

Important Characteristics of Hazrat Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)



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CHARACTERISTICS
OF HAZRAT
IMAM MAHDI
(A.T.F.S)**

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
اللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لَوْلِيكَ الْحُجَّةَ ابْنِ
الْحَسَنِ صَلَوَاتِكَ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى
آبَائِهِ فِي هَذِهِ السَّاعَةِ، وَفِي كُلِّ
سَاعَةٍ وَلِيًّا، وَحَافِظًا، وَقَائِدًا،
وَنَاصِرًا، وَدَلِيلًا، وَعَيْنًا، حَتَّى
تُسْكِنَهُ أَرْضَكَ طَوْعًا، وَتُمَتِّعَهُ
فِيهَا طَوِيلًا.

CHARACTERISTICS OF IMAM MAHDI (A.T.F.S)

There are some distinguishing characteristics of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f s) that serve the dual objective of enabling the people to recognise the real Mahdi and reject the imposters. Two of the most important characteristics include:

1. Long life
2. Occultation (*Ghaibat*)

Before discussing these characteristics it is important that we consider the following points:

1. Imamah or the leadership of the Ahle Bait (a.s.) is the foundation of Islam. Acceptance of deeds, beliefs, as well as salvation in the Hereafter hinges upon the belief of Imamah.
2. Imamah is neither a position that can be granted by human beings nor a covenant taken by them. This position can be granted by Allah alone, i.e. it is a divine covenant. This authority is granted exclusively to those whom Allah chooses. Since Imamah is a divine covenant it follows that
 - a. The number of Imams (a.s.) can be decided by Allah.
 - b. The Imams (a.s.) can be appointed only by Allah.
 - c. Allah will determine their responsibilities and conduct in life.

Therefore no one can decide the number of Imams (a.s.); neither can he impose any condition on the Imam nor can he determine the characteristics the Imam must necessarily possess. He also has no right to decide the age of the Imam nor can he question the Imam about his responsibilities.

Now when we observe the system of Imamah in Islam and reflect on the traditions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), we find that the

number of Imams (a.s.) have been declared as twelve on several occasions.

Traditions like these not only abound in Shia books but also in the most reliable books of the Ahle Sunnah like in *Sahih-e-Bukhaari* vol. 4, pg. 164 and *Sahih-e-Muslim* vol. 2, pg. 119. These traditions have been accepted as reliable by the scholars of traditions. We can conclude from these traditions that:

- a. The number of Imams (a.s.) after Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) will be twelve.
- b. This number will never change till Qayamat (i.e. no scope to increase or decrease it).
- c. The exact time of the Day of Judgment is known only to Allah.
- d. 1,416 years have passed since the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) departed from this world. At present, we are in 1427 A.H.
- e. It naturally follows that all or at least one of the Imams (a.s.) after the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) should have a long life so that the chain of guidance continues till the Day of Judgement.
- f. If none of the Imams (a.s.) have a long life, then the chain of guidance will break or alternatively the number of Imams (a.s.) will have to be more than twelve.
- g. This number can neither change nor can the chain of guidance discontinue because what the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) has forecasted is bound to unfold.
- h. All the other chains of caliphs (from the Bani Ummaya and Bani Abbas) had more than twelve caliphs. More importantly, most of them were steeped in oppression and transgression. The chain of the infallible Imams (a.s.) from the Ahle Bait (a.s.) is the only series of guidance that has

exactly twelve leaders with all of them treading the path of righteousness and uprightness.

- i. On considering this chain of guidance, we find that most of the Imams (a.s.) had short lives. Their end was not the result of death in the natural course of events; rather they were either poisoned or martyred by the government of that time.
- j. From this it is clear that the Imams (a.s.) faced grave danger from the government.
- k. It was essential that at least one the Imams (a.s.) of this chain have a long life so that the saying of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) is proved truthful in his prophecy (that Islam will last till the Day of Judgement).
- l. The Imams (a.s.) faced danger from the government and at the same time it was necessary for one of them to have a long life. Both these aims could only be achieved if one of them went into occultation. Thus occultation and long life of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) is necessary to fill the world with justice and equity.

Second proof

When we say that Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) was born 15th Shaban 255 A.H and is alive till now i.e. 1427 A.H. some people express amazement and demand as to how a person could live so long in this age and time.

Those who put forward this question can be divided into two categories - those who acknowledge the developments of science and those who believe in the religion of Islam (i.e. Muslims).

To those who acknowledge the developments of science we say:

1. Medical science has not fixed the maximum age up to which a man can live (it only mentions an average age). It has never said that a man cannot live beyond say for example 100 years.

2. Scientists are constantly engaged in the pursuit of inventions and medical breakthroughs to prolong the human life span. If it were not possible to increase the age of man, scientists would not spend their valuable time and resources in such an effort. The fact that they have successfully eliminated many diseases and made several other terminal diseases curable proves that man's lifespan can be increased.
3. Also people dying at various ages (some of them surviving for over 100 years) prove that we cannot determine the maximum age limit for man.
4. The reason behind a man living for 130 years is the same for a man living for 100 years.

Therefore, it follows that if man's age is not interrupted he will continue to live long. Hence it is not against the principles of medical science if a person lives for 1,000 or more years.

To the Muslims, we advance the following answers to substantiate belief in Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s.) long life:

1. We believe in the Imamat of such a personality who is appointed by Allah.
2. Allah is Ever-living, Ever-lasting and has power over everything.
3. The One who changed the nature of fire for Hazrat Ibrahim (a.s.) and the nature of water for Hazrat Musa (a.s.) has the power to protect His Last Hujjat (a.t.f.s) from the effects of the passage of time.
4. All Muslims believe that Hazrat Isa (as) was not killed by the Jews but Allah raised him to the Heavens. This is also found Holy Quran:

وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ
وَلَكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ

إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا

And their saying: Surely we have killed the Messiah, Isa son of Marium, the messenger of Allah; and they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them so (like Isa) and most surely those who differ therein are only in a doubt about it; they have no knowledge respecting it, but only follow a conjecture, and they killed him not for sure.¹

5. Both Shia and Sunni traditionists have narrated that when Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) will appear, Hazrat Isa (a.s.) will descend from the Heavens and offer prayers under the leadership of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s). It means that Hazrat Isa (a.s.) is still alive and will continue to live till Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) reappears and he will pray behind Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s).

If Allah the Almighty can grant long life to the follower (*Ma'mum*) why can't he grant long life to the leader (*Imam*)?

Third Proof

In Ghadeer-e-Khumm, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) not only announced the Mastership and Imamat of Hazrat Imam Ali (a.s.) and his infallible sons, but he also declared their Mastership over the believers. He (s.a.w.a.) declared:

مَنْ كُنْتُ مَوْلَاهُ فَهَذَا عَلِيٌّ مَوْلَاهُ

*'Of whomsoever I am the master (Maula)
this Ali is his master (Maula).'*

In Islamic terminology, 'Maula' is a person who has more authority over people than people have on themselves. Since the twelve Imams (a.s.) represent the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and are his successors they naturally possess the position of mastership (Wilayat) over the believers. This mastership is not limited to mankind but extends over everything in the heavens and the earth. There is nothing in the universe that is beyond the influence and authority of the infallible Imams (a.s.). There is not an atom in

1 Surah Nisa (4): 157.

this universe that has the audacity to go against their orders. This aspect is beautifully explained in Ziarat-e-Jaameaa Kabeer:

وَدَّلَ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ لَكُمْ

'And everything is obedient to you.'

Everything is obedient to Ahle Bait (a.s.); everything is at their beck and call. A signal from them is enough to make a thing change its very nature. For example, fire will surrender the nature of burning and water will no longer moisten.

Hazrat Hujjat b. Hasan Askari (a.t.f.s) enjoys the same authority over everything in the universe; all factors that make humans weak and old are included in them. Since these factors are completely obedient to Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s), he (a.t.f.s) controls them and is not affected by them. So Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) can live as long as he pleases.

As this extensive authority is gifted by Allah Himself exclusively to Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), others are deprived of it. So others are affected by these factors and as a result become weak and old. This is precisely the reason behind Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) being young despite his prolonged age and Hazrat Imam Ali (a.s.) fighting like a youth of 25 years when he was 60 years old. Only those who fail to appreciate the true meaning of Wilayat raise the question about Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s.) long life.

Ghaibat of Imam (a.t.f.s)

We have already explained that occultation is a necessary condition for long life of Imam (a.t.f.s.). The deniers who bear animosity towards Ahle Bait (a.s.) ask with skepticism as to why Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) chose to go into occultation. They mock the Shias by demanding how one can benefit from an occult Imam.

Firstly it is our responsibility as Muslims to surrender before the divine command and refrain from using our limited intellect to fathom the wisdom behind Allah's Orders. Should we make

such an attempt we will fail miserably. For instance, who can explain why the morning prayers (Namaz-e-Fajr) and noon prayers (Namaz-e-Zuhr) are of two and four units respectively. Does anybody have the right to declare that he will not pray till the time he understands the reason behind the number of units in each prayer. Since we believe that Allah is All-Knowing and All-Wise, then we must necessarily accept that none of His Actions are devoid of perfect wisdom and all His Actions are beneficial to human beings.

Ghaibat is an order of Allah and one of His Secrets. It certainly has some benefit for us. Imam Sadiq (a.s.) informed: ‘Occultation is necessary for the Master of the Affair (Sahib-e-Amr). We are not permitted to disclose the reasons behind it. The reason behind the Ghaibat of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) is the same as that of the past prophets (a.s.). The real reason behind the occultation shall be known only when Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) reappears. Just like the reason behind Hazrat Khizr (a.s.) making a hole in the boat, killing the infant and repairing the wall came to light only when Hazrat Musa (as) and Hazrat Khizr (as) parted ways.’

When we know that Allah is All-Knowing and All-Wise then we should also testify that all His Actions are backed by wisdom, even if it is not apparent to us at that time.

Allah’s Wrath

Imam Baqir (a.s.) declared:

إِذَا غَضِبَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى عَلَى خَلْقِهِ نَحْنًا عَنْ جِوَارِهِمْ

‘When Allah - the Almighty - is angry with His creatures He keeps us (Ahle Bait (a.s.)) away from them.’²

This tradition invites our attention to the following question:

Why did Allah in all His Mercy order His Last Hujjat (a.t.f.s) to

² *Al Kaafi*, vol. 1, pg. 343; *Yaumul Khalaas*, pg. 119.

go into occultation whereas He sent Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as a “Mercy for Worlds” to the society that was full of deviation and error?

Allah Almighty says in Holy Quran

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِّعْمَةً اَنْعَمَهَا عَلٰى قَوْمٍ حَتّٰى يُغَيِّرُوْا مَا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ ۗ وَاَنَّ
اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ

‘This is because Allah has never changed a favour that He has conferred upon a people until they change their own condition; and because Allah is Hearing, Knowing.’³

Once Allah bestows a bounty, He does not withdraw it from the midst of the people till they perform actions to merit such a deprivation. If Firaun and his followers had accepted the prophethood of Hazrat Musa (a.s.) and thanked Allah for His Bounty, they would not have been chastised.

In Dua-e-Kumail, Hazrat Imam Ali (a.s.) says:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي الدُّنُوْبَ الَّتِي تُغَيِّرُ النِّعَمَ.

‘O Allah! Forgive me my sins that change bounties.’

The greatest bounty of Allah is the Mastership of Ahle Bait (a.s.). When the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) announced the Imamat and Wilayat of Hazrat Imam Ali (a.s.) in Ghadeer, Allah revealed the following Quranic verse

اَلْيَوْمَ اَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِيْنَكُمْ وَاَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِيْ وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ
اَلْاِسْلَامَ دِيْنًا

‘This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My Favour on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion.’⁴

Hence Imamat is the greatest bounty of Allah and He takes away

3 Surah Anfal (8): 53.

4 Surah Maaidah (5): 3

this bounty when people change their conditions i.e. we are deprived of this bounty because of our sins, since our sins evoke Allah's Anger. So one of the reasons behind Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s) *Ghaibat* is persistent sinning. To punish man for his sins, Allah has kept Imam (a.t.f.s.) concealed from us.

In one of his Tauqee (letter) Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) informs:

فَمَا يُحِبُّسْنَا عَنْهُمْ إِلَّا مَا يَتَّصِلُ بِنَا مِمَّا نَكْرَهُهُ، وَلَا نُؤْتِرُهُ مِنْهُمْ

'...then nothing keeps us away from them (Shias) except those news from them which we dislike and do not expect from them.'

If we are sorrowful and sad over the occultation of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) and are desirous of his (a.t.f.s) earliest reappearance, then we should abstain from sins as much as possible. We should adopt piety as a way of life and perform deeds that please Imam (a.t.f.s). We should hasten to act in a manner that would transform Allah's Wrath into His Mercy and makes Him consider unveiling His Last Hujjat (a.t.f.s) from the garb of occultation.

Benefit of the Hidden Imam (a.t.f.s)

Mention the occultation of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) and the skeptic demands to know - how can one benefit from a hidden Imam (a.t.f.s) when there are no means to contact him?

In reply to this question we say:

1. The occultation of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) did not occur all of a sudden. In fact, Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the infallible Imams (a.s.) had foretold even before his (a.t.f.s.) birth that the last Imam (a.t.f.s) would go into occultation.
2. The occultation of Imam (a.t.f.s) proves their truthfulness and veracity because events unfolded exactly as they had predicted.
3. Whenever the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the Imams (a.s.) mentioned the occultation of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s) they were asked how a person could benefit from a hidden Imam (a.t.f.s).

They all gave the same answer.

Jabir b. Abdillah Ansaari (r.a.) asked the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), ‘Would the Shias be able to derive benefit from the Qaim (a.t.f.s.) when he is in occultation?’ The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) replied: ‘Definitely, and I swear by the One who raised me as a Prophet that they will surely derive benefit from him and will be illuminated by the Light of his Wilayat in the same manner as people derive benefit from the Sun behind the clouds.’

A similar tradition has been narrated from Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.).

While the presence of clouds prevents us from seeing the Sun we nevertheless benefit from it.⁵

Sun is the center of the solar system and everything revolves around it. Similarly Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) is the center of the universe. The universe ‘revolves’ around Imam (a.t.f.s.) and is dependent on him.

How eloquent is the tradition of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) when he informed that the Shias would be illuminated by the light of Imam’s (a.t.f.s.) Wilayat! It means that only those who believe in his Wilayat will benefit from him. It is Wilayat that is guiding his Shias to the Straight Path in an environment riddled with deviation and error.

⁵ *Behaarul Anwaar*, vol. 52, pg. 2; *Yaumul Khalaas*, pg. 126.

LOVE OF IMAM (A.S.)

In the Holy Quran. Allah has mentioned the love of Ahle Bait (a.s.) as the recompense of the Holy Prophet's (s.a.w.a) effort in guiding the nation towards Islam. The Holy Quran declares:

قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ

*'...say I do not ask from you any reward except the love of my near ones...'*¹

In a tradition, Imam Baqir (a.s.) mentions,

لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ أَسَاسٌ وَأَسَاسُ الْإِسْلَامِ حُبُّنَا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ

*'For every thing there is a foundation and the foundation of Islam is the love of the Ahle Bait.'*²

In another tradition, Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) narrates,

*'The faith of a believer is not complete till the time he holds me dearer than himself and he considers my kin dearer than his own kin and my progeny more beloved than his own progeny.'*³

When we ponder over the above verse and traditions we come to the following conclusions:

1. The love of the Ahle Bait (a.s.) is the recompense of the Holy Prophet's (s.a.w.a) efforts. Thus any individual who confesses to the prophethood of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) and wishes to adhere to the Islamic Shariat (code), must necessarily submit to the Ahle Bait (a.s.). Else, none of his actions shall be accepted by Allah.
2. The foundation of Islam is the love of Ahle Bait (a.s.). Only if a building has a solid and firm foundation can it withstand natural calamities like cyclones and storms. A house without a foundation or a weak foundation at best will come crashing down at the first gust of wind. Thus the Islam which is void of the love for the Ahle Bait (a.s.) is like the structure that has

1 Surah Shura (42): 23.

2 *Usoole Kafi*, vol. 3, pg. 77.

3 *Beharul Anwaar*, vol. 27, pg. 13.

no foundation. Small doubts and uncertainties are enough to wreck this Islam. It is for this reason that we find people deprived of this bounty constantly changing their ideologies and beliefs. But the lovers of Ahle Bait (a.s.) are steadfast and resolute in the face of calamity and tragedy

3. A person is said to possess 'faith' (Imaan) only if he loves Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) and his (s.a.w.a) Ahle Bait (a.s.) more than his own kith and kin. In the prophetic tradition stated earlier, it is important to note that an individual is expected not only to love the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) and his (s.a.w.a) Ahle Bait (a.s.), rather he should love him (s.a.w.a) and them (a.s.) more than his own self and family.

A person loves himself and his family so much that it is natural for him to strive in this world for his own comforts and that of his family members. If someone attacks him or insults him then he is enraged. All this is because his ego is hurt. Likewise, if his children are out of sight even for a little while or they don't return home at a specific time, then he becomes worried and restless.

At this time, Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) - Hazrat Hujjat b. Hasan Askari (a.s.) is the son of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a). He is the last infallible from the Ahle Bait (a.s.). He is the divine representative (Hujjat) of Allah and the Imam of the Age. Hence, if we claim to be Muslims, then it is necessary for us to back our claims by confessing our love for him.

- * If we wish to practise and act upon Islamic laws, then it is obligatory for us to love the 'Master of the Age' - Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.).
- If we are desirous of making our religion (Islam) strong and secure then we must love the Imam of the Era (a.t.f.s.).
- If we wish to perfect our faith (Imaan), then it is necessary for us to attach ourselves with Sahebuz Zamaana (a.t.f.s.).

- If we are keen that our actions meet with divine approval then it is essential for us to love Imam-e- Zamana (a.t.f.s.).

In a tradition the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) has explained this in a very beautiful manner. He says

مَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يَلْقَى اللَّهَ وَقَدْ كَمَلَ إِيمَانُهُ وَحَسَنَ إِسْلَامُهُ فَلْيَتَوَلَّ الْحُجَّةَ
صَاحِبَ الزَّمَانِ الْمُنتَظَرَ

‘The one who wishes to meet his Lord in a state in which his faith is complete and his actions are acceptable then he must accept the mastership of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) and submit to him and hold him dear.’⁴

Hence the recompense for the Holy Prophet’s (s.a.w.a.) struggle in the propagation of Islam is the love of his Ahle Bait (a.s.). The first among them is Hazrat Imam Ali b. Abi Talib (a.s.) and the last is Hazrat Imam Hujjat b. Hasan Askari (a.s.). It is our religious responsibility to illuminate our hearts with the love of each one of them.

The love of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) is not something that is obtained easily. It is the love of those revered personalities whom Allah has purified from all kinds of impurities and uncleanness. The love of these infallible leaders (a.s.) can find place only in those hearts that on one hand are free from sins and on the other, submit completely to them. If personally we are not in favour of visiting a dirty place, then how do we expect the love of Ahle Bait (a.s.) to settle in a heart that is filthy with vices and sins?

Imam Muhammed Baqir (a.s.) said to Abu Khalid Kabuli:

‘O Abu Khalid! By Allah, a person does not love us and accept our Wilayat (mastership) till the time that Allah does not purify his heart. And Allah will not purify his heart till the time he does not submit to us. If he surrenders to us then Allah will ease his accounting and will protect him from the great fear of the Day of Judgement.’⁵

4 Beharul Anwaar, vol. 36, pg. 296.

5 Usoole Kafi, vol. 1, pg. 276.

How to acquire the love of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.)?

Now it is time to answer the question - how can we illuminate our hearts with the love of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.)? In two separate incidents, Allah revealed to Hazrat Moosa (a.s.) and Hazrat Dawood (a.s.) - *'Love Me and make My Creatures also love Me'*. They said 'O Allah! It is apparent to us how we should love You. But how can we make Your Creatures love You? Allah replied, *'Mention to them My Bounties then they will begin to love Me'*.⁶

In light of this tradition if people were to realise the various bounties that they continuously receive due to Imam-e-Zamana's (a.t.f.s.) grace, then not only will his (a.t.f.s.) love emanate from their hearts but it will intensify manifold. This is because Allah has created every individual in such a way that he loves the person who has obliged him. The existence of this earth, the heavens, the moon and the stars exist due to the benevolence of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.). All the bounties that we receive are due to Imam-e-Zamana's (a.t.f.s.) intercession. If we are alive today, it is due to Imam s (a.t.f.s.) prayers.

In the Ziarat of Imam Husain (a.s.) we read

بِكُمْ تُنْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ أَشْجَارَهَا وَبِكُمْ تُخْرِجُ الْأَرْضُ أَثْمَارَهَا وَبِكُمْ تُنْزِلُ
السَّمَاءَ قَطْرَهَا وَرِزْقَهَا، وَبِكُمْ يَنْزِلُ اللَّهُ الْعَيْثُ، وَبِكُمْ تُسَبِّحُ الْأَرْضُ النَّبِيَّ
تَحْمِيْلُ أَبْدَانِكُمْ وَتَسْتَقِرُّ جِبَالُهَا عَن مَّرَاسِيهَا إِرَادَةُ الرَّبِّ فِي مَقَادِيرِ أُمُورِهِ
تَهْبِطُ إِلَيْكُمْ وَتَصْدُرُ مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ

If we ponder over every phrase of this Ziarat, we will realize the number of bounties that we receive due to Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.). This will lead to his love not only blooming but intensify in our hearts.

1. It is due to you (Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)) that trees grow.

6 *Mikyal Al Makaarim* in Persian vol. 2. pg. 200-201.

2. It is due to you (a.t.f.s.) that the earth manifests its fruits.
3. It is due to you (a.t.f.s.) that the rain and sustenance descends from the skies.
4. It is due to you (a.t.f.s.) that Allah dispels calamities.
5. Allah showers rain and mercy only because of you (a.t.f.s.).
6. It is because of you that the earth under your feet glorifies Allah.
7. Mountains remain firm in their place due to you (a.t.f.s.).
8. The divine commands concerning the regulation and control of the entire universe first descend upon you and are implemented from your abode.

These concepts are available in Ziarat-e-Jameah Kabirah as well.

If we love ourselves, our life, our family, our relatives and friends, our house, our business and all things associated with this world, then our love for the personality - Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), who has bestowed us with these worldly bounties, should be a lot higher.

Besides all the worldly benefits that we receive through Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) there are a host of other bounties associated with the hereafter like faith, guidance, divine acceptance of our deeds, ease at the time of death, salvation from the squeezing of the grave, ease at the time of accounting on the Day of Resurrection, remaining steadfast on 'Straight Path' (صراط المستقيم) salvation, entering Paradise and acquiring high grades in it. From the innumerable bounties, we have named only a few over here. All these bounties have been endowed by Allah due to Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.) and his Mastership (Wilayat). These bounties demand that we love our Imam (a.t.f.s.), hold him dearer than everything else and give him preference over every other creature.

PRAYING FOR IMAM-E-ZAMANA (A.T.F.S.)

In the previous pages, it has been clarified that professing love for Imam-e-Zamaana (a.t.f.s.) is our religious responsibility. Not only is his love necessary and obligatory upon us, it is also important that we prefer him over ourselves, our families, relatives and all other things that we love in this material world. It is imperative that we beseech Allah through the mediation of Prophet Muhammed (s.a.w.a.) and his progeny so that we are fortunate enough to receive this immense blessing.

It is in human nature that a person is aggrieved on account of separation from his close friend or relative. He mourns his friend's separation and is saddened by events that disturb his friend. If his friend is a victim of injustice or discrimination, he laments for him.

In such a situation, he whole-heartedly prays that his friend be relieved from his difficulties leading to quick solution of his problems. He desires that his friend is protected from the evil designs of the enemies; that his enemies are destroyed and his friend returns to a life of peace and tranquillity.

On this basis, every person who submits to the Mastership (Wilayat) of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), submits to his occultation (*Ghaibat*) and awaits his reappearance (*Zuhoor*) and is a firm believer in his universal government it is his most important duty that he pray as much as possible for Imam-e-Zamaana (a.t.f.s.). Since every believer sincerely desires the earliest reappearance of Imam-e-Zamaana (a.t.f.s.) and yearns to meet him (a.t.f.s.), it is necessary that special attention be paid to supplications for the early reappearance of the Imam (a.t.f.s.).

The period of occultation is characterised by corruption and bloodshed and accompanied by nagging doubts and uncertainties. It is a period in which slander and lies rear their ugly heads at alarming frequency. Undoubtedly, it is a difficult period for the Muslim to protect his faith and belief.

Hazrat Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) predicted.

وَاللّٰهِ لَيَغِيْبَنَّ عَيْبَةً لَا يَنْجُو فِيْهَا مِنَ الْهَلَكَةِ اِلَّا مَنْ يُنْبِئُهُ اللّٰهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَلٰى
الْقَوْلِ بِاِمَامَتِهِ وَوَقَّعَهُ فِيْهَا لِلدُّعَاءِ بِتَعْجِيْلِ فَرَجِهِ.

*'I swear by Allah that he (Imam-e-Zamaana (a.t.f.s.) will be in occultation. During this period, only those will remain protected from destruction who Allah will keep firm on his (a.t.f.s.) mastership and those whom He bestows with the opportunity to pray for his (a.t.f.s.) early reappearance.'*¹

We can conclude that if a person wishes to remain firm on his belief and upon his faith, he must seek the early reappearance of Imam-e-Zamaana (a.t.f.s.) through prayers and supplications. Moreover, Imam-e-Zamaana (a.t.f.s.) has himself ordered the believers to pray excessively for his earliest reappearance. He urges the Shias,

اَكْثِرُوْا الدُّعَاءَ بِتَعْجِيْلِ الْفَرَجِ فَاِنَّ ذٰلِكَ فَرَجَكُمْ

'Pray more for my early reappearance for in it is your salvation.'

How to acquire the love of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.)?

Some supplications for Imam (a.t.f.s.) in the period of occultation:

1. To recite Dua-e-Ahad after every morning prayer.
2. To recite the supplication of **كُنْ لَوْلِيَّكَ** in the Qunoot of every prayer. It is well-known about Ayatullah Al-Uzma Sayyed Abul Qasim Khui (r.a.) that over the last 75-80 years of his life, he recited this supplication in the Qunoot of every obligatory prayer. The importance of this supplication can be estimated from the fact that from the recommended actions of the 23rd Ramazan (i.e. Shabe Qadr) is the recitation of this supplication. In fact, it is recommended that this supplicated is recited as much as possible - in Qunoot, while bowing (Ruku), while prostrating (Sajdah), in effect, as much as one can recite.

¹ Kamauluddin, pg. 384.

3. Dua-e-Nudbah should be recited every Friday morning.
4. To recite, اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَجِّلْ فَرَجَهُمْ 100 times after the Asr prayers on Friday.
5. To recite the supplication, اللَّهُمَّ اذْفَعْ عَنِّي وَلِيَّكَ which is narrated from Hazrat Imam Reza (a.s.). This supplication can be found in *Mafaatihul Jinaan* after Dua-e-Ahad.
6. *Dua-e-Marefat* - this supplication is also famous as *Dua Dar Ghaibat-e-Imam-e-Zamaana (a.t.f.s.)* - Supplication in the period of Imam-e-Zamaana's (a.t.f.s.) occultation. The supplication begins with the words - اللَّهُمَّ عَرِّفْنِي نَفْسَكَ فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ لَمْ تُعَرِّفْنِي نَفْسَكَ - This supplication is also found in *Mafaatihul Jinaan*.
7. The following supplication is to be recited after every obligatory prayer as follows: Clasp your chin/beard with your right hand and recite this supplication thrice:²

يَا رَبِّ مُحَمَّدٍ عَجِّلْ فَرَجَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ، يَا رَبِّ مُحَمَّدٍ إِحْفَظْ عَيْبَةَ مُحَمَّدٍ، يَا رَبِّ
 مُحَمَّدٍ ائْتَقِمْ لِابْنَةِ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ

8. To pray for the early reappearance after the grieving over Imam Husain (a.t.f.s.). A person who saw Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) in his dream narrates that the Imam (a.t.f.s.) said, 'I pray for the one who prays for my reappearance after hearing the sorrows of my grandfather.'
9. To recite اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَجِّلْ فَرَجَهُمْ after every morning and noon (Zohr) prayers.
10. To recite the following supplication on Thursday eve:

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَجِّلْ فَرَجَهُمْ وَأَهْلِكَ عَدُوَّهُمْ مِنَ الْجِنِّ
 وَالْإِنْسِ مِنَ الْأَوْلِيَيْنِ وَالْآخَرِينَ

² *Mikyalul Makaarim*, vol. 2, pg. 23.

11. To recite *Dua-e-Nudba* on Eidul Fitr, Eidul Qurban and Eidul Ghadeer.
12. To recite *Dua-e-Ghareeq*. Imam Sadiq (a.s.) forewarned, 'Soon you will be enveloped in doubts. At that time, your Imam will be hidden. No person will be saved from these doubts, save the one who recites *Dua-e-Ghareeq*'

The supplication is as follows:

يَا اللَّهُ يَا رَحْمَنُ يَا رَحِيمُ، يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِي عَلَى دِينِكَ

The narrator recited the above supplication in this fashion:

يَا اللَّهُ يَا رَحْمَنُ يَا رَحِيمُ، يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ وَالْأَبْصَارِ ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِي عَلَى دِينِكَ

Imam (a.s.) corrected him saying,

Allah is *مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ وَالْأَبْصَارِ* (one who changes the conditions of the heart and sight), but you recite it as I have instructed you -

يَا اللَّهُ يَا رَحْمَنُ يَا رَحِيمُ، يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِي عَلَى دِينِكَ³

The above narration teaches us that we must not make any addition in supplications from our whims, even to the extent of a single word. The Imams (a.s.) are the healers of our bodies and souls; they have been granted this special knowledge by Allah Himself. More than any other person, they are aware of the correct way to invoke Allah through supplications. The addition of words from our side in supplications is akin to a patient adding medicines to the ones prescribed by the doctor in his bid to gain quick relief from his sickness. Needless to say, a moment of poor judgement on the patient's part will do his problem more harm than good.

We beseech Allah that He grants us the tawfeeq to Supplicate excessively for the earliest reappearance of Imam-e-Zamaana (a.t.f.s.). We also invoke Allah that He includes us among Imam's (a.t.f.s.) most proximate helpers and companions. Aameen!

³ Mikiyalul Makaarim, vol. 2, pg. 98.

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