers to some unusual event. Those who pay zakat while bowing does not refer to a usual practice. It implies an exceptional event which took place by chance. What was that event? We see that both the Shi'ah and the Sunnis agree that this verse was revealed in connection with Imam Ali.

## **What The Gnostics Say?**

There are some other verses also the significance of which becomes clear only after some deep thinking. That is why the gnostics have since long said that the question of Imamah and Wilayat is the inner side of Islamic law. That is what the Shi'ah also believe. Hence, the gnostics have expressed the idea well. To understand the question of Imamah it is necessary to penetrate into the husk a little to be able to reach the kernel, for basically it is a question that requires deep thinking. Only those who are endowed and blessed with this quality have been able to understand this question well. They invite others also to reach the depth of this question. Some respond whereas some others do not.

We now propose to look at some other verse, so that the logic of the arguments of the Shi'ah may be fully understood.

## **The Concept Of Imamah**

There is a verse in the Qur'an which is a part of that series of verses which we are at present discussing. The remarkable verse is not connected with Imam Ali's person, but deals with the doctrine of Imamah in the sense which we have already explained and now we propose to explain it briefly.

As we have already said, it is an old mistake of the Muslim scholastic theologians to discuss the question of Imamah in a way as if both the Shi'ah and the Sunnis subscribe to the same conception of Imamah but hold different opinions with regard to its conditions.

The Shi'ah say that an Imam must be infallible and is to be appointed by Divine ordinance whereas the Sunnis do not subscribe to that point of view. The actual fact is that the Sunnis do not believe at all in that conception of Imamah in which the Shi'ah believe. The Imamah in which the Sunnis believe is only to this worldly aspect of the actual Imamah and one of its functions.

In the case of Prophethood also we see that the Holy Prophet was the leader of the Muslim community but this leadership or the administration of the State was only one of his functions as a Prophet. His

leadership does not mean that Prophethood and leadership are synonymous. Prophethood is a reality which has so many aspects and features. One of the characteristics of a Prophet is that in his presence nobody else can be the ruler or the head of the Muslims. The Sunnis say that Imamah means, no more than the administration of the government and that an Imam is the head of this administration or the ruler of the Muslims.

He is to be elected by the Muslims from among themselves. The Sunni concept of an Imam does not go beyond the status of the head of the Muslim State. But according to the Shi'ah Imamah is a rank similar to Prophethood and in some respects, even higher than Prophethood by certain degrees. The high-ranking Prophets are those who were Imams also. Many Prophets were not Imams at all. Even the high ranking Prophets attained the assignment of Imamah long after they had been Prophets.

In short, if we admit that Imamah is like Prophethood, we will have to admit also that as in the presence of a Prophet who has a superhuman aspect, the question who should be the ruler does not arise, similarly in the presence of an Imam, this question is out of question. This question arises only when there is no Imam, either because no Imam exists at all or because the Imam is in occultation as is the case during our times. We should not mix up the question of Imamah with that of government and then ask what the Sunnis say in this respect and what the Shi'ah hold. As a matter of fact the question of the government is different from that of Imamah. According to the Shi'ah, Imamah is a phenomenon exactly like that of Prophethood, and that too like the highest degree of it. As such we the Shi'ah believe in Imamah whereas the Sunnis do not. It is not that they also believe in it, but the conditions required for an Imam, according to them are different.

## **Imam In Prophet Ibrahim's Progeny**

The verse which we now would like to quote clearly denotes the concept of Imamah in which the Shi'ah believe. The Shi'ah maintain that this verse shows that there does exist a truth called Imamah, and that it has existed not only during the period following the death of the Prophet of Islam, but has been existing since the first appearance of the Prophets and will continue to exist in Prophet Ibrahim's progeny up to the Day of Resurrection. The Holy Qur'an says:

***"And (remember) when his Lord tried Ibrahim with His commands, and he fulfilled them, He said: I have appointed you an Imam for mankind. Ibrahim said: And of my offspring? He said: My covenant includes not the unjust." (Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 124).***

## **Prophet Ibrahim's Trials**

### **Command To Migrate To Hijaz**

The Qur'an itself has mentioned a number of trials which Prophet Ibrahim had to face. They included his struggle against Namrud and his henchmen who threw him into a burning fire as well as several

subsequent events. One of these events was that Ibrahim received an astonishing command which could not be implemented by anybody not fully devoted to Allah. The old man had no children.

For the first time his wife, Hagar gave birth to a child at the age of seventy eight. Prophet Ibrahim receives a Divine command to go from Syria to Hijaz, take his wife and that child on the spot where at present Masjidul Haram is located and keep them there and then leave the place. This command was not in keeping with any logic except that of complete self-submission and total devotion. As he was sure that it was a Divine command which he had received through revelation, he carried it out. He said:

***"Our Lord: I have settled some of my posterity in an uncultivable valley near Your Holy House so that they may establish prayers." (Surah Ibrahim, 14:37)***

### **Command To Slaughter His Son**

More astonishing than these events is the story of Prophet Ibrahim's slaughtering his son at Mina. It is in memory of this extraordinary self-surrender that we now sacrifice goats and sheep. (As we perform what we have been told by Allah, there can be no question of why and what for in this connection.) After seeing two or three times in dream as if he was sacrificing his son, Ibrahim was convinced that it was Allah's Command to him to do so.

He told his son about it. His son readily agreed and said: Father, do that which you are commanded. Allah willing you will find me of the steadfast. The Qur'an depicts a wonderful picture. When they had both surrendered (to Allah) and he had flung him down upon his face. (At last when Ibrahim was absolutely sure that he would cut off the head of his son, and Isma'il had no doubt in his mind that his head would be severed,

***We called to him: Ibrahim, you have already fulfilled the vision. (Surah as-Saffat, 37: 102-105).***

What Allah says is that He did not actually want Isma'il's head to be cut off. He only wanted to see that Ibrahim and Isma'il showed their complete submission to His will, which they did.

The Qur'an expressly says that Allah gave a son to Prophet Ibrahim in his old age. It says when the angels came to him and told him that he would be granted a son by Allah, his wife said:

***"Shall I bear a child when I am an old woman and this my husband is an old man? The angels said to her: Do you wonder at the commandment of Allah? The mercy of Allah and His blessings be upon you, people of the house." (Surah Hud, 11:72-73)***

According to this verse Allah gave a child to Ibrahim when he was an old man. So long as he was young, he did not have any child. When he got a child, he was already a Prophet. In the Qur'an there are fairly a large number of verses about Ibrahim. They show that he got a child towards the end of his life when he was seventy or eighty years old. After that also he lived for ten or twenty years more, Ishaq and

Isma'il both grew up during his lifetime. Isma'il becomes so mature to help his father build the Ka'bah. The Qur'an says:

***"And (remember) when his Lord tried Ibrahim with his commands, and he fulfilled them. He said: I have appointed you an Imam for mankind. Ibrahim said: And of my offspring? He said: My covenant includes not wrong-doers." (Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 124).***

What period of Ibrahim's life do these verses refer to? Do they pertain to his early age?

There is no doubt that they refer to that period of his life when he was already a Prophet, for they speak of a revelation. Further, they pertain to the concluding period of his Prophethood, for they speak of the trials through which Prophet Ibrahim had passed. These trials covered his whole life, most important of them having taken place during the declining period of his age. Furthermore in these verses there is a mention of his offspring. That shows that when this conversation took place, he already had at least one child.

In fact according to this verse Prophet Ibrahim was told toward the end of his lifetime: I have made you an Imam for mankind. Thus he was given a fresh assignment. That shows that he was already a Prophet and a Messenger of Allah. But there was still a stage which he had not reached so far. He reached it only after successfully passing through all the trials. Does it not show that according to the Qur'an there is one more reality the name of which is Imamah? Now what is the meaning of it?

## **Imamah Is A Divine Covenant**

Imamah means the stage of becoming a perfect man and a perfect leader of all others. When Ibrahim was appointed an Imam, he at once thought of his progeny and offspring and said: 'What about my offspring? How about my descendants? He was told: My covenant includes not the wrong doers.

Here Imamah has been described as Allah's covenant. That is why the Shi'ah say that the Imamah in which they believe is Divine. The Qur'an also describes it as "*My covenant*". It is Allah's covenant, not of the people. If we take into consideration the fact that Imamah is different from the guardianship of the Muslim community, we will not find it surprising that Imamah is a Divine assignment. People ask who is to set up the government, Allah or people?

We say that the question of government is different from that of Imamah. Allah says to Ibrahim: Imamah is My covenant and it will not include the wrong doers among your children. In reply to Prophet Ibrahim's question Allah neither says 'no', nor 'yes' to him. He makes a discrimination and excludes wrongdoers from the scope of Imamah. Thereafter only the non-wrongdoers of Ibrahim's progeny remained. This verse shows that among them Imamah will always be existing. In this respect there is one more verse in the Qur'an:

***"And He made it a word enduring in his descendants." (Surah az-Zukhruf, 43:28).***

## **Who Is A Wrongdoer?**

Now the question is what is meant by a wrongdoer. The Imams (Peace be on them) have based their arguments on the use of this term in this verse. From the point of view of the Qur'an everybody who is unjust to himself or others is a wrongdoer. In common parlance, a wrongdoer is only he who violates the rights of others. But according to the Qur'anic terminology he is also a wrongdoer who is unjust to himself. There are many Qur'anic verses in which those who were guilty of transgression against themselves, have been called wrongdoers.

In connection with Prophet Ibrahim's question about his offspring Allamah Tabataba'i quotes one of his teachers as having said that Prophet Ibrahim's descendants from the point of view of being good or bad can be divided into four categories:

- (i) Those who throughout their life have been wrongdoers;
- (ii) those who were wrongdoers in the beginning, but became virtuous later;
- (iii) those who were virtuous in the beginning but became wrongdoers subsequently; and
- (iv) those who were not wrongdoers at any time.

Prophet Ibrahim fully realized the importance of the high office of Imamah which was granted to him after he had been a Prophet for a fairly long time. As such it is impossible that he would ask this position for those of his descendants who were bad throughout their life or who were good at first but turned wrongdoers later. Prophet Ibrahim must have asked this position only for those who were good.

Hence his good descendants included: those who had been good throughout their life and those who were bad in the beginning but became good later. It is certain that he could not have asked this position for those who were not included in these two categories. Now we see that the Holy Qur'an says: "*My covenant does not include those who have been wrongdoers.*" It is evident that Ibrahim's question did not include those who had been wrongdoers throughout their life or those who had been good in the beginning, but turned wrongdoers in the later part of their life. Therefore what the Qur'an says amounts to saying that those whose past has not been above reproach, will not get Imamah.

It is on this basis that the Shi'ah argue that those who have been polytheists in any part of their life, are not fit for holding Imamah.

## **Questions And Answers**

What does the infallible mean? Is the conception of infallibility a by-product of our Shi'ah logic or has it any basis which we have further developed and improved? Who is infallible, he who does not commit any sin or he who besides not committing any sin does not commit any mistake too? Some twenty years

age I attended a lecture by the late Mirza Abdul Hasan Faroghi, who had made a special study of the question of infallibility and had formed his own opinion about it. He gave a detailed and neat talk. I did not understand 80% of it, but from the 20% that I understood, I came to the conclusion that he defined infallibility in an unfamiliar way. He said that the infallible was not he who did not commit any sin, for there were so many people who never committed a sin during their whole life. Still they were not called infallible.

Now I have nothing to do with that talk. I would like His Eminence (Mutahhari) to say who the infallible is. If the infallible is he who does not commit any mistake, I see that out of the 12 Imams only two, Imam-Ali and for a short period Imam Hasan were able to assume Khilafah, and even they committed mistakes in the administration of the State. This is a point beyond any dispute from historical point of view. This position is not in consonance with the definition of the infallible. For example, we see that Imam Hasan detailed Ubaydullah ibn Abbas to conduct fighting against Mu'awiyah. Imam Ali himself appointed Abd Allah ibn Abbas Governor of Basrah. It is certain that he would never have appointed him if he had known what disgrace he would bring about and how dirty his behaviour would be.

This means that he did not know in advance the consequences of his action. He thought that he had selected the best man for the particular job, but Ibn Abbas proved contrary to his expectations. If we carry out further investigation into Imam Ali's period of government, we will come across many more examples of this kind. From historical point of view such mistakes are all right, but they are not in keeping with this definition of infallibility. As I have said, any unilateral discussion all the participants of which subscribe to a particular ideology is not very useful. The reason is that when a man has a particular belief, he begins to love it and is not willing to listen to anything contrary to that belief.

This principle applies especially to us, the Shi'ites in whose hearts love of Shi'ism and Imam Ali's house has been ingrained from childhood and who have never heard any criticism against them. We might have heard some criticism against our religion, its principles and even against monotheism and religiousness, but have never heard anybody criticizing Shi'ism, the Imams or the actions taken by them. That is why we feel very much perturbed if anybody raises any objection against, for example, Imam Hasan. To listen to anything against Imam Husayn is far more difficult.

His Eminence has laid stress on the verse that says:

***"Those who offer prayers and pay zakat while they are bowing (in prayers)." (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:43).***

He has argued that this verse refers to none but to Imam Ali and that it was revealed in connection with his giving away his ring while bowing in prayers. In my opinion this argument is not very sound and logical because: We have heard and have read in Imam Ali's life account that while offering prayers he was so devoted to Allah that he was unable to recognize any individual. It is also said that while performing ablution he did not recognize anyone passing in front of him.

Then how can it be expected of such a person that he would be so vigilant while offering prayers that he would pull out his ring and give it to a beggar who had appeared before him and to whom no body else had given anything. Further it is not a good thing to give money to a beggar. At least giving money to a beggar was not so important that for the sake of it one should impair one's prayers. Furthermore, zakat is not due on a ring. According to the verdict of the Shi'ah jurists a ring is not one of those things on which zakat is due. Besides that, some people who are biased in this respect, have with a view to magnify this incident, said that the ring was very costly, while we know that Imam Ali never wore a costly ring.

**Answer:** In respect of the question of infallibility very few individuals hold a different opinion. Anyhow, it is a useful practice to ask questions.

What is the meaning of infallibility? Sometimes man tends to think that Allah keeps a watch on certain selected people and does not allow them to commit a sin. Whenever they intend to commit it, He prevents them from carrying out their intention. Of course that is not infallibility and even if that be, it does not bring any credit to anybody. If somebody always keeps a watch on a child and does not allow him to do anything wrong, which cannot be considered to be a merit of the child. But there is another meaning of infallibility which can be deduced from the Qur'an. In the story of Prophet Yusuf whom a particular woman tried to seduce him, the Qur'an says:

***"She verily desired him and he would have desired her if it had not been that he saw the argument of his Lord." (Surah Yusuf, 12: 24).***

Prophet Yusuf after all was a human being. He was young and had innate impulse. That woman advanced towards him but he did not advance towards her. If it had not been that he knew that he was being watched by Allah, he also would certainly have advanced. The perfect faith with which he was endowed by Allah prevented him from doing a wrong thing and made him conscious of its harmful consequences.

Each one of us without the intervention of any outside force desists from committing many sins and lapses because we all are fully convinced of their dangerous consequences. For example it is a sin to fling oneself from the top of a four-storeyed building or throw oneself into a burning fire. We never commit such a sin, because we are fully conscious of the danger which it involves. We know that touching an electric live wire means instant death. We commit this sin only when we ignore its underlying danger.

A child touches fire without hesitation, because he does not realize its danger as we the grown ups do. Piety becomes a trait of a righteous man's character and therefore he does not commit many sins at all. This trait of his character makes him infallible to a certain extent. Therefore infallibility depends on man's faith and his conviction. We have accepted certain acts to be sinful because they are prohibited by our religion. We say that as Islam has forbidden drinking wine, we do not drink it, and as Islam has forbidden gambling, we do not gamble. We more or less know that these things are bad. But the risk that these

sins involve is not as clear to us as the risk involved in throwing ourselves into a burning fire.

If we had been as much convinced of the harm of these sins as we are convinced of the harm of throwing ourselves into a fire, we would have been infallible as far as these sins were concerned. Therefore infallibility means perfect faith and conviction. He who has said: "*Even if the curtain was lifted, my conviction would not increase*" [2](#), was certainly infallible, for while this side of the curtain, he could clearly see the other side of it. He could feel that if he used foul language against anyone he would be creating a scorpion for himself, and for that reason he would not talk abusively. The Qur'an itself mentions some examples of the faith of this degree.

That is why it is said that infallibility is relative term and infallibility has several degrees and stages. Those who are infallible never commit those sins which we sometimes commit and sometimes avoid. They are impeccable. Still they have stages and degrees and all of them are not alike. In certain stages they are like us. As we are not immune from committing sins, they are also not immune from committing certain types of mistakes. They do not do anything which we regard as a sin, but they may do certain things which they themselves regard as sins although we may not regard them as such at all, for we have not reached that stage which they have. If a student of class V solves a question of class VI, it is creditable to him and he may get a reward for that, but if a student of IX class solves the same question, it does not bring him any credit. What is meritorious to us may be sinful to the infallible. As the proverb goes, one man's food is another man's poison.

That is why we find that in the Qur'an disobedience has been ascribed to some Prophets also.

***"And Adam disobeyed his Lord and went astray." (Surah Ta Ha, 20:121).***

To the Holy Prophet, Allah says:

***"So that Allah may forgive you of your sin, which which is past and that which is to come." (Surah al-Fath, 48:2).***

These verses show that infallibility is a relative term. The Prophets and the Imams are infallible according to their capacity and we are according to our capacity. The very nature of infallibility protects one against sins. The scope of this protection depends on the degree of the perfection of one's faith. A man is as much near the stage of "***if it had not been that he saw the argument of his Lord***" ***(Surah Yusuf, 12:24)***, as much his faith is perfect. Infallibility is automatic. It is not that an infallible person desires like us to commit a sin, but someone is sent by Allah to hold his hand and prevent him from carrying out his intention. Had that been the case, there would have been no difference between me and Imam Ali. Like me he also would have desired to commit sins.

At the most he would have been prevented from actually committing them by someone sent by Allah, whereas for me no such arrangement exists. If someone from outside prevents a man from committing a sin, which is not creditable to that man. Suppose someone committed theft, but I did not merely because

I was always being escorted by a watchman. In this case I am as good a thief as that man is, with the difference that no watchman prevented him from committing the crime whereas a watchman prevented me. This can bring no credit to me.

The main ingredient of infallibility is the incapability of making a sin. The incapability of making a mistake is quite a different matter. Anyhow, we cannot say that the Holy Prophet might have made a mistake in conveying the commandments of Islam or might have conveyed anything contrary to what was revealed to him, as often happens in the case of ordinary messengers, who sometimes deliver a wrong message. In regard to the Holy Prophet it is not possible to say that in the delivery of his message he might have made a mistake.

As for other questions, the questioner has been hasty in drawing his conclusions. He has been unjust even to Imam Ali. If he were in Imam Ali's place, is he sure that he would not have selected Ubaydullah ibn Abbas? There is no harm if one draws a speculative conclusion in such historical matters. Anybody can easily say that he thinks that it would have been better if such and such person instead of doing that 500 years ago would have done this. If somebody asked him whether he was sure about that, he could say that it was his personal guess.

But it is dangerous to come to a definite conclusion in such matters, not only in respect of Imam Ali but in respect of other individuals also. Imam Ali was aware of the situation as it prevailed. He knew Abd Allah ibn Abbas and his other companions better than you and me. But still we say if he had selected someone else instead of Abd Allah ibn Abbas, he would have done the job better. This is a hasty conclusion in this matter. Further you yourself have always stated that Imam Ali had a special policy of his own and he did not want to budge an inch from it. But he did not have any supporters of his policy.

He always said that he did not have any man. This Abd Allah ibn Abbas and other often advised him to be flexible. They urged him to pursue that which was now-a-days called diplomacy. I ask you to prove to me that Imam Ali had enough men to choose from, but he made a mistake in his selection. I for one cannot prove that. All that I know is that the Holy Prophet designated Imam Ali as his successor. Imam Ali himself complained that Khilafah had been snatched from him.

When after Uthman people came to him to pledge their allegiance to him, he retracted and said: "*Leave me alone and seek someone else, for we are facing a many-sided situation. The atmosphere is overcast and the route has changed beyond recognition.*" What Imam Ali meant was that the conditions were extremely bad and he lacked supporters and workers with whose help he might be able to improve the conditions and reform society. Then he said what amounted to saying: "Still I have no excuse. If I make an excuse, history will not accept it. People will say that Ali through his own negligence lost the opportunity. Though in fact it is not an opportunity. I accept your suggestion so that history may not blame me." Thus Imam Ali himself admitted that he did not have enough men, and the time was not opportune for his Caliphate.

One may doubt any thing, but even history does not doubt that Imam Ali believed that his claim to Khilafah was stronger than that of anybody else. Sunnis admit that Imam Ali considered himself to be a more legitimate candidate for Khilafah than Abu Bakr and Umar. Nevertheless when after Uthman people went to him and asked him to accept Khilafah, he declined and said that he would rather like to continue to be an adviser and guide than to become a ruler. From this it is clear that he did not have enough competent men around him. Why so? That is a different question.

As for the verse, They establish prayers and pay zakat while they are bowing, you say that zakat is not due on a ring In fact zakat includes every thing given for a good cause. Its modern use as a technical term for the obligatory zakat is the use of the jurists. In the Qur'an this word has not been used everywhere in this sense. Zakat means purification of property and money.

This word is used in connection with spiritual purification also. The Qur'an has at different places described spending for the sake of Allah as Zakat of wealth, Zakat of soul, and Zakat of self. The same case is with the word, "*Sadaqah*" (charity alms). Today it has a special significance. For example we say 'secret sadaqah', but according to the Qur'an every good deed is called sadaqah. If you build a hospital or write a beneficial book, which will be a *sadaqah jariyah* (running charity) in the words of the Qur'an. That is why even the Sunnis who do not accept the conception deduced from this verse, have not objected to this word. They being conversant with Arabic literature know that zakat does not always mean obligatory Zakat only.

Now the question is how comes it that Imam Ali gave his ring while bowing in prayers. This is an objection which was raised by some early scholars like Fakhruddin Razi also. They say that Ali was always so absorbed in his prayers that he never paid any attention to what was going on around him. Then how could all this happen while he was offering prayers? In reply, it may be said that it is true that Imam Ali used to be fully absorbed in his prayers, but it is also a fact that the state of the Holy men is not always the same. It has been reported about the Holy Prophet that sometimes he was so violently carried away by a desire to offer prayers that he could not wait for the call to prayers by Bilal to be finished and asked him to make haste.

On some other occasions while he was prostrating himself in prayers it often happened that Imam Hasan, Imam Husayn or some other grandchild of his came to him and rode his shoulders, and he waited calmly until the child got down. Once while he was standing in prayers, he found that some spittle was lying in front of him, he took two steps forward, covered it with dust by his foot and then returned to his place. From this incident the jurists have deduced a number of rules concerning prayers.

Bahrul Ulum has said: "The noblest person walked while offering prayers. This incident solves many questions."

For example the jurists have on the basis of this incident decided what amount of action not relevant to prayers is permissible during prayers. A number of other rules also have been deduced.

All this shows that the Holy men have different spiritual states, and according to these states they behave differently on different occasions.

There is another point. The gnostics according to their taste say that when man reaches the most perfect spiritual state of being fully attracted towards Allah, he returns to this world. In other words in this state he attends to Allah as well as to the creation. That is what the gnostics say, and I agree to their view, although it may not be acceptable to many.

Another spiritual state is that of disincarnation or casting off the body. Those who reach this stage, in the beginning cast off their body for one or two seconds or at the most for an hour or so. But some individuals ultimately reach a stage at which they are in this state all the time. (I believe that and have personally observed it.) Sometimes it may happen that you see some individuals sitting with you like ordinary people, but actually they are in this state. According to these people the state in which an arrow was pulled out of Imam Ali's body while he was offering prayers without his being conscious of it was a lower state than that in which he attended to a beggar without being unconscious of Allah. He was so attentive to Allah that he could see the whole world. In the presence of all this evidence this incident cannot be denied.

1. She is held in very high respect by the Shi'ah and is regarded as the most eminent wife of the Holy Prophet (S) after Khadijah. She is greatly respected by the Sunnis also. According to them, she ranks next to Khadijah and 'Ayishah.

2. Imam Ali (AS) is reported to have said so. (Safinat ul-Bihar, vol. 2).

## Imamah From The Viewpoint Of The Imams

The general discussion of the question of Imamah is coming to an end with this discourse. A further discussion of this question will consist of the study of the Prophetic traditions relating to Imam Ali and other Imams and the sayings of the early Imams in respect of the subsequent Imams. All these traditions are of the nature of authoritative directive, in regard to the designation and appointment of the Imams.

Perhaps a number of points included in the present discourse have already been covered by the discussion already made, but as these points reflect the spirit of the question of Imamah, we propose to discuss them again with reference to the sayings of the Imams in this connection. We also propose to quote some extracts from al-Kafi, Book of Hujjah.

We have several times said that Imamah in the sense in which the Shi'ah or at least their Imams talk about it is different from the Imamah of which the Sunnis speak. The question of Imamah is also different from that of government, which is so often the subject of discussion nowadays. Basically the question of Imamah closely follows that of Prophethood, not in the sense that Imamah is something inferior to Prophethood, but in the sense that it resembles Prophethood. The great Prophets were both Prophets

and Imams at one and the same time. Imamah is a spiritual state. In this connection the Imam have laid stress on the concept of man. Let us review our concept of him so that this point may become clear.

## **What Kind Of A Being Is Man?**

Do you know what kind of a being basically man is? There are two points of view. According to one of them man, like all other living beings, is a 100% material being, which as a result of a series of material changes has developed to the utmost possible to which degree a material being could develop. Life whether in plants, animals or men is a manifestation of the gradual development of the matter without the interference of any non-material element in their existence. (We have used the word element only for want of any better expression.)

Every wonderful quality existing in any being emanates from its material structure. On this basis the first man or the first man who appeared in this world must have been the most primitive men. It is with the passage of time that man has gradually developed.

That is true whether we consider man to have been created direct from clay according to the ancient conception, or to have developed from lower animal kingdom on the basis of natural selection according to the theory put forward by some modern gentlemen whose idea is also worth consideration at least as a theory, according to this theory also man has his ultimate roots in the earth although according to it the first man was not created direct from clay.

## **First Man In The Qur'an**

Not only according to the Islamic and Qur'anic belief, but according to all religions, the first man was not only more developed than all the subsequent men; but was more developed than even the modern man. From the moment he stepped his foot in the world the first man was the vicegerent of Allah as well as His Prophet. It is a point worth consideration why the first man who appeared, appeared as a Divinely appointed authority and Prophet, while it seems more natural according to the evolutionary process that first ordinary men should appear and after they have attained a fairly high degree of development, one of them be appointed a Prophet.

According to the Qur'an the first man held a very high position: When your Lord said to the angels:

***"Surely I am about to place a vicegerent in the earth, they said: Will you place therein one who will do harm in it, and will shed blood, while we hymn Your praise and sanctify You? He said: Surely I know that which you know not. And He taught Adam all the names, and then showed them to the angels, saying: Inform Me of the names of these if you are truthful." (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:30-31).***

In short the first man who came into being caused surprise to the angels. What is the secret of this? In respect of the first man the expression, ***I breathed in him of My spirit (Surah al-Hijr, 15:29)*** has been used.

This shows that the structure of this being had in it a higher element besides the material elements and it is this higher element which has been described by the above expression. In other words in the structure of this being something very special was put by Allah, who made him His vicegerent:

***"I am about to place a vicegerent (My vicegerent) in the earth. " (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:30).***

Thus the Qur'an gives the impression that the first man who stepped his foot on the earth did so as a Divine authority, a Prophet and a being having contact with the unseen world. Our Imams have laid stress on this origin of man in order to establish that the last man on the face of the earth would also be holding the same dignified position as the first man. Actually the world of humanity can never be devoid of a being possessing the spirit of I am about to place a vicegerent in the earth. The existence of all other men depends on his existence.

If such a man does not exist, others also cannot exist. Such a man is called 'Divine authority'. By Allah, the world cannot be devoid of an authoritative master appointed by Allah . This sentence has been extracted from the sayings of Nahjul Balaghah and quoted in many books. I have heard the late Ayatullah Burujardi citing it, said that it was a sentence which Imam Ali pronounced while in Basra and that it was regularly reproduced both by the Shi'ah and the Sunnis. This sentence is the concluding part of a tradition reported by Kumayl. He says that one day Imam Ali caught hold of his hand and took him out of the city. When they reached a secluded place known as Jablbn, Imam Ali heaved a deep sigh and said: *"Kumayl, the hearts are receptacles. The most retentive of them are the best. Therefore remember what I tell you. The men are of three types: a Divine scholar, a pupil seeking salvation and a buzzing fly".*<sup>1</sup>

According to Imam Ali's terminology a divine scholar is not an ordinary scholar, although we often apply this term indiscriminately. He means a scholar 100 per cent devoted to Allah. In this sense perhaps this term can apply only to the Prophets and the Imams. The second group is that of the pupils who receive knowledge from the first group. The third group is of those "who have not sought the light of knowledge and have not resorted to a strong support." After saying this Imam Ali complained of the people of his time. He said that he had great amount of knowledge to impart, but he did not find any one fit to receive it. He added that there were some people intelligent enough, but they wanted to use what they learnt to gain their selfish ends and to exploit religion for their worldly gains.

Therefore he had to withhold knowledge from them. There were others who were good people, but they were fools. They did not understand or understood wrongly. From what Imam Ali said so far it appeared that he was totally disappointed. But that was not the case. He was talking of the majority only, for he added: *"No, not indeed: The earth is never without a divine authority, whether visible and known or*

*hidden and unseen. The existence of such an authority is necessary so that Allah's proofs and arguments may not become invalid. But how many and where are such people? Indeed very few, but very dear to Allah. It is through them that Allah preserves His proofs and arguments. They pass on their knowledge to their likes and cultivate it in the hearts of their counterparts."*

Speaking further about these individuals who receive their knowledge from Divine source, Imam Ali said: "*Knowledge rushes to them giving them insight into the truth.*" In other words their knowledge is intuitive, not acquired, and is free from every error and mistake. "*They are endowed direct with the spirit of conviction*", for they are in direct touch with the unseen world. "*What is difficult for those who are accustomed to luxurious living, is easy to them. The most difficult thing for those who live in ease and luxury is to devote themselves to Allah.*" "*They are familiar with that to which the ignorant are averse. They live in the world while their souls are attached to the highest place.*" "*Their bodies are with the people in this world, but their souls are somewhere else. The people find them among themselves, but do not know that their souls are attached to some elevated place.*"

That is the logic of Imamah. That is the reason why there is a chapter in al-Kafi entitled, *Babul Hajjah*. Reports in this chapter say that even if only two persons were left in the world, one of them would be a hujjah or Divinely appointed authority. I propose to quote some extracts from the Babul Hajjah of al-Kafi so that you may become better acquainted with this logic. All other questions such as that the people must have an Imam so that he may dispense justice to them or so that he may resolve the controversies about religious matters, are subsidiary questions. An Imam is not required to administer the government and hence he is not to be chosen by the people. He is above all such things. The administration of government may be called a side business of him. Now we put forward selected words of various traditions so that the logic of Imamah may become clear.

A report from Imam Al-Sadiq: This is a report relating to the Prophets. It is said that a zindiq (a free thinker or an atheist)<sup>2</sup> asked Imam Al-Sadiq how he could prove the existence of the Prophets and the Divine Messengers. The Imam basing his reply on the doctrine of monotheism, said:

*"We know for certain that we have a Creator, who is far above us and above all that He has created. That Creator is wise and sublime, but we cannot have direct contact with Him. It is not possible for His creation to see Him, to touch Him or to argue with Him. But we need His guidance, for He alone knows what is in our interest and what is beneficial to us. Therefore there must be some messengers of Him to convey His message to His creation and His slaves and to tell them what is to their advantage and what is detrimental to them. This proves that there are some admonishers appointed by Allah, the Wise, the All-knowing."*

About these admonishers (Prophets and Imams) Imam Al-Sadiq says: "*They are wise men, wisely trained and sent with a wise message. They have been created exactly like other people, but still they are different from them.*" They have an additional dimension and an additional spirit. "*They enjoy the support of the All-wise and All-knowing who has granted them wisdom. The existence of such a person*

*is essential in every age and every period of time, so that the world may not be devoid of a master (hujjah) having signs showing his veracity and irreprochability."*

## **Zayd Ibn Ali And Imamah**

Imam Muhammad Baqir's brother, Zayd ibn Ali was a pious and virtuous man. Our Imams have sanctified him and his uprising. But it is a controversial point whether he claimed Khilafah for himself or sought it for his brother, and his campaign aimed at only 'enjoining good and forbidding evil'. However, it is certain that our Imams have venerated him and have described him as a martyr. A report in al-Kafi says: *"By Allah! He passed away as a martyr."* Another report which we are going to reproduce now shows that he was mistaken. It is a different matter how such a great man made such a grave mistake.

One of the companions of Imam Muhammad Baqir is known as Abu Ja'far Ahwal. He says that while Zayd ibn Ali was under-ground, one day he sent for me and said to me: "If anyone of us rises against the present government will you be prepared to cooperate?" I said: "Yes, provided your father and the brother agree." "I intend to rise myself and have nothing to do with my brother", said he. "In that case I will not cooperate", said I. He said: "Why? Are you not willing to sacrifice your life for me?" I said: "I have one life only. If in this world there was a master (hujjah), appointed by Allah, then he who stayed away, would be safe, and he who went out with you, would perish. If there was no master appointed by Allah, then he who stayed away and he who went out with you were alike."

[Hence it was immaterial whether I did or did not join you in your uprising].

Abu Ja'far Ahwal knew what Zayd meant. According to this tradition Ahwal told him that there was a master or a *hujjah* existing in the world and that *hujjah* was Zayd's brother, not Zayd himself. In reply Zayd said what amounted to saying: "How do you know (that my brother is the *hujjah*) while I do not know? My father loved me very much, but he never told me anything about that. He was so fond of me that in my childhood while taking food, he always seated me beside him. Whenever he found that any food was too hot for me, he always cooled it and then put it into my mouth. How can you expect a loving father, who was so affectionate and never allowed my mouth to burn, which he would ever allow me to be burnt in Hell?" Abu Ja'far Ahwal said: "It was because your father was very fond of you that he did not tell you anything about this question. He was afraid that if he told you, you would deny it and thus earn Hell. He was aware of your impudent spirit. He intentionally kept you in the dark so that at least you might not become hostile to your brother. But he told me the truth so that if I accepted it, I might be saved and if not, I shall be doomed. Fortunately I have accepted the truth".

Abu Ja'far Ahwal says that he asked Zayd who was superior, the members of his family or the Prophets. Zayd replied that the Prophets were. Then Abu Ja'far said: "Prophet Ya'qub said to his son Yousuf who was also a Prophet: ***'My dear son, tell not your brothers of your vision, lest they plot a plot against you. (Surah Yusuf, 12:5)***. Prophet Ya'qub gave this advice because he loved Yousuf, and he knew that if his brothers came to know that he would attain such a high position, they would immediately become

his enemies. The story of your father and brother with you is exactly like the story of Ya'qub with Yousuf and his brothers."

Zayd had no reply to give. At last he said: "Now that you have told me all this, I also may tell you that your friend in Medina (He meant 'your Imam', which is Imam Muhammad Baqir) has apprised me that I would be killed and crucified at the garbage dump of Kufa and that he had a book, in which there was a prediction about my being killed and crucified."

Here Zayd, so to say, turned a new leaf. He advanced an entirely new argument. Anyhow, what he said supported the view that he believed in the Imamah of his brother. First he said something to Abu Ja'far and continued to talk in the same vein. But when he saw that Abu Ja'far firmly believed in Imamah, he changed the trend of his talk and made clear that he was not unmindful of the true position. He implied that he was launching his struggle with the knowledge and approval of his brother. Abu Ja'far adds that one year he went to Makkah. There he related this story to Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq, who confirmed his view.

According to another tradition Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq said: "*In the world there will always be an Imam.*" He is also reported to have said: "*If only two persons were left, one of them would be the master (hujjah) of the other.*"

A report from Imam Al-Ridha': In this connection we have a large number of traditions. There is a detailed report which is connected with Imam Al-Ridha'. A man named Abdul Aziz ibn Muslim says: "We were in Marv with Imam Al-Ridha' when he went to Khurasan while he was still a heir apparent. Once on Friday we were in the Jami' Mosque. The Imam was not present there. In the mosque there were people in a large number and they were discussing the question of Imamah. After the prayers I went to Imam Al-Ridha' and told him what had transpired there. The Imam sarcastically smiled and said: "These people are ignorant and have deceptive opinions. Allah carried away His Prophet only after He had completed his mission. Allah has revealed the Holy Qur'an which contains all the rules of law and all that is permissible or forbidden. In the Holy Qur'an there is every thing that the people need in connection with their religion. The Holy Qur'an itself says:

***"We have not neglected anything in this Book." (Surah al-An'am, 6:38).***

In other words, nothing is missing in it. (At least all the rules of law have been described in it).

On the occasion of the Farewell Pilgrimage towards the end of his life the Holy Prophet recited this verse:

***"This day I have completed your religion and have perfected My favour on you and chose Islam as a religion for you." (Surah al-Ma'ida, 5:3).***

Imam Al-Ridha' continued: "The religion cannot be complete without the doctrine of Imamah. The Holy

Prophet departed this world only after he had explained to his ummah (followers) all the main points of their religion, showed them the right way and set up Imam Ali as a conspicuous sign and a rallying point.

In short the Qur'an expressly says that it has not left out anything unsaid. But has it not left out the details and the minor points? Actually it has dealt only with the principal points and the general rules required by the people. One of the main issues dealt with by the Qur'an is the question of Imamah.

The Qur'an indicates that the Holy Prophet was to be succeeded by a man who knew the interpretation of the Qur'an and its true meaning based not on any independent judgement or individual deduction, which might sometimes be right and sometimes be wrong, but based on his Divine knowledge of the true nature of Islam. Allah says that He has mentioned in the Qur'an everything. Even the details were not totally ignored, but were left with him who knew Islam thoroughly. A man knowing Islam thoroughly has always existed and will always be existing among the people. "If any one thinks that Allah has not completed His religion, he refutes the Book of Allah. And anyone who refutes the Book of Allah is an infidel. "Do those who maintain that an Imam can be appointed by the choice of the people, know the value of Imamah and its position in the Ummah?

They think that the selection of an Imam is just like the selection of a commander of the army, while Imam means the person with whose designation, according to the Qur'an, religion has been completed. We know that the Qur'an does not deal with the minor issues. The knowledge of them has been imparted to the Imam, whose knowledge of Islam is very thorough. People cannot say who is such a person. That is why they cannot elect him, as they cannot elect a Prophet.

"Imamah is too valuable, too sublime, too lofty, too impregnable and too deep for the people to perceive it with their mind or to get to it through their own thinking."

Imamah is above the comprehension of the people. Hence it cannot be decided by election. Only that question can be called elective which can be determined by the people. Religion does not interfere with such a question direct, and basically it should not, because if it does, then what is the use of reason and intellect? Within the range of human thinking man himself is to decide, but beyond that there is no question of human choice. "Imamah is too valuable, too sublime, too lofty, too impregnable and too deep for people to know their Imam or to select him on their own. Allah first chose Ibrahim as His Prophet and friend and only then conferred Imamah on him."

If you want to know the real meaning of Imamah, then you must understand that Imamah is different from what our people nowadays say. It is not the election of a successor to the Holy Prophet for the administration of public affairs only. Imamah is a position that was attained by Prophet Ibrahim after he had been a Prophet. On attaining it he felt so happy that he said: "***And of my offspring?***" (*Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 124*). (Will there be any Imam)? He wanted some of his offspring also to attain the position he had attained. The reply was: "***My covenant included not the wrongdoers.***" (*Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 124*).

We have already explained what this reply means. Does Allah refer only to those who are wrongdoers at the time of the grant of Imamah irrespective of the fact whether previously they had been the wrongdoers or not? It is evident that Prophet Ibrahim could not possibly have asked Allah to grant Imamah to the wrongdoers. Obviously he had in mind only those of his offspring who were good. Therefore this reply meant that Imamah would be granted only to those whose past record was also unblemished.

Imam Al-Ridha' further said: *"This verse has nullified the possibility of Imamah being conferred on any wrongdoer till the Day of Resurrection and has confined Imamah to the cream among the posterity of Prophet Ibrahim. Allah has honoured him by placing Imamah in those of his posterity who were the chosen and pure."* It means those who were infallible. After saying that, Imam Al-Ridha' quoted these verses of the Qur'an and based his argument on them:

***"And we bestowed on him Ishaq, and Yaqub as a grandson. Each of them we made righteous."***  
***(Surah al-Anbiya', 21:72).***

***"And we made them Imams who guide by our Command and we inspired in them the doing of good deeds."***  
***(Surah al-Anbiya', 21:73).***

The Qur'an stresses the fact that Imamah will for ever continue in the posterity of Prophet Ibrahim. The renowned Islamic scholar Muhammad Taqi Shariati has in his book, *Khilafah and Wilayat* elaborately discussed the question why the Qur'an which does not believe in ethnic discrimination, has said so. From ethnic point of view posterity is a technical term. How did Prophet Ibrahim's posterity exclusively acquire the capability of holding Imamah is a different question.

Imam Al-Ridha' added: *"How can these ignorant people elect an Imam?"* Prophet Ibrahim attained Imamah only after he had attained Prophethood. How can these ignorant people elect any body for such a high position? Can such an assignment be elective? *"Imamah is a grade of the Prophets and heritage of the legatees."* It is something traditional in the sense that the competence to get it is transferred from generation to generation, but still it is not strictly hereditary. *"Imamah is vicegerency of Allah and Caliphate of the Holy Prophet."* It is the same vicegerency which Adam was the first to hold. *"Imamah regulates the religion."* It is an organization of the Muslims and a system of their life. Their prosperity and honour depend on it. It is the basis of Islam and the highest department of it. *"The accomplishment of Prayers, Zakat, Fasting, Hajj and Jihad etc. is linked with the existence of an Imam."*

## **Conclusion**

All this leads us to a logical course of thinking. If we accept it, it has a basis. If somebody rejects it by chance, which is a different matter. This logical course is different from the pursuit of superficial and ordinary questions discussed by the majority of the scholastic theologians. For example, they say that Abu Bakr succeeded the Holy Prophet as the first Caliph, while Ali was the fourth.

Now the theologians discuss the point whether Ali should have been the first Caliph or, for example, the fourth, and whether Abu Bakr fulfilled the conditions necessary for Imamah. They then discuss the qualification which an Imam, in the sense of a head of the Muslim State must possess. No doubt this question is also of basic importance, and from this point of view the Shi'ah have in this connection raised some objections and quite valid too, but on principle it is not proper to confuse the issue of Imamah with the question whether Abu Bakr did or did not possess the qualifications necessary for being an Imam.

As a matter of fact the Sunnis do not believe in Imamah in that sense in which the Shi'ah do. In short, the Sunnis hold that the metaphysical aspects of man mentioned by Allah in connection with Adam, Ibrahim and others up to the Holy Prophet, have come to an end. Now all men are ordinary human beings. At the most there are scholars who have acquired knowledge. They sometimes make a mistake and sometimes do not. Similarly there are rulers. Some of them are irreproachable, whereas some others are wicked. That is the end of the question. The Sunnis do not believe, as we do, in the 'Divine masters' (*hujjah*) having contact with the metaphysical world, for they think that with the demise of the Holy Prophet all this has terminated.

The Shi'ah say that there is no doubt that with the Holy Prophet the Prophethood has come to an end. Now no Prophet will come and no new religion will be brought by any human being. There is only one religion and that is Islam. The Prophet of Islam is the last Prophet. But the question of the *hujjah* and perfect man has not come to an end at all. As the first man was of this category, the last man must also be like him. Among the Sunnis only the sufis believe in this doctrine, though they also give it a different name.

That is why we see that some sufis despite their being Sunnis accept the doctrine of Imamah in some of their writings in the same sense in which the Shi'ah do. Muhyuddin ibn Arabi is an Andalusian. Andalus (Spain) was one of those countries, the inhabitants of which were not only Sunnis but were also fanatically anti-Shi'ah, having a smack of Nasibiism in them. The reason was that Andalus was originally conquered by the Umayyads who ruled over it for a long time. The Umayyads, bore malice against the Holy Prophet's household. Perhaps in Andalus there were not any Shiites and if there were, their number was as very small. Muhyuddin is an Andalusian, but on account of his gnostic taste he believes that the earth can never be devoid of a *Wali* and *hujjah*.

He accepts the Shi'ah point of view in this connection and recounts the names of the Imams. While mentioning the last Imam, he goes so far as to claim that he personally met Muhammad ibn Hasan 'Askari at such and such place a few years after 600 A.H. But despite all this he has made many statements against Shiah doctrines, and is basically a biased Sunni, but because of his gnostic inclination he admits that it is not possible that at any time there be no *Wali* (or *hujjah* as our Imams say) on the earth. He even claims: "I had an audience with Muhammad ibn Hasan Askari, who is now in occultation and whose age at present is more than 300 years."

## **Question And Answer**

### **Question**

As you have said, it is true that the main subject of dispute between the Shi'ah and the Sunnis is the question of Khilafah and Wilayat. Unfortunately most Shi'ah who are not aware of the true nature of Imamah ask how it comes that the Qur'an mentions the word Wilayat only and the word Khilafah is not found in it, while Khilafah is different from Wilayat. That was the reason why I was keen to ascertain if the word '*Mawla*' has been translated as Khalifah also. The other day I found that the well-known dictionary, al-Munjid has given 'Khalifa' as one of the meanings of *Mawla*. As such in my opinion the question now stands resolved. In this connection I would like to know what the correct word is, *Khalifah* or *Khalif*. Of course the Qur'an has used the word *Khalifah*.

### **Answer**

It is not correct. In the Qur'an the word Khalifah has not been used in the sense in which we normally use it, though in the Shi'ah tradition this word has been frequently used in this sense. Anyhow the use of a particular word is not very important.

The significance of the Khalifah in the construction *Khalifatullah* (vicegerent of Allah) is quite different from its significance in the construction *Khalifatur Rasul* (successor to the Holy Prophet). We must not lay unnecessary stress on whether or not this word has been used in the Qur'an or the Sunnah. What is important is the sense of the word, not the word itself.

You have said that *Khalif* is one of the meanings of *Mawla*. That is not true. I think you have been mistaken. In al-Munjid the word is *Halif*, not *Khalif*. *Halif* means an ally or a supporter. Among the Arabs two or more individuals or tribes used to take oath to help each other. They were called *Hulafa* and each of them was called *Halif* of the others. As such if the word *Mawla* is used in the sense of *Halif*, it still means a helper and a supporter.

1. Nahjul Balagha, Saying 146.

2. At that time the word, 'zindiq' was not an abusive term as it is now. In those days a number of people were called zindiqs and they did not think it insulting to be called so. In our times the same is the case with the word, materialist. Of course a monotheist would never like to be called so, but he who is a materialist, may even be proud of this appellation. As regards the origin of the word, zindiq, there are various theories. Mostly it is believed that the zindiqs were Manichaeans who appeared in the beginning of the second century, that is the century in which Imam Al-Sadiq lived. Many westerners and other scholars have discussed the question of the zindiqs in Islam.

They have come to the conclusion that the zindiqs were the followers of Mani. It may be remembered that Mani's creed was not anti-God. Mani himself claimed to be a Prophet. Anyhow, he was a dualist, not a monotheist, and for that matter, more dualist than Zoroaster, for some people believe that Zoroaster was possibly a monotheist, who at least believed in one eternal source of the whole universe, though it cannot be proved from his writings that he believed in one Creator. In contrast, Mani was definitely a dualist and claimed to be a Prophet raised by the god of good. But later Manichaeans tended towards materialism and naturalism, and ceased to believe in anything spiritual.

# Notes On Leadership And Management

1. If we want to find out the Islamic equivalents of the technical terms, leadership and management in their modern expanded sense, we should say *irshad* (direction) and *rushd* (maturity), or *hidayat* (guidance) and *rushd*. According to Islamic terminology the capability of leadership is called *hidayat* and *irshad*, and the capability of management is the same as what is called *rushd* in Islamic jurisprudence.

In ordinary use and day to day Persian parlance '*rushd*' is a physical quality relating to body and stature, but as a term of Islamic jurisprudence it is a quality related to mental development. It means maturity of understanding as distinguished from physical maturity. When a child has attained this maturity, his property is handed over to him. The jurists (*Fuqaha*) say that physical maturity is not enough for contracting a marriage. Mental maturity is also required for this purpose. In this sense *rushd* means possessing discrimination and common sense and having the capacity of utilizing and taking care of the means of life.

2. The second point is that the guidance of man has two aspects, one stable and the other changing. While discussing Islam and the requirements of time we have said that human life has some stable aspects fitting in a stable framework. These aspects are represented by moral principles and inviolable Islamic laws. In other words human life has a fixed orbit as well as changing stages. The guidance and leadership of the Prophets fall within a fixed orbit, but human guidance and leadership operate within the range of specific questions and changeable details. For example the Holy Qur'an gives instructions about Jihad. It lays down against what people and under what circumstances holy war is to be waged, and under what conditions peace is to be concluded. This type of directions and guidance are given by the Prophets. But at what time, under whose command and with what equipment the army is to march, are the questions of detail. They are related to the movement within a fixed orbit.

3. We have said that the word, '*Wali*' is synonymous with leader. It is possible that somebody says that '*Hidayat*' means guidance, not leadership. Guidance has an instructional and propagative aspect, whereas leadership implies the sense of mobilization and giving a forward motion along a certain path. The conception of leadership covers such acts as those of formulating the ideas, mobilizing the forces, organizing the individuals and launching a movement.

Our reply is that it is correct that the word '*Hidayat*' signifies guidance but it is used in the sense of leadership also. Not only that, but it is used to convey the sense of leading to the desired goal too. Perhaps the words, *Siyadat*, *Qiyadat* and *Imamah* convey the sense of leadership better.

4. There is one more question. It is the question of the need of leadership and a leader. This pivotal point is the basis of the Prophets' teachings. In the Shi'ah creed the question of *Imamah* is based on the permanent need of the existence of an infallible and impeccable person.

5. Another question is that of the conditions, means and principles of leadership.
6. One more question is that of the objectives of leadership.
7. Another question is that of the types of leadership.
8. "Thorough knowledge of human physiognomy is essential for a leader, and for that matter for any man who works with other people on any level, whether in the house, in the school, in the factory or in any other organization".<sup>1</sup>
9. We have cited a well-known tradition regarding travelling. The Holy Prophet has said that if two (or three) persons travel together, they should choose one of them as their chief and the manager. This tradition shows how much importance Islam attaches to leadership and to discipline.
10. Relationship between leadership on the one hand and organization and discipline on the other.
11. Leadership is an art that can be learnt like any other arts.
12. "Human behaviour has its own laws or mechanism. Every action produces a corresponding reaction. If we want to work smoothly with other people, we must know the laws and the mechanism that govern their behaviour. Men are like a mystery box, to open which a special key is required. Their cooperation can be secured by means of knowledge and graceful manners, not by force. The laws of human behaviour are not to be formulated. They are to be discovered like the laws of physics, chemistry and physiology. The rules and regulations made to guide human conduct will be received well only if they are in consonance with the laws of human nature and human behaviour"<sup>2</sup>.

The same book quotes a high official of the secretariat as having said: "Our office equipment has been modernized, but unfortunately our men are worn out."

13. Ref: No. 4 & 11: "Nowadays the need of leadership is discussed under the general heading of management. Industrial management, commercial management, technical management and administrative management are all probably classified as administrative sciences. Our age is the age of administration and management"<sup>3</sup>.
14. "Do not cross this stage unaccompanied by a *Khizr* (true guide). It is a dark place; beware of going astray."
15. "He will perish who does not have a wise man to guide him and a foolish man to support him."
16. The famous Persian poet, Hafiz says: "Try to learn if you do not know. Unless you walk yourself, how will you be able to lead others?"
17. Describing the qualifications required for a leader, Plato says that the kings must be philosophers. The eminence of a philosopher must be combined with the grandeur of a king.

## 18. Conditions and Means of Leadership

"A leader must be able to play a creative role in:

(i) Organizing divergent human forces,

(ii) And utilizing them for achieving the desired objectives, both individual and collective." (*Preface to Leadership*, p. 45)

19. The following Qur'anic verse explicitly shows the active and reformatory leadership of the Holy Prophet of Islam:

***"It was by the Mercy of Allah that you were lenient with them, for if you had been stern and fierce of heart, they would have dispersed from you. So pardon them and seek forgiveness for them and consult with them upon the conduct of affairs. And when you are resolved, then put your trust in Allah. Surely Allah loves those who put their trust in Him."* (Surah Ale Imran, 3: 159).**

20. The incident of Abu Lubabah and his repentance and the incident of the three persons who lagged behind at the time of the Battle of Tabuk, and were subsequently excommunicated by the order of the Holy Prophet. They were left isolated and so took shelter in the hills.

***"And to the three also (did He turn in mercy) who were left behind, when the earth, vast as it is, was straitened for them, and their own souls were straitened for them, till they bethought them that there is not refuge from Allah save towards Him."* (Surah at-Taubah, 9: 118).**

The incidents of Sa'd ibn Rabi', Abu Dharr and Abd Allah ibn Jumu' are unique examples of securing general cooperation and carrying out public affairs and relationship.

21. One of the requirements of a leader is his possessing of cooperative spirit and his practical participation in general effort. Initiative is all the more necessary. Example is more important than precept.

22. Relating to the importance of the right action at the right time, '*Preface To Leadership*' says: "nine factor plays the basic role in leadership. Time-consciousness is an essential quality of a successful leadership."

23. The Holy Prophet was the bearer of the Divine Message and the leader of Divine movement. Imam Husayn son of Imam Ali was the leader of a revolutionary uprising in Islam. The Holy Prophet undertook the task of awakening a slumbering society and Imam Husayn rose to bring back a straying society to the right path. Both of them displayed high qualities of leadership. The Holy Prophet was a leader having a mission, a message and an ideology. He organized the necessary forces and mobilized them. He conveyed the Divine Message to the people of the world and shattered their ideological and social shackles. Imam Husayn led a Holy revolution against ostentation, hypocrisy and falsehood, and guided a

reformatory uprising in order to enjoin what is right and to forbid what is wrong.

With reference to No. 22 – Ali and time-consciousness -- In reply to Abu Sufyan Imam Ali said: *"Successful is he who either rose up with a wing or resigned and relaxed. This water is polluted. It is a morsel which chokes its eater. The one who plucks the fruit before it is ripe is like the man who sows in the land which does not belong to him."*<sup>4</sup>

25. Self-confidence is one of the essential qualities of a leader. In other words a leader must have faith in his success. The Holy Prophet in the early days of his apostleship used to talk of the forthcoming submission of the Romans and the Iranians. At that time the Quraysh and the Bani Hashim ridiculed him.

***"The messenger believes in that which has been revealed to him from his Lord." (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:285)***.

What had been revealed included this verse:

***"He it is who has sent His messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, so that He may cause it to prevail over all religion." (Surah al-Fath, 48:28)***.

Imam Husayn was fully confident of the result of his uprising. He said to Abu Hirrah or someone else that his opponents would kill him, but afterwards they would be disgraced and would bring shame on themselves. On the day of Ashura (10th Muharram) he told his companions that they had only that much time left to them as a rider takes in riding his horse and getting off it. He also said to his family members: *"Note that only Allah is your protector and saviour."*

26. For the essential qualities of a leader refer to the notes <sup>5</sup> on the qualities of a reformer, especially to Imam Ali's saying:

***"Nobody can establish Allah's command except he who does not compromise on principles, is not a specimen of depravity and is not greedy."*<sup>6</sup>**

A number of positive and negative qualities of a leader have been mentioned in *'Preface to Leadership'*, p. 66. The positive qualities include correct and quick appraisal of the situation, being firm and quick in decision, bold and quick action, visualization of precautionary measures in case of failure, preparedness to face criticism, tolerance of opposite views, courage of taking responsibility and accepting the consequences in case of failure, fair distribution of human labour, handing over authority commensurate with ability, organization, eagerness to obtain the latest information relevant to his functions, leniency mixed with sternness, dignity accompanied with simplicity, encouragement of the subordinates and the promotion of their capabilities, attention to the emotional problems of the individuals and the feeling of delight at their success. [Some of these items are the duties of a good leader, not his essential qualities].

The negative qualities of a reformer are lack of self-confidence, faltering decisions, fear of the possible consequences, getting perplexed when faced with an unexpected development, intolerance of criticism and of the views contrary to his own, impatience for achieving results, having a complex of leadership, demanding blind obedience from every body, self-praise, unsociability, abstaining from studies and acquiring information, getting depressed at the success of others and indifference to the human and emotional needs of the people.

He who lacks the above mentioned positive qualities cannot organize and mobilize the unfolded, but marvellous human forces for constructive purposes. Before everything else a man aspiring to become a leader should evaluate his positive and negative qualities.

## **Style Of Leadership**

27. The style of leadership may be despotic, dictatorial or 100 per cent individualistic. It may also be consultative, cooperative and based on common thinking.

Naturally ordinary people having individualistic and despotic tendencies dictate their laws and policies to their followers and do not care for the opinion of others. They encourage their followers and chide them in accordance with their own decisions and personal feelings. In the words of "*The Preface to Leadership*" such people are self-appointed leaders.

A consultative leadership always discovers the necessary solutions to the problems coming before it out of the suggestions advanced by its followers. Such a leadership, according to the same book is a popular and democratic leadership.

Besides, a leader who consults his followers and gives due importance to their suggestions, accords a personality to his followers, encourages them to follow him willingly and secures their whole-hearted cooperation.

"The style of a leader is different from his objectives. It is possible that the objectives of a leader may be noble, but his style of leadership be despotic and objectionable. It is also possible that his objectives may be objectionable, but the method adopted by him to implement them be democratic."[7](#)

28. There is another useful and interesting discussion in '*The Preface on Leadership*'. "Some leaders pay exclusive attention to their objective and almost pay no attention to their followers. The policy of some other leaders is entirely contrary to that. The first group thinks of the desired results only and pays no attention to the individual wishes, emotional longings and special aspirations of its followers. Not only that but occasionally treats them sternly. The second group regards the winning of the hearts of its followers more important than anything else and just to please them often deviates from its basic goal in the middle of the way.

To keep a balance between these two tendencies is one of the most basic duties of a good leader and

his success depends on his finding a solution to this problem."<sup>8</sup>

29. Under the heading "*Prosperity –A Common Desire Of All Men*", this book makes an improper interpretation of the root-cause of the success of the great leaders. It says: "All men usually keep waiting for a better day and a more opportune time when they may secure every thing to their heart's liking and may find no trace of oppression and tyranny, corruption and poverty, grief and disease. After all what are all the uprisings, revolts, yearnings, hopes, vexations, excitements, waiting and suffering for? Are they not for a better day, a more prosperous time and a more dignified future?"<sup>9</sup>

The writer does not explain what he means by a better day. Does he mean a day when better and more profuse means of living would be available or does he believe that man has a higher ideal also in the depth of his soul, for the achievement of which he is always consciously or unconsciously striving? Or is it that he does not go beyond the limits of bread and butter?

Discussing the impulse that induces man to look for a leader and a saviour, to admire the leader and the saviour and to indulge in hero-worship, the author says: "What usually induces man to look for a leader, is his desire to obtain prosperity. For this purpose man makes every effort to find the best possible leader, and when he thinks that he has found one, he does all that he can to praise him and applaud him.

The author believes that hero-worship results from man's desire to find a saviour. In his opinion man lauds a hero as a means of getting better livelihood. But this is a very debatable point. Hero-worship is different from admiring a hero. A hero-worshipper is willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of the hero whom he worships. He does not merely like him as a means of his own prosperity. The cause of the author's mistake is that he has not paid due attention to the sense of worship or has not attached enough importance to it.

30. The Qur'an says:

***"And (remember) when his Lord tried Ibrahim with His Commands, and he fulfilled them, He said: Surely I have appointed you an Imam for mankind. Ibrahim said: 'And of my offspring' (will there be Imams)? He said: 'My covenant includes not the wrongdoers." (Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 124)***

This verse indicates the importance of leadership and man-management. Prophet Ibrahim had to pass through many trials because of his faith. He was thrown into a burning fire; he had to fight a whole nation single-handedly; he broke the idols and he went to the extent that he was about to slaughter his own son. After he had passed through all these trials successfully, Allah called him an Imam and a leader. From this an idea of the extraordinary importance of leadership can be easily gathered. There is a tradition which says: "*Allah appointed Ibrahim a Prophet before He appointed him His Messenger; He appointed him His Messenger before He appointed him His Friend; and He appointed him His Friend before He appointed him an Imam.*"

There is a well-known tradition according to which the Holy Prophet said: *"If more than two persons travel together, let them elect one of them as their leader."* This tradition shows the importance which Islam attaches to organization, management and leadership.

It is a fact that to mobilize the dormant human forces and leading men along the path of perfection are the most noble and the most difficult tasks both from the viewpoint of this worldly social life and from the viewpoint of moral and spiritual life. That is why no one is worthy of an all round and perfect leadership but such men as Prophet Ibrahim, the last Holy Prophet of Islam and Imam Ali (Peace be on them).

31. We have said that maturity means capability of utilizing and managing the assets and the means of life and looking after them. Now we say that the most important of all assets are human assets and the most important and the most basic type of maturity is one's capability of correctly exploiting and looking after one's own personal and moral resources. That is why we see that when Ibrahim asked Allah to appoint some of his descendants also Imams and leaders, he was told:

***"My covenant does not include the wrongdoers" (Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 124).***

In other words, those who lack individual and personal maturity, which is those who lack human and moral maturity cannot become the leaders of others. He who is not himself a man, cannot be a man-maker, man-engineer and a cultivator of men. (Like plants putting forth their shoots).

Organization of human resources, their exploitation and utilization, their motivation and mobilization means breaking off man's moral and spiritual shackles:

***"He will relieve them of their burden and the fetters that they used to wear." (Surah al-A'raf, 7: 157).***

It is this maturity that is called today management or leadership.

In respect of individual maturity it must be made clear that man's mental and intellectual faculties are one of his assets. They require good management for being utilized well. For example there is a faculty of memory. How should it be utilized? Some people think that it is enough to have a good and strong memory. Others think that as their memory is weak, it is no use doing any intellectual work. They do not think that memory also requires management and training. It needs a special method to promote it. If it is supposed that memory was like an unorganized store, it would not be of much use. But if man guides his memory and uses it methodically, it will be like a well-managed library in which books have been arranged systematically in the racks and shelves according to their subjects and sizes and not heaped together haphazardly.

Those who study all sorts of books unmotivatedly and read a book of history today, a book of psychology next day, a political book on the third day and a religious book some other day, do not acquire any knowledge. The correct method is to select books for study consciously according to one's

personal needs and not to leave the selection of books to any chance. One should not study whatever book falls into one's hand. The second point is that after studying a book, the reader should check whether its contents have actually been committed to his memory. The third point is that even if one has a very strong memory, it is not enough to study a book only once. Consecutive study of a book at least twice is necessary for a strong memory and more than two times for a weak memory.

The fourth point is that study must be subject wise. Every time a particular subject should be selected for deep study. A number of relevant books should be chosen and studied. Notes should be taken and a summary should be compiled. Then that summary and the results of that study should be deposited in one of the cages of memory. Only then it can be said that optimum use of memory has been made and that the person concerned has the capability of directing and managing one of the faculties at his disposal. There is a well-known sentence in Nahjul Balaghah, which throws some light on the method of study and the management of thinking. Imam Ali says: *"Like the bodies the hearts also get bored. Therefore seek for them interesting pieces of knowledge."* [10](#)

Another example of personal guidance and self-management is exercising a control over one's feelings, emotions and inclinations. We can say that a sensitive man who cannot control his feelings is as imperfect as a licentious man. Basically personality is nothing but the ability of self-control. A man who cannot manage his desires of eating and sleeping and cannot control his tongue, eyes, ears and sexual drive, is not a man in the real sense.

As we have stated in our treatise on *Wilas and Wilayat* [11](#), sometimes man is able to acquire so much self-control that he becomes the master of his thoughts and thinking power, as the famous Persian poet Mowlawi says:

"I am master of my thoughts, not a slave of them,  
Like a mason who is master of what he builds."

Sometimes man may acquire so much self-control, which he can bring about any change he likes in his body. He can cast off his body if he so wants. Man can bring about changes in the outside world too, but that question is beyond the scope of what we are discussing now.

Man must exercise self-control even in respect of his acts of worship. There is a well-known Prophetic tradition addressed to Jabir in respect of the preservation of interest in devotional acts. The Holy Prophet said: *"Do not make worship of Allah hateful to yourself, for with coercion you can neither pass any stage, nor can keep the spirit intact."*

As for managing other people, the modern age believes in its importance so much that in Dr. Abu Talib's words, "our age is the age of management." This importance given to management is based on several considerations:

(i) Human assets are the most important assets of every society. Imam Ali says that knowledge is more

important than wealth, for knowledge is a human force and a human asset, whereas wealth is a non-human force and a non-human asset. Without this human asset that non-human asset is a calamity. If the non-human asset is missing, it can be acquired with the help of human asset but not vice versa. We see today that illiterate but rich nations possessing huge subterranean resources like Iran [12](#) and Saudi Arabia are helpless before the world powers lacking these resources and are being exploited by them. A tradition says: "*Men are like mines of gold and silver.*"

(ii) Just like petrol, which is discovered, extracted, refined and then used, the human assets, which is men are also in need of being managed, guided, discovered and turned to account. Unlike the animals that are equipped with instinct, man lacks instinct and requires learning. In other words he is in need of guidance and being led. Man's need of guidance is the basis of the teachings of the Prophets and the philosophy of their mission. The Holy Prophet's mission is also based on this philosophy.

(iii) The third point is that, as we have stated earlier, men, in their behaviour and their spiritual life, have special laws or mechanism and a special system of actions and reactions. If we want to work with human beings, we must know their mechanism and the laws governing their behaviour. Men are like mystery boxes. To open the box of their spirit and to gain their cooperation, more than anything else knowledge and tact are required, but not force. The laws of human behaviour are not to be formulated they are to be discovered like the laws of physics, chemistry and physiology.

It may clearly be seen that Islam has paid due attention to all these three points. The importance of human assets is illustrated by what Islam states about the position of man, who has been described as the vicegerent of Allah before whom the angels prostrate themselves and who has a Divine spirit in him. The Prophets have come to disclose the hidden treasures of human intellect. Allah says to man: "*I have created all things for you and have created you for Myself. He has made available to you all that is in the heavens and the earth. We have created for you all that is in the earth. We have made your livelihood in it. He has created you from the earth and settled you in it.*"

The second principle is that about which we have said that it is the basis of the Prophets' mission. The third principle is the same that is nowadays called the principle of management. It can be inferred from two Islamic sources, the first of them being the marvellous life account [13](#) of the Holy Prophet, Imam Ali and the rest of the Holy Imams, and the second source being the instructions issued by these great personalities to their representatives, whom they appointed them as the guides of the people. According to the *Sirah Ibn Hisham* the Holy Prophet told Mu'az Ibn Jabal: "*Make things easy for the people; do not make them difficult; win their hearts by telling them pleasing things; do not scare them away; and when you offer prayers with them, your prayers should be such as suit the weakest of them.*"

In the policy instructions issued by Imam Ali to his governors and administrators such as Uthman Ibn Hunaif, Qutham Ibn Abbas, Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr, Abd Allah Ibn Abbas and especially to Malik Ashtar, hundreds of psychological and social points relating to the principles of management and leadership can be discovered.

Unfortunately we are not aware of the philosophy of these instructions. For example we do not know the basic philosophy of austerity closely connected with leadership. We often describe voluntary austerity as an escape from this world and life. The well-known event of Imam Ali narrated in Nahjul Balagha, which we have reproduced in our article on ascetism, makes this philosophy quite clear. Imam Ali once went to 'Ala Ibn Ziyad Harithi's house where after some conversation 'Ala made a complain against his brother, Asim Ibn Ziyad. Imam Ali sent for him and addressed him as "*O enemy of yourself*". The Imam reproached 'Asim for his self-imposed asceticism. In reply 'Asim cited Imam Ali's own example. The Imam said: "*Allah has made it incumbent on the Imams of the Muslims to keep themselves at the level of the poorest men, so that the poor may not feel ashamed of their poverty.*"<sup>14</sup>

In the charter he issued to Malik Ashtar, Imam Ali throws light on the spirit of the elite and the masses. He says: "*Do not rely on those who are self-satisfied, having two much expectations and ever demanding more and more. Instead of them rely on the masses who know the value of service and are ready to follow the truth.*"<sup>15</sup>

In the same charter he discusses some points relating to administration and issues instructions in regard to the manner of dealing with different section of society such as the secretariat staff, army, craftsmen, judges, merchants etc. He throws light on the spirit and the value of each of them.

32. The capability of leadership is either innate or acquired. In fact it is innate as well as acquired. Some persons from childhood show a natural aptitude for leadership. They induce other children to follow their plans, both personal and general. They bring other children under their influence and make them obey them. It is, said that the Iranian king, Nadir while still a child used to draw his plans of invasion and conquest using his herd of sheep as his army. Some people believe that all or most upright Prophets have at some time in their life worked as shepherds in order to gain practical experience of leadership. Of course even an inherent leader if not infallible, needs to gain experience and learn the art of leadership. When Prophets have to be shepherds, it is evident what others will be required to do.

A point that shows ridiculous ignorance of our people is that anybody who for some time has studied jurisprudence and theology, acquired a limited knowledge in this field and writes a small book, is at once proclaimed by his followers the "outstanding leader of Shi'ism." For this very reason the question of *marja'* (religious authority) is one of the basic problems of the Shi'ah world.

We propose to discuss it, Allah Willing, in a separate article under the heading "*One of the Basic Problems of Divinity*". The fact that our society regards as leaders even those divines who are at the most fit to convey only the formal religious opinion, has stagnated the Shi'ah forces. In fact those who convey the juristic opinion, are successors to the Holy Prophet (only as far as a section of the rules of law is concerned) whereas leadership means succession to the Imam. (A successor to the Imam is responsible for issuing juristic opinion as well as assuming leadership of the Muslims.)

33. Consequences of immaturity: <sup>16</sup> – As we have stated in the article on Islamic Maturity, No. 5, he who

does not possess financial maturity, a custodian and guardian is appointed for him. Similarly in the case of an immature nation another nation comes and immediately become its guardian either overtly or covertly. The old colonialism was an open and unconcealed guardianship whereas the new colonialism is a disguised and concealed one. The guardian nation carries away every thing including the religion of the world nation. What these guardian nations have given to the Muslim nations under their hegemony is only a distorted form of Islam.

In our article on asceticism we have said that compassion is one of the rationales of austerity. In other words when it is not possible to render material help to the needy, at least moral help must be rendered. This sort of asceticism is incumbent, on the leaders.

To this effect we have quoted a tradition from Imam Ali. He said: *"Allah, the Almighty has appointed me an Imam of His creation. As such He has made it incumbent on me to be on a level with the poorest so that a poor man may remain content with his poverty and the riches of a rich man may not distract him."*

## **Notes On Leadership In Islam**

1. Imam Ali Addressing Uthman said: *"The best man in the sight of Allah is a just ruler, who has been guided by Islam and who guides others – towards it, who keeps up the Holy Prophet's traditions and who exterminates the vile innovations. The worst man in the sight of Allah is a despotic ruler, who himself is misguided and who misguides others, who exterminated the accepted traditions and reintroduces the discarded innovations. I beseech you in the Name of Allah not to be such a leader of this ummah as to be killed by the oppressed, for it has been predicted that a leader of the ummah who will open the gates of ever lasting bloodshed and sanguinary feuds, would be killed. He will create doubts among the ummah and will cause widespread disturbances, with the result that people will not be able to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. They will be agitated and confused. Therefore with your age and experience do not be a pet animal to Marwan and do not allow him to drive you wherever he likes."* [17](#)

The last sentence signifies that a leader must have an independent thinking and must not be a tool in the hands of the people surrounding him. The earlier sentences refer to the importance of the spirit of justice which a leader must possess.

2. Imam Ali's Instructions To One Of His Functionaries Whom He Had Sent To Collect Zakat. After giving him certain instructions and advising him to be sincere in his words and deeds, Imam Ali said: *"I order you not to be hostile to them, not to oppress them and not to keep yourself away from them, showing your superiority to them because you are a government officer. They are your brethren in faith and are expected to help you in the collection of dues... Woe be to the person against whom the poor, the destitute, the beggars, the under-privileged, the sufferers and the way-farers complain before Allah! The worst form of treachery is the embezzlement of public funds and the most despicable form of faithlessness is to deceive the Imam."* [18](#)

3. Imam Ali has said: "*In comparison to enjoining what is right and restraining from what is evil, all virtuous deeds and Jihad in the way of Allah, are no more than a breath in an unfathomable ocean. Enjoining what is right and restraining from what is evil do not bring any one closer to his death nor do they diminish the subsistence of anybody. But what is more valuable than all this is a just word before a cruel ruler.*"

Hence, internal reform (enjoining what is right and restraining from what is wrong) is more important than waging a holy war against the external infidels, but what is all the more important is the struggle against the deviations of a leader.

However, it may be noted that enjoining what is right is a stage of *Jihad*, and similarly a just word before a cruel ruler is also a sort of "enjoining right and forbidding wrong."

4. "Imam Ali expressly says that the view of the Khawarij that the Qur'an is enough and that there is no need of a government, any administrative machinery and any leader is wrong. The Khawarij used to say that "there is no arbiter and judge except Allah". Imam Ali said: "*Their slogan is right but they draw a wrong conclusion from it. They say that there should be no government except that of Allah. But the people must have a ruler, whether virtuous or wicked, under whose rule both the faithful and the disbeliever may work and enjoy life.*"<sup>19</sup>

The administrative machinery is called government because it maintains internal and external peace and enforces law and order. It is called Imamah because it is headed by a leader who mobilizes the dormant forces and unfolds the hidden capabilities.

In Nahjul Balaghah expression of *Wali* and *Raiyyat* has been used for the ruler and the subjects. The expression implies that the duty of the ruler is to protect and take care of his subjects. Imam Ali says: "*The greatest claim prescribed by Allah is the claim of the ruler on the subjects and the claim of the subjects on the ruler.*"<sup>20</sup>

5. "The requirements of a human being are not confined to food and shelter. The requirements of man are entirely different from those of a pigeon or a deer. Man has a number of psychological needs also which must be attended to. Therefore it is not enough for a government which wants to be normal, popular and tolerable, to meet only the material needs of the people. It is equally necessary to pay attention to their human and spiritual needs also. What is important is how the government looks at the people. Does it regard them as lifeless tools – which are also incidentally to be maintained; or as beasts of burden and milk-giving animals – that require medical care too, or as human beings having equal rights and privileges. In short, are the people for the leader or the leader for the people?"<sup>21</sup>

In the above mentioned article we have said that the recognition of the rights of the people and abstinence from anything that is detrimental to their authority is the first essential condition of a sound and normal leadership that wants to satisfy the people and gain their confidence.

We have said in the above mentioned article that the artificial link that the Church maintains between a belief in God and the rejection of the sovereignty of the people and as a corollary of that, between the sovereignty of the people and the rejection of God, has been an important factor in turning the people away from religion and faith.

The Roman Emperor Kaligola (the first century A.C. or the first century B.C.) used to say that rulers had the same kind of superiority over the people as the shepherd over the sheep. The rulers were like gods and the subjects like the cattle.

Some Western philosophers also believe that the rulers do not hold power for the benefit of their subjects. They think that the rulers have a divine right, which is to say that the subjects have been created for the convenience of the rulers.

6. In the above mentioned article we have said that although the word *Ra'iyyat* which has been used by Imam Ali, has in Persian lately acquired a disgusting sense, it actually implies the conception that the ruler is for the people, not that the people are for the ruler.

7. We have also said that it is gathered from the verse: "***Allah commands you that you restore trusts to their owners, and if you judge between people, judge justly.***" (*Surah an-Nisa, 4:58*), that the rulers are the custodians of the people. In other words it enunciates the principle: the ruler for the people, not the people for the ruler. The book, Majma' quotes Imam Muhammad Baqir and Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq to have said that this verse is addressed to the Imams and the next verse: "***Obey Allah and obey the Messenger***" (*Surah an-Nisa, 4:59*), is addressed to the people. Imam Muhammad Baqir has said: "*One of these two verses belongs to us (our rights) and the other belongs to you (your rights).*"

Imam Ali has said: "*It is essential for the Imam to judge according to what Allah has revealed and to restore the trust. If he does that it is incumbent on the people to listen to him, to obey him and to respond whenever they are called.*"<sup>22</sup>

8. Imam Ali wrote to his governor in Azerbaijan: "*Your job is not a juicy morsel provided to you. It is only a trust committed to your care. You have been appointed by your superior a shepherd (to look after the flock of people placed under you.) As such you have no right to deal with the people in a despotic manner.*"<sup>23</sup>

In his circular letter addressed to all tax collectors, Imam Ali says:

*"Do justice to the people on your part, and look after their needs patiently, for you are a treasurer of the people, a representatives of the Ummah and an ambassador of the Imams".*<sup>24</sup>

From what has been said in No. 6 – 9 it is clear that from the viewpoint of Nahjul Balaghah the basis of leadership is that the leader is for the people, not the people for the leader.

## Leadership And Management

1. The sense of leadership is synonymous with that of Imamah. While Hidayat (guidance) means to guide to the goal and management is a sort of maturity.
2. The phrase financial maturity is generally used with reference to orphans, although it applies to other individuals also. Matrimonial maturity applies to everybody.
3. Definition of maturity: Competence to take care of and to exploit the existing potentialities. This requires knowledge on the one hand and will-power on the other. Knowledge means the knowledge of the meaning, objective, value and the result of a work and ability to choose it.
4. Life is an asset. Longevity is an asset. Man has a marvellous and untapped power. His limbs, organs, and physical and spiritual faculties are all assets. History, culture, time, literature, books, technology, arts and civilization also are assets.
5. Every kind of maturity means some kind of ability of management, but when the word management is used in the sense of man-management, its sense comes closer to that of Imamah.
6. Man-management and leadership are the art of better mobilization, better organization, better control and better employment of human forces.

It is the power of management that turns weakest nations into the most strong nations. The great world leaders are not those who curb their nation and do not allow it to raise its voice. The best leader is he who mobilizes the individual forces, motivates them, co-ordinates them and creates an ideal for all the people. For an ideal two things are necessary. First the people are made ideal-minded and secondly large groups of them are induced to accept the ideal introduced to them.

7. Management is required more by man than it is required by the animals. A flock of sheep can be managed by an illiterate shepherd who knows the pastures and watering places, can prevent the sheep from being scattered and protects them from being attacked by a wolf. If any sheep falls sick, he should be able to give it some treatment. But the sheep have no mysterious spiritual world. They neither have any restless forces stored within them nor do they have any complex morals to learn. They are not the vicegerents of Allah or the manifestations of His Names and Attributes, nor have they been "*created of the best stature*." That is the reason why the sheep require a shepherd while man needs a leader, and that leader must be more superior to other men than a shepherd is to the sheep.

8. The difference between Prophethood and Imamah is that the first is guidance and the second is leadership. The first is conveying, intimating, apprising and showing the right path. The second is directing by going in front and mobilizing the available forces and organizing them. Some Prophets were guides as well as leaders like Ibrahim, Musa, 'Isa and the last Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on them). Some others were only guides, but the Imams are only leaders. They are guided by the guidance given

by the last Prophet.

9. Difference between the concept of leadership in the modern world and in the terminology of Islam.

10. Three important points about men: (i) Men are great treasures. "They discover for them mental treasures." (ii) Instinct is not enough for human being. (iii) The laws of man's spirit are so complex that a leader cannot be successful without knowing the laws governing human life. The knowledge of these laws is the key of dominating the hearts of the people. Often it is necessary to remove the complexes, fetters and shackles. "***He will relieve them of their burden and the fetters that they used to wear.***" (*Surah al-Araf, 7:15*). The Holy Prophet's man-management in his family, among his companions and in connection with preparing the troops. He knew how to manage and conduct man.

The Holy Prophet's inspiring instructions, regarding preaching and management, to Mu'az Ibn Jabal: "*Make things easy; do not make them difficult; win the hearts of the people by telling them pleasing things; do not scare them away; and when you offer prayers with them, your prayers should be such as suit the weakest of them.*"

The incident of Imam Ali and 'Asim Ibn Ziyad. Imam Ali's extraordinary austerity was a part of his administration.

11. The essential qualities of a leader are: Initiative, creative power of organization, power of attracting people and gaining their love and faith. (Refer to point no. 15).

12. The Holy Prophet's leadership astonished Abu Sufyan. The story of three different persons at Tabuk  
– The story of Abuzhar.

13. The Holy Prophet has said that if three persons travel together, they should make one of them their leader. This shows the importance which Islam attaches to man-management. Addressing the Holy Prophet, Allah has said if he does not specify who would be the Leader, he would not have conveyed Allah's Message.

14. Imam Husayn's life is a superb example of leadership.

15. Qualities of a Leader:

- (a) Initiative;
- (b) Sympathy – Story of Imam Ali and 'Asim ibn Ziyad – public life,
- (c) Power of organization,
- (d) Ability of selecting the right man for the right job,
- (e) Ability of gaining the love and loyalty of the people,
- (f) Ability of convincing people of the importance and necessity of achieving his objective.
- (g) Understanding the prevailing conditions. ... "*Brackish water and choking morsel.*"
- (h) Faith and confidence in the objective,

- (i) Faith and confidence in the success – No wavering – Self confidence (The Holy Prophet and full faith in his mission. Imam Husayn also was confident of the result of what he was doing.
- (j) Correct choice of an action.
- (k) Correct choice,
- (k) Quick choice,
- (1) Firmness,
- (m) Determination No wavering in the choice of any step nor in the choice of the goal itself,
- (n) Boldness and no fear of the consequences,
- (o) Foresight,
- (p) Advance planning of the measures to be taken in case of failure,
- (q) Magnanimity and broad-mindedness. "Broad-mindedness is essential for leadership."
- (r) Courage of accepting defeat,
- (s) Appropriate distribution of work and human force,
- (t) Will-power and a personality strong enough to inspire and influence other people. A power of delivering the message in a convincing way goes along with such a personality. That was the reason why the pagans thought that the Holy Prophet possessed some mysterious magical power.

Imam Ali addressing to Ibn Abbas said: *"This Caliphate is more trivial to me than an old shoe unless I restore a right or redress a wrong."* [25](#)

*"The greatest right prescribed by Allah in that which the ruler can claim on the ruled and that which the ruled can claim on the ruler. It is an obligation prescribed by Allah which each of them owes to the other. This system has been set for the development of love between them and for the glory of their religion. The ruled will not be good unless the rulers are sound, and the rulers will not be good unless the ruled are honest."* [26](#)

The real position of a ruler is that of a trustee.

Out of all the qualities of an Imam, the most important qualities are two: justice and guidance. These two are the main objectives for which the Prophets have been raised, so that the people may set up justice. The Holy Prophet has been described as a preacher calling to Allah and an illuminating lamp. From the viewpoint of justice an Imam is a protector and trustee; and from the viewpoint of guidance he is a leader and chief. From both the angles he is a model and an example. His personality is a perfect manifestation of justice as well as a perfect manifestation of progress, maturity and sound leadership.

The most pertinent question in regard to Imamah is what need it satisfies. As Prophethood is the product of a definite need, so is Imamah.

Four assignments of the Holy Prophet: Religious authority, political leadership, dispensation of justice and supervision of the condition and its idea.

The Qur'anic verse saying that the example of the Holy Prophet is to be followed.

The truth about infallibility and its connection with perfect faith. Hadith of Thaqualayn and its relation to infallibility. The verse, "**Your master is only Allah**" (*Surah At-Tawbah, 9:51*), and its connection with infallibility.

Different uses of the word, "Imam" in connection with religious authority and political leadership – the rightful Imam and the false and despotic Imam.

Rational proof of Imamah and Wilayat in the sense of having power to take independent action – Wilayat a part of the cosmic laws. A Comparative study of the arguments advanced by such scholastic theologians as Allamah Hilli and Shaykh Mufid and the argument of Allamah Tabatabai which we have reproduced in the *Khilafah and Wilayat*, p. 380.

The Shi'ah discuss the question of Wilayat and Imamah from three angles: religious authority, political leadership and a belief in the perfect man and master of the time.

The question of the master of the time and the question of the friend of Allah – Ascribng administration to someone other than Allah – Ascribng failure to someone other than Allah – Ascribng revelation or bounties to someone other than Allah – There is no question of man's discretion – Meaning of the verse, "for myself I have no power to benefit."

The Qur'an and man – What is the position of man according to the Qur'an? He is before whom the angels prostrated, themselves.

The discussion of 'Divine favour' (*Lutf*) and the 'more appropriate' – Through this discussion the existence of an infallible Imam is proved – The discussion of the real position of man – Imamah in the sense of spiritual guardianship shows man's importance, and hence its discussion is the discussion of man.

Man in fact has two lives, one external and the other spiritual. Both the lives are actual. It is not that man's spiritual life is something unreal or phenomenal.

## **Difference Between Prophethood And Wilayat**

### **Difference between Prophethood and Wilayat<sup>27</sup>**

The Holy Qur'an has given the reason why the Prophets have always been the human beings. The gist of the matter is that the Prophets besides being a medium of conveyance of the Divine message are a medium of imparting knowledge also. Man can receive knowledge from a non-human being but he can neither love him, nor can he emulate him.

"How comes it that religion has made history, brought a culture into existence, trained innumerable men and many generations as it wanted, but it has not been able over history to bring into existence a single ideal city? The sociologists say and the historians admit that since Plato's time till today and even during

Mesopotamian civilization, not a single ideal city of this type has ever existed. The reason is that an ideal city is that in which there should not be a Divine Leader (Imam)"[28](#)

The question is why an ideal city as conceived by the philosophers does not have an Imam. Actually it is a drawback of the school of philosophers. Their school has no spiritual basis. It has only rational basis.

The difference between the religious ideology and other ideologies is not exclusively that of having and not having an Imam. Further, such a model should be looked for among the companions and the followers of the Holy Prophet, not in the exceptional personality of an Imam or the Prophet. If it is possible for everybody to become an Imam, then why one individual only? If it is not possible, then an Imam cannot be an example for others. Anyhow, he can be a supreme model.

It appears that the thesis of the book "Ummah and Imamah" has been drawn from *A Preface to Leadership*. The only difference is that the Ummah and Imamah is a book that is committed to the support of a religious theory, whereas the book, *A Preface to Leadership* has no such commitment and is exclusively based on psychological aspects. It expressly says that Imam, especially the Hidden Imam meets the spiritual requirement of man, who needs a leader.

## **Imamah Of Imams**

One of the proofs of Imamah is the Divine knowledge of an Imam and the extraordinary respect that the eminent Alawis and others showed to the Imams while they were still children. When it was said to Ali ibn Jafar, an uncle of Imam Jawad's father: "In spite of being a grand old man and son of Ja'far ibn Muhammad you say so about this chief", he said: "I think you are a devil." He then took hold of his beard and said: "What can I do, when Allah considered him fit for this position and did not consider me fit in spite of my grey hair?"[29](#)

[1.](#) *Preface to Leadership*, p. 25.

[2.](#) *Preface to Leadership*, p. 25.

[3.](#) *Preface to Leadership*, p. 35.

[4.](#) *Nahjul Balagha*, Sermon 5.

[5.](#) A compromise on principles may be in the name of expedience which includes undue regard for someone. A compromise may also be due to making discrimination in showing favour or accepting an intercession. It is a known fact that the Holy Prophet awarded legal punishment even to prominent men of the Quraysh. He abstained from showing undue favour to anybody. There are three main reasons of a compromise on principles: One is fear; another is greed. Therefore a reformer must be bold, and must not be liable to be influenced by any kind of bribe including money, flattery, women etc. The third cause of compromise on principles is nepotism and showing undue favour to friends. A reformer's friendship must be for the sake of Allah only. It may be noted that undue favour has been described in the Qur'an as 'idhan' which originally meant lubricating and oiling, and hence includes flattery and deceit, and is used in the sense of compromising also. Who wish you to compromise so that they may also compromise.

A compromise on principles may be conscious but tacit or may be unconscious. Another form of a compromise on principles is the exploitation of the weak points of society instead of combating them, and being carried away by the prevailing trend of society. The examples of this attitude are the acceptance of the kissing of hands and showing too much

sensitiveness to the questions of dispute between the Shi'ah and the Sunnis.

The story of the late Mirza Muhammad Arbab can be cited as an example. The following Qur'anic verse also refers to this subject:

"My people, I delivered my Lord's message to you and gave you good advice, but you do not like those who give you good advice." (Surah al-A'raf, 7:79).

Sufyan Thawri says: "If you find a scholar having many friends, you can be sure that he is indiscriminate. Had he been telling the truth only, people would not have liked him." Abuzar said: "Enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong have left for me no friends." Imam Ali said: "Do not try to use artificial manners to be intimate with me and do not address me with those words with which the tyrants are addressed."

These words of the Imam show that to like flattery and the use of high sounding titles is also a sort of a compromise on principles. Those who like such cheap things do not succeed in reforming society. Imam Ali further said: "For me the strong is weak till I force him to restore the rights of others." He means to say that he is not one of those who compromise on principles. We frequently meet with the word compromise in connection with the Mu'awiya affair and the proposals put to Imam Ali to come to terms with him. Imam Ali said that a leader must not be a specimen of the depravity of his people.

"He should not be an impious man commanding others to piety or an ailing physician treating other people." How can a man who is eating dates himself ask others not to eat them. "He who puts himself as a leader of the people, should begin the reform with himself...." A leader must not be greedy for avarice means permanent bondage, which is contrary to spiritual and moral freedom. In respect of Christ Imam Ali says: "He had no wife to seduce him, no child to grieve him, no property to divert his attention and no cupidity to disgrace him." (Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 160).

In short, a man who is morally a materialist cannot be a true reformer and a materialist philosopher cannot morally be a 100 per cent non materialistic. Other qualities of a reformer: Calmness in spite of sensitiveness. An example of calmness in Imam Ali's behaviour. A woman from Basrah and a Kharijite once abused him, but he paid no attention to their foul language. A reformer must be iron-clad. He should not be delicate, but he should be sensitive. An example of being sensitive without being delicate is the story of Sufiyan Gharni, who arrived in Anbar. "If any Muslim dies henceforth on account of sorrow ..... "Should I pass the night while I have overeaten and there are hungry stomachs around me?"

6. Nahjul Balagha, Saying 109.

7. The Preface to Leadership, p. 80.

8. The Preface to Leadership, p. 81.

9. The Preface to Leadership, p. 86.

10. Nahjul Balagha, Saying 91.

11. Master and Mastership, I.S.P. 1984.

<https://www.al-islam.org/master-and-mastership-murtadha-mutahhari> [9]

12. It may be noted that these notes were written before Islamic revolution had taken place in Iran.

13. A part of the life account of the Holy Prophet should be studied from the viewpoint of the principles of leadership.

14. Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 209.

15. Nahjul Balagha, Letter 53.

16. Item No. 33 deals with signs of immaturity, which have been mentioned in the article on Islamic maturity in the Book, Divine Succur in Human Life.

17. Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 164.

18. Nahjul Balagha, Letter 26.

19. Article 10 on Nahjul Balagha, Murtadha Mutahhari.

20. Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 216.

21. Article 5 on Nahjul Balagha, Murtadha Mutahhari.

22. al-Mizan, quoted from Durr al-Manthur.

- [23. Nahjul Balagha, Letter 5.](#)
- [24. Nahjul Balagha, Letter 51.](#)
- [25. Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 33.](#)
- [26. Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 216.](#)
- [27. The Khilafat and Wilayat, P. 379 and See, Master and Mastership.](#)
- [28. Ummah and Imam p. 100.](#)
- [29. Imam Al-Sadiq p. 150.](#)

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.al-islam.org/imamah-and-khilafah-murtadha-mutahhari>

## Links

- [1] <https://www.al-islam.org/printpdf/book/export/html/120602>
- [2] <https://www.al-islam.org/printepub/book/export/html/120602>
- [3] <https://www.al-islam.org/printmobi/book/export/html/120602>
- [4] <https://www.al-islam.org/person/murtadha-mutahhari>
- [5] <https://www.al-islam.org/organization/islamic-seminary-publications>
- [6] <https://www.al-islam.org/person/mustajab-ahmad-ansari>
- [7] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/imamah>
- [8] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/caliphate>
- [9] <https://www.al-islam.org/master-and-mastership-murtadha-mutahhari>