

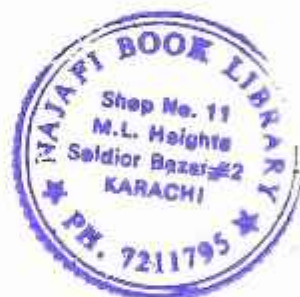
THE TWELFTH IMAM

By Murtaza Lakha



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PREFACE

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE BENEFICENT, THE MERCIFUL

“Remember the day when We will call every people with their Imam” - The Holy Qur'an (17:71)

This book is a result of lectures given by the author in Dar-es-Salaam in response to a demand for them from youths. There then followed a call that there be a transcription of the lectures. This book should, therefore, be regarded as such rather than an authoritative reference guide on the subject. Like the lectures, it aims at providing the youth elementary information and provoking further thought and research by them on one of the most important aspects of the Shia Ithnasheri faith and the most pressing issues of our time.

Soon after the lectures were delivered, followed the publication of the English translation of the Gujarati book by the late Haji Muhammad Jaffer Sheriff Dewji on Imame Zaman Hazrat Mahdi (A.S.). Material already contained in that book has, therefore, been omitted from this work.

Finally, this work is the culmination of the effort and dedication of a number of individuals for whose missionary spirit the author will ever remain grateful. Particular mention is necessary of Alhaj Fidahussein Abdulla Hameer, the President of Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania, who obtained cassettes from various individuals who had recorded the lectures, and had them transcribed by two ladies and a gentleman who have wished to remain anonymous. At my request, he then had the contents checked and verified by Syed Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, the Chief Missionary of the Bilal Muslim Mission and his then assistant Missionary, Syed Muhammad Mahdi Shushtari. To them and to Alhaj Mulla Asgharali M. M. Jaffer who kindly read the manuscript I am grateful for their valuable suggestions. My gratitude is also due to Alhaj Muhsin Alidina, Lecturer at the University of Dar-es-Salaam, for rendering readable what was delivered to be heard and to my son Shabbir for his very helpful contribution to the production of this work.

However, responsibility for all the faults and failings in this work rest with me alone.

May 1993
London

MURTAZA AHMED LAKHA

THE INVISIBLE KINGDOM

Modern youths are perplexed by the concept of an unseen Imam guiding his followers. The questions that arise in their minds are where is he? How does he guide his followers? How can his followers reach him? How do they receive guidance from him? How do they receive his help when they need it in desperation? When will he re-appear? Indeed, they even query how such an Imam helps the religion at all? These are the questions which we need to consider. Indeed, all these questions have been asked over and over again and while the scope of this book does not allow a complete and exhaustive treatment of all these questions, efforts will be made to offer brief and helpful answers. To revert, firstly, to the last question which, in a way, embraces all the other questions posed, attention must be directed straight away to the well known and reliable tradition from the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) himself to Jabir bin Abdillah al-Ansari. This close companion of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) asked him the names of the Imams who will succeed him. He said that first of them would be Ali, then his first son Hasan, then his second son Husain, then Husain's son Ali and Ali's son Muhammad. At this point, the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) said to him, "O Jabir, you will meet him. His name will be my name. His complexion and appearance will resemble mine, his voice and gait will be like mine; when you see him, convey to him my salaams". All these predictions proved true, of course, and when Jabir met the fifth Imam (A.S.), the Imam himself demanded from Jabir the salaams from the Prophet (S.A.W.W.). Then the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) went on to say, "After Muhammad, his son Jafer will be the sixth Imam, then Jafer's son Musa, then Musa's son Ali Ridha, then Ali's son Muhammad Taqi, then Muhammad's son Ali Naqi, then Ali's son Hasan Askari, then Hasan's son Muhammad Mahdi (A.S.). The last Imam will be concealed from the people and his reappearance will be delayed for so long that people will begin to doubt his existence. He will not reappear until the last days of the world, when it will have been filled

with sins and injustices. Then he, on the command of Allah, will reappear and change the face of the world. He will wipe out injustices and sins and replace them with truth and justice. Prophet Isa will descend from the heavens at that time and both of them will spread the name of Allah from one end of the earth to the other." Jabir then asked, "How will the people benefit from him when he will remain hidden from them?" The Prophet (S.A.W.W.) answered, "Just as they benefit from the sun when it is hidden behind the clouds." Who can deny that life which cannot exist on this globe without the sun, thrives and prospers even when the sun is behind the clouds? So, we need to analyze this statement of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) in detail to realise the answers to the various questions posed.

The Invisible Kingdom

The first question is that if he has been living so long, how does he live, is he still a human being or has he become an angel? It is the will of Allah that at all times there should be in the world a guide for His creation. It is also His will that such a guide should be in the same form in which the best of His creations exists. Therefore, at all times there must be a human being to guide man towards Allah. Thus, all the Prophets were humans. By the same token, the Imam (A.S.) exists on earth as a human being, with the same needs and feelings as other human beings, just as his eleven predecessors demonstrated during their lives. Like them, he too, lives in total compliance with the commands of Allah and in conformity with all the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.). Therefore, in keeping with the sunnah, he also has married and has children.

In this brief chapter it is not proposed to discuss the philosophy of *Ghaibah*. Suffice it to mention that the circumstances which prevailed after the martyrdom of the eleventh Imam (A.S) are well known and this led to the concealment of the Twelfth Imam (A.S.). Indeed each house was searched to find the little boy and assassinate him. Allah, in order to preserve His guide in the world, decided to place him in concealment.

There followed a period of the Transitional Concealment (*Ghaibat-e-Sugra*) and the Long Concealment (*Ghaibat-e-Kubra*). All this became necessary because of the hostile attitude of the rulers of the time and the lack of willingness or power on the part of the Ummah to withstand and confront the oppression of the rulers. Now, logically, if the Imam had to be kept in concealment for his safety by Allah, then even his family had to be kept in concealment. As a result, all his children too have remained out of sight. However, we have traditions, authentic and reported in great details, to show that his family lead ordinary lives of human beings on a group of several islands which some believers have been fortunate to visit. Indeed, even non-believers have recounted how they chanced to visit the islands and their experiences there. This group of islands is known as the *Jaziratul Khadhra*, The Green Island. They are protected by a large sea known as *Bahrul Abyadh*, The White Sea. There are large cities in them and the names of these cities are given as:

MUBARAKA — which is under the governorship of Hazrat Tahir, a son of the Imam (A.S.)

RAEQUA — under the governorship of the second son of the Imam (A.S.), Hazrat Qasim

SOPHIA — which is governed by another son of the Imam (A.S.), Hazrat Ibrahim

ZALOOM — where the governor is Hazrat Abdul Rehman also the son of the Imam (A.S.)

PANATIS — whose governor is also the son of the Imam (A.S.), Hazrat Hashim.

In the English translation of the book *Imam-e-Zamana*, Hazrat Mehdi (A.S.) by Haji Muhammad Jafer Sheriff Dewji, the author has described these islands and even answered the argument that if they are so big why they are not visible despite the advanced modern technology.

To keep a person in this world amidst us yet concealed from our sight

is not a novel phenomenon. The example of our Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.), whom Muslims of all denominations accept as a guide from Allah will suffice. Was he not kept out of sight of his enemies on a number of occasions by Allah? We may remind ourselves of the instance when he was sitting with a companion. An infidel enemy approached them and asked the companion if he had seen Muhammad as he wished to assassinate him. The companion was so frightened that he denied having seen him and the enemy moved away. Absolutely bewildered, this companion asked the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) how that enemy had failed to notice the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) when he was sitting right there? The Prophet (S.A.W.W.) explained how Allah conceals whom He chooses from the sight of the enemies.

This tradition is accepted by all sects of Islam. Again, to quote only one more instance accepted by all sects, on the night of the *Hijrah*, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) managed to depart from his house leaving Hazrat Ali (A.S.) lying on his bed totally unnoticed by no less than 70 enemies who were waiting at his door with swords drawn to kill him. So the concept of Allah providing such shelter to whom He wills from the sight of enemies is neither new nor mysterious. Indeed, we do not look to science to explain the Will of Allah. These are realities one cannot deny as history has already proved them. Moreover, it would be ineffectual for Allah to seek to protect Hazrat-e-Hujjat (A.S.) from the sight of the enemies and yet house him in a place which would be known to everybody. If, for example, we knew that the Hazrat lived in a bungalow at a definite place, he would no longer be in *Ghaibah*. The entire philosophy and purpose of the concealment would be lost if he has a fixed place of abode either for himself or for his family known to any person at any given time. The concept of *Ghaibah*, therefore, presupposes and requires that even his residence and that of his family should be in concealment. Hazrat-e-Hujjat (A.S.) like all other Imams (A.S.) is at all places, at all times. This phenomenon was proved by Hazrat Ali (A.S.) being at the houses of forty friends on the same evening having dinner with them at their respective houses at the same time. This is a quality bestowed by Allah on the Imams so that they are able to assist their followers and guide them at different places at the same time, on vastly different issues. So, Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) is everywhere. His

family, however, has to have a fixed place of abode. Yet, they have to be protected and kept in safety. This is a logical conclusion which we can draw. No wonder, then, that these islands should exist and yet be invincibly protected by the Hand of Allah and surrounded by the White Sea. Let us then consider, two reports by people who have actually visited these islands. (See also the narration of Syed Mohammed Shafti Rishti on page 101 of the English translation of the book on Imam-e-Zamana by Haji Muhammad Jafer Sherif Dewji.)

It is reported in the authoritative book *Al-Najmus Thaqib* that the pious Muhammad Bin Ali Alawi Husaini reports that on the 10th of the Holy Ramadhan 543 A.H. the learned scholar Ahmed Bin Muhammad bin Yahya narrated at his house that during the previous Holy month of Ramadhan he had been invited to an Iftar at the house of the Minister, Aunuddin Yahya Bin Habir and after Iftar, the Minister invited a few selected guests to remain behind for conversation. The Minister, at all times, showed very high regard and respect for one gentleman who was present there whom the scholar did not know. The various topics of conversation included a bitter attack by the Minister on the Shia faith, thanking Allah that they were only few in number and disgraced. At that stage, the gentleman whom the Minister respected so much sought leave of the Minister to narrate an incident which he had experienced personally. This shook the Minister considerably, but he eventually granted him permission. Firstly, he contradicted the Minister by stating that mere number of followers does not establish the truth or falsehood of a religion. He explained that just as places heavily populated and dominated by Christians for generations including those in Iraq, Rome, Syria and others, do not prove the fewer Muslims wrong, so, the smaller number of Shias does not prove that they are not right. Then he proceeded to narrate his sensational experience.

He said, "Twenty years ago, I set out with my father on a business trip by sea. By pure chance, our boat landed on a strange island which we did not know existed at all. We consulted our Captain who too was totally ignorant of the island. However, we decided to land there and discovered that it had a large city with numerous people. The water on that island was very sweet and the air very refreshing. We found that the

inhabitants were extremely friendly and pious. On inquiring from them we learnt that the city was called Mubaraka and that the governor was a person called Tahir but that his seat of government was at a place called Zahira which, we were informed, would take 10 nights to reach by sea or 25 days by land. We expressed the desire to be presented before some authority to register our presence and were taken before a highly venerable and deeply pious person. We explained our predicament and he asked us if we were Muslims. We replied that some of us were Muslims, some Christians and some Jews. He demanded *Jazia* (the religious tax levied on non-Muslims) from the Christians and the Jews and once these were paid, he turned to the Muslims and asked them their faith. When he had heard them, he asked, "What sort of Muslims are you? Allah has sent the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) and then his Twelve successors beginning with Ali (A.S.)" and then he mentioned all the Imams to the 12th Imam (A.S.). They were bewildered and frightened and requested that they should be presented before the Sultan of the country hoping that he would find some solution for them. Seeing the Muslims in this situation we did not regard it proper to leave them to their fate. So we decided to join them. We approached our Captain and inquired whether he could take us to Zahira but he disclaimed any knowledge of the sea of Zahira. Eventually, we decided that the more proper course would be to hire a boat from the local residents and set out for Zahira with the Muslims. It took us a journey of twelve nights and days to sight land. It was a city which glittered and was full of greenery. There were plenty of gardens with trees laden with variety of fruits. One experienced a heavenly sight and feeling. We found a vast population with wide streets and big bazaars. What amazed us was that when a purchaser went to a shop, the shopkeeper asked him to pick what he wanted, to weigh it himself and leave its price. When the *Adhan* was heard everybody ran for prayers, the shopkeepers leaving their shops open and unattended. We were convinced that it was a place in which all the inhabitants had the highest sense of honesty. Indeed their conduct and behaviour was very impressive.

When we were presented before the Sultan, we noticed that there was a huge garden with a number of rivers flowing. A muezzin was calling the *Adhan* after which prayers were conducted and the garden became

filled with congregation. The Sultan led the prayers and on completing them, turned to us. As we heard the congregation refer to him as *Yabna Saheb-iz-Zaman*, we also addressed him similarly and explained to him our predicament. He asked if we were traders or mere visitors. We replied that we were traders and then enquired about our religion. Among the Muslims one was a Shafi by the name of Hasan Rozebahan Bin Ahman Ahwazi. He asked if all of us were Shafis and Hasan replied that we were, except for Hasan Bin Ghaith who was a Maliki. He said, "So you belong to the faith which accepts the majority views and follows its own deductions?" He then questioned them on the verse of Mubahila (*Ayat-e-Mubahila*) and the challenge to the Christians and asked who were the people whom the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) took with him for the confrontation with the Christians. He then discussed various other verses in the Holy Qur'an in honour of the Ahlulbait including the verse of purity (*Ayat-e-Tathir*). He revealed his identity as Tahir, the son of Imam Mahdi (A.S.). He was so elegant and convincing in his arguments and the narration of the traditions which Rozebahan accepted as genuine that he became a Shia. Then he ordered that we be taken to a special guest house where we received special treatment for eight days, being constantly visited by most hospitable people. We had the opportunity to visit the entire city which was immensely long and wide which would have needed two months to cover even at a fast pace. We then visited another city known as Raequa where the governor was Qasim Bin Saheb-ul-Amr (A.S.). It was similar in size with its people similarly courteous and pious. Then we came to another city called Sophia where the governor was Ibrahim Ibne Saheb-ul-Amr (A.S.).

The city we visited next was called Zaloom and was under the governorship of Abdul Rehman Ibne Saheb-ul-Amr (A.S.). These cities also had similar facilities as the other cities. Then came another city called Ghnafis whose Governor is Hashim Ibne Saheb-ul-Amr (A.S.). It is the largest of all cities with numerous villages and beautiful gardens with the rivers flowing in them. It was not possible even to estimate its population but they were all Shias, friends of the Twelfth Imam (A.S.) and enemies of the opponents of the Ahlulbait, conscious of *Salat* and *Zakat*, *Amr bil Maaruf* and *Nahy Anil Munkar*. Their number far exceeds those of all the other sects we know in the world."

Having heard this wonderful narration, the Minister Aunuddin rose and called each one of those present separately into his private chamber and requested each most emphatically not to repeat this episode to anybody at anytime. Thus this tradition has been handed down to us from a Christian source giving exactly the names of the Islands and their governors as related in our other Shia traditions.

Another episode reported by Shaikh Zainuddin Ali Ibne Fadhil Maazindarani is set out by Allama Majlisi in *Biharul Anwar*. He states that he had proceeded to Damascus to study under the tutelage of Shaikh Andalusy. By chance he had to travel from Damascus to Egypt and insisted that Sheikh Maazindarani accompany him. When they were in Cairo, the Sheikh received an urgent letter from an old friend in Andalus stating that he was seriously sick and wished the Sheikh to visit him urgently as he could not move to Cairo. The Sheikh decided to do so and took Sheikh Maazindarani with him. On the first day of their arrival in Andalus, Sheikh Maazindarani became seriously sick and his tutor was obliged to leave him and make arrangements for him to join him at his friend's place when he improved. After he had recovered, by chance, he met a group of travellers from whom he learnt that they came from a place near Burbur where Shias resided and which was close to *Jazirat-ul Khadra*. He joined them and reached Burbur. He found a good number of Shias there to whom he disclosed his faith and who became extremely hospitable to him when they learnt that he was also a Shia. When he asked them how they obtained their food supplies he learnt that twice a year a vessel from *Jazirat-ul Khadhra* brought them their food supplies. He was prompted to ask this question as he saw no agricultural activities in Burbur. He then enquired when the next vessel would arrive and was told that it was expected shortly. So, he remained there till this vessel arrived. He made a point to meet the Captain of this vessel. To his utter amazement, the Captain greeted him by his name Ali and even the name of his father Fadhil. When Sheikh Maazindarani expressed the desire to be taken to the Island of the Twelfth Imam (A.S.), the Captain said he already had orders to take him. On reaching it he found that the ruler was Syed Shamshuddin Muhammad, the special representative of the Twelfth Imam (A.S.). He learnt a number of religious lessons from him including

obtaining answers on some intricate questions. All these questions and answers are reported in the lengthy tradition. One of the questions, however, he asked was whether the 12th Imam (A.S.) goes for pilgrimage. The Syed replied that he goes for pilgrimage every year and often visits the Shrines at Kerbala, Madina and Mashad. Sheikh Maazindarani requested to meet the Imam but the Syed declined adding that every true believer could see the Imam without recognizing him. At this juncture, the Sheikh explained, I am a devoted servant of the Imam but have never had the good fortune of his *Ziarah*". The Syed told him, "You have already seen him thrice." This stunned the Sheikh. The Syed proceeded to explain, "The first occasion was when you went to Samarya but were separated from your companions and became terribly frightened and confused. You reached a dry river where you met a rider on a black and white horse. He came close to you and told you not to be frightened but to continue onwards and that your companions were waiting for you under a certain tree which he described to you." The Sheikh confirmed all this. The Syed continued, "The second occasion was when you were again terribly frightened and a person on a white horse approached you and advised you to proceed to the right and enter the village that you would come to on your way and without any hesitation should disclose to its inhabitants your true faith and they would help you out." The Sheikh reports that on hearing this, the entire event flashed across his mind. He recalled having gone into that village where the inhabitants were deeply devoted Shias and committed enemies of the opponents of the *Ahlul-bait*. He enquired from them as to how they had become Muslims and they explained that they were converted by Abu Dharre Ghiffari after he had been banished to their village.

However, the Sheikh reports that a time came when the Syed persuaded him to leave the island and return to his home advising him to stay in Iraq. The Seyyid also gave him a present of five dirham coins on which was inscribed LA ILA-HA ILLA ALLAH, MOHAMMADUN RASULULLAH, ALIYYUN WALIYYULLAH, MOHAMMED IBNUL HASSAN QAIMUN BI AMRILLAH".

He also gave him a guide who brought him to Burbur from where the Sheikh proceeded to Makka by a short route revealed to him by the Syed. He preserved the five dirhams as a souvenir and showed them to the Shias. It is from them that the Mujtahids from time to time have made replicas which they give to the *zawwars* when they visit them.

IMAMAT IN CONCEALMENT: DEFENDING THE FAITH

We have noticed from the Hadith of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) to Jabir that Hazrat Mahdi (A.S.) will conduct his Imamat in concealment just as the sun benefits the earth with its light and heat even when hidden behind the clouds. Indeed, the traditions show that the Imam (A.S.) discharges all his duties and performs all his functions despite his invisibility to the public eye. Allah, who withdrew him from public contact in order to protect him, has amply provided for the Imam (A.S.) to play his full role despite his concealment. We will examine a few traditions which throw light on and illustrate how he performs these functions leaving sufficient traces to establish his physical existence on this globe.

There are certain, although very few, functions which entail the physical presence of the Imam himself. For example, the only person who can fix the black stone (*Hajare Aswad*) in the Holy Kaaba is the Imam of the current time. During the Imamat of the Twelfth Imam (A.S.) such an occasion arose in 307 A.H. Abul Qassim Jafer Ibne Muhammad Kawlavayh reports in his book how the army of Karamata' had attacked the Holy Kaaba and removed the Stone. On the day assigned for the restoration of the Stone, eminent scholars attempted to restore it but did not succeed. Then a youth of impressive personality and bright face emerged from the crowd, firmly fixed the Stone into its proper place and departed. Proof of his identity as the Twelfth Imam (A.S.) became certain as Abul Qassim knew that none except the current Imam could firmly restore the Stone into its place and sent him a letter which the Imam (A.S.) replied without even opening it. This event is fully described at page 133 of the English translation of the book on *Imame Zamana, Hazrat Mehdi (A.S.)* by Mulla Haji Muhammad Jaffer Sheriff Dewji. Thus, it will be noticed that when the physical presence of the Imam is required to discharge a function, the Twelfth Imam (A.S.) has physically appeared (without making his identity known) and fulfilled it.

Another important function of an Imam at all times is to protect the faith and the believers for he is truly the Defender of the Faith. Whenever the faith has been in jeopardy, the Imam has always come to its rescue. The famous tradition on how the Shias of Bahrain were rescued by the Imam (A.S.) from the hands of the Minister who harboured enmity against the Shias and the Shia faith is well known. It is the episode of how he concocted an inscription on a pomegranate including the names of the three as Khalifas of the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) and how the Governor was so impressed and convinced by it that he called the Shia scholars and gave them a deadline to reply to the claim failing which they should all embrace the Sunni faith, or else be killed or be subjected to *Jaziya*. The Imam (A.S.) provided the answer to the Shia scholars by unfolding the forgery of the Minister and showing them exactly where the moulds used to press the inscription on the fruit would be found. This episode is fully described on pages 51 and 52 of the English translation of the book by Haji Muhammad Jaffer Sheriff Dewji on *Imam-e-Zaman, Hazrat Mehdi (A.S.)*. This is an episode of which every Shia youth and student must know. In the same book on pages 134 to 136 is described an event which took place as recently as 1266 AH in Qandhar, Afghanistan at the house of the son of Mulla Abdulrahim Mulla Habibullah, where the Sunni scholars including the Chief Kadhi criticized the Shia faith alleging how ignorant and naive Shias were to believe that Hazrat Mahdi (A.S.) was already born in 255 A.H. The Imam (A.S.) miraculously appeared at that meeting and sat amidst them rendering them all totally dumb-founded. Never has the Shia faith been put into jeopardy or even ridiculed without the Imam (A.S.) coming to its succour. Instances like those in Bahrain do not occur often but they prove that when his aid is imperative, his concealment is no impediment to the protection of the faith.

The more usual experience is of the believers being cornered or confused on questions of faith. Numerous examples exist of how the Imam (A.S.) has come to their rescue, in particular the Ulama, to provide full and forthright answers to their queries.

Fadhil Mirza Abdullah in his book *Riyadhul Ulama* reports a discussion that took place between Abul Qassim Bin Muhammad Hasami, a Shia scholar, and Rafiuddin Hussein, a Sunni scholar. Despite their differ-

ences in faith, they were close friends and even travelled together on a number of occasions. However, they never indulged in religious discussion. By chance, they once met in the Masjid in Hamadan and in the course of conversation Rafiuddin spoke of Abu Bakr and Omar according them superiority over Hazrat Ali (A.S.) whereupon Abul Qassim immediately retorted with a number of traditions from the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) to show the excellence and superiority of Hazrat Ali (A.S.) over all companions and even quoted verses from the Holy Book in honour of Hazrat Ali (A.S.). Rafiuddin mentioned how Abu Bakr was with the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) in the cave and how he was bestowed the title of the Truthful by the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.). Abul Qassim replied with the various traditions from the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) bestowing on Hazrat Ali, (A.S.) the titles of *Seyyidul Ausia*, *Seyyid ul Awlia*, *Imamun Nasi wal Jin*, *Qasimul Nnar wal Jannat* etc, the fact that the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) gave the hand of his daughter in marriage to Hazrat Ali, that he slept on the bed of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) on the night of the *Hijrah*, that the doors of the houses of all the companions in the Holy Mosque were ordered to be closed by the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.), except the door of Hazrat Ali, (A.S.), his birth in the Kaaba, his knocking down the idols in the Kaaba, his fierce battles and renowned victories, his ordering the sun to return and that he never strayed from Islam. Indeed, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) had said that anyone wishing to have a glimpse of the knowledge of Adam, the understanding of Nuh, the Personality of Musa and the piety of Isa, should look for them in Hazrat Ali (A.S.). Yet Rafiuddin did not give up the discussion and eventually offered that they should agree on a mediation between them by the first person who entered the Mosque whose decision they should both accept without question. Abul Qassim did not regard it wise to accept that course as the majority of the people living in Hamadan at that time were Sunnis. However, he accepted it reluctantly. Instantly a young person, bright and impressive, entered the Mosque. His face was glowing with brilliance and appeared to have just arrived from a journey. The two scholars rose and presented their problem to him. Rafiuddin presented his point of view fully and asked that personality, in the name of Allah, to make a just decision on the dispute. Without hesitation the personage made an immediate reply in the form of a poem which meant that it was below the dignity of his

Maula for him to say that he was superior to the other two. Just as a sword cannot be compared to a stick and is insulting to the sword to state that it is sharper than a stick, so was the case with the suggested comparison. On noticing the eloquence and depth of this personality, both the scholars became astonished and wished to ask him more about himself when he suddenly disappeared from their sight. From this experience, Rafiuddin immediately abandoned his faith and became a Shia. The sudden disappearance from the sight of a person actually before him convinced him not only of the superiority of the leader of the Shia faith, Hazrat Ali (A.S.), but also of the *Ghaybah* of the Twelfth Imam (A.S.)

Numerous such examples have been narrated in authentic historical works. Allama Majlisi reports in *Biharul Anwar* that in a town near Hilla was one Muammar bin Shams who had engaged an agent called Ibne Khatib who was a pious Momin. With him was employed a manager called Osman who disagreed with Ibne Khatib on matters of faith and constantly argued on religious matters with him. Once they both met in Maqame Hazrat Ibrahim in Hilla when numerous people were gathered there. Ibne Khatib taking advantage of the occasion challenged Osman that their dispute on who is right between them be resolved on that date.

He proposed that each should write on his hand the names of the religious leaders in whom he had faith, clasp both hands and keep them on fire. One whose hands caught fire would be in the wrong and the other right. Osman was terrified and did not accept the challenge, despite much persuasion by his adversary. Ibne Khatib insisted that if he had confidence in the people he regarded as his leaders, he should not have hesitated when Ibne Khatib was so keen and ready for the exercise. Even the people who had gathered jeered at him. On hearing all this, his mother was deeply upset and setting out to help her son, climbed onto the roof of her house and from there poured scorn on the entire public, particularly, those who had jeered her son, so much so that she left no abuse or curse unuttered. In a natural retribution she suddenly found herself blind. In utter desperation she called for neighbouring ladies who found that although ostensibly her eyes looked all right, in fact she could not see at all. They helped her descend from the roof into her house. Numerous doctors were called to treat her from Hilla and even Baghdad

but no cure could be found for her and she remained blind. Eventually a few Mominat who used to visit her explained to her that if she became a Shia, became a friend of the friends of Hazrat-e-Hujjat (A.S.) and an enemy of his enemies, he would restore her eyes. Helplessly, she accepted this advice and on the eve of Friday, the ladies took her to *Maqame Sahabuz Zaman* in Hilla and placed her inside the *Qubbah* there. They all came out. Hardly had the quarter of the night passed when the lady had her eyesight restored and came out able not only to recognize everybody but also their colours. The ladies could not contain themselves with joy and thanked Allah. When they asked her exactly what had happened, she narrated that after they had left her in the *Qubbah*, somebody placed his hands on her hands and said, "Go out as Allah has made you well." Just as he said so, she found light in her eyes, saw the *Qubbah* fully lit and in the middle of it was a personality of high brilliance. She asked him who he was. He explained his identity and immediately disappeared. She became a devout Shia, so did her son and the prestige and reputation of the Shias in Hilla was manifoldly enhanced.

This is an incident which clearly demonstrates that even in his concealment, Hazrat-e-Hujjat (A.S.) comes to the aid of the faith or the faithful. This was so well deserved particularly when the faithful was so devoted as to be ready to write the Hazrat's name on his hands and place them on fire in the full conviction that they would emerge uncharred.

There is another famous tradition about how the Imam has helped in resisting the enemies of the faith and in defending it. Again, the tradition is one of which every Shia youth must be aware. Shahid-e-Thalith, Haji Noorullah Shustari, has reported in his book *Majalis-ul-Muminin* and other leading scholars have also reported in their various books that one Alim, so learned that even Allama Hilli was his pupil in respect of some subjects, had written a book against Shias and Shiaism. However, he did not publish it for the fear of it being replied, but read passages from it at various gatherings to poison his audience against Shias. Allama Hilli made all possible efforts to obtain a copy of this book but failed. Eventually, he used his position as a pupil to secure the book from the author who, helplessly, lent the book to Allama on the condition that he

should keep it only for one night and return it the following dawn. The book was voluminous and the time given was deliberately so short that it was impossible to copy it in one night. However, the Allama accepted the condition in the belief that it would be worth his while to copy down whatever he could. So the Allama commenced the task of copying out the book as fast as possible. According to one version of this narration, the Allama became so exhausted after midnight that sleep overtook him. He saw Hazrat-e-Hujjat (A.S.) in his dream, saying, "Hand the book over to me and you continue sleeping". When he woke up, he found that the entire book had already been copied. According to another version, when the Allama commenced the task an Arab entered and said to the Allama, "You draw the lines on the papers and I will copy out the contents". So saying, he commenced writing. The Allama began to arrange the papers for him but the style of his writing was so speedy, that he completed writing a page before the Allama had even arranged the next one. Indeed, by the time it was dawn, the entire book had been copied out. It is reported in a number of books, that in his *Majlises*, the Allama has himself narrated this incident and identified his guest as Hazrat-e-Hujjat (A.S.). Thus, the book against the faith was made available to the Allama to write out a complete and convincing reply against it.

Another duty of an Imam is to answer questions from the scholars in respect of matters which perplex them or in respect of which there is no clear answer. An Imam who is accessible to the Ulama of the time, would easily be approached to solve such problems. Indeed, such was the service which the eleven Imams, in particular the sixth Imam (A.S.), were able to render. How does the Imam (A.S.) fulfil this duty while in concealment? He has done so on so many occasions, in such varied ways and at such different places and times that abundant narrations exist. We shall discuss only three episodes.

It is reported in *Kasasul Ulama* that once Allama Hilli (A.R.) was proceeding to Kerbala for *Ziarat* on a Friday eve. He was alone. On the way he was joined by an impressive Arab who kept him company. In the course of their conversation, it transpired to the Allama, that his companion was highly learned. This tempted the Allama to continue

with the conversation. Gradually, he found that his companion was leading to discussions on topics about which the Allama had doubts or was not certain or was confused. The Allama found the explanations and discussions of his companion so enthralling, that he became deeply engrossed in the conversation. He even found a number of answers to many points of *sharia* which had troubled him and on which he either had no answer at all or the answers he had were not, in his view, satisfactory. This personality gave him such thorough and convincing explanations that all those points which were unclear to him became obvious and evident. However, their discussions led them to a point on which the Allama strongly disagreed with the personality saying that there was no tradition reported in any authentic source which would support the proposition made by his companion. Thereupon, the companion asserted that the Allama had overlooked one authority that is contained in *Tahzib* of Sheikh Tusi and even cited the page in which the Hadith had been reported. This reply so astounded Allama Hilli, that he asked what was his heart's desire, "What is the way to obtain audience with Hazrat-e-Hujjat (A.S.), in these times, or is it impossible to meet him?" As he posed this question the stick he was holding in his hand dropped. His companion stooped to pick it up for him and as he handed it to the Allama, replied, "Why not, particularly, when his hand is now in your hand?" On hearing this, the Allama became so overawed, that he immediately knelt to kiss the feet of Hazrat (A.S.) but, in his excitement, fell down and became temporarily unconscious. When he gathered consciousness he was alone on the road. However, the Allama gathered strength and walked to Kerbala for his *Ziarat*. When he returned from Kerbala, he checked *Tahzib* and found the Hadith reported exactly as the Hazrat (A.S.) had mentioned. He immediately wrote in the margin that it was a Hadith taught to him by Hazrat-e-Hujjat (A.S.) himself. Thus when Hazrat finds that his Ulama are in difficulties on important matters of the *sharia* which have to be clarified and expounded he does not even wait for them to approach him; he finds his own way of meeting them and explaining the principles of religion. Hence the message of Allah reaches the people even when he is in concealment. The mission of Allah is not hampered or retarded.

Once this very Alim, Allama Hilli, was deeply troubled by yet another

Hadith which he could not understand and which, again, the Imam (A.S.) helped him to appreciate. This episode is described by the Allama himself in his book *Tazkira*. He says that he had read a tradition that if a person visits the shrine of Imam Hussain (A.S.) in Kerbala for forty consecutive Thursday nights and spends the complete Thursday night in the Haram in prayer, he is graced with the audience of Hazrat-e-Hujjat (A.S.). He says that as he was keen to meet the Imam he decided to take this course. He adds, however, that he was also very deeply troubled by another hadith that he had read that if one weeps on the calamities suffered by Imam Hussain (A.S.) and is so moved that even one drop of tear comes out of his eye, Allah will forgive him all his sins. The Allama says he was perplexed as to how one drop of tear can be enough to wash out all the sins of a sinner. Ostensibly, this tradition is baffling. However, the Allama spent thirty nine Thursday nights under the *Qubbah* of Imam Hussain (A.S.) in prayer and supplications. When the Allama was proceeding towards Kerbala on the fortieth consecutive Thursday evening, he was again troubled by these very two questions as he was crossing the desert. Suddenly he saw an Arab approach him and holding the reins of his horse asked, "O Sheikh! What is troubling you?" The Allama thought that this was a man from the desert who would hardly be able to help him in the complex mental exercise that preoccupied him and he replied, "Dear brother, why are you concerned about my thoughts? Leave me alone and you proceed on your way." This personality, however, insisted on the Allama disclosing his problems to him just in case he was able to give satisfactory answers. On the insistence of this Arab, the Allama put forward to him both the problems that were exercising his mind, one on audience being granted by Hazrate Hujjat (A.S.) if one completed forty Thursday nights in prayer under the *Qubbah* of Imam Hussain (A.S.) explaining that he was proceeding for the fortieth night and had not yet had the benefit of such audience and, secondly, how a person who sheds one drop of tear on the sufferings of Imam Hussain (A.S.) can be forgiven all his sins. The Allama asserted that it was not possible to understand how so much reward can follow such a simple deed. This personality replied, "O Sheikh, I will first reply your second question. Imagine, for example, that a mighty emperor goes hunting with his companions and army but is suddenly separated from them and in his loneliness begins to roam around in the forest. Suppos-

ing, also, that he suddenly meets an old lady in a small cottage, the only hut in the area and the only soul. The emperor approaches this lonely lady and explains to her how hungry and thirsty he is and asks for some food and drink. The only worldly property in possession of the old lady is a goat. The lady milks the goat and offers the milk to the emperor who quenches his thirst. However, the emperor asks for food saying that he is extremely hungry. In her charity, the lady even slaughters the goat, makes kebab for the emperor and serves him. Now, we can consider that if this lady were to approach the emperor in his court asking for reward, what would be the just reward which the emperor should give to this old lady? Only if the emperor hands his entire kingdom to the old lady would he have rewarded her justly. He would not have given her an iota more than what she deserved. She had sacrificed her entire wealth and possession for the sake of the emperor. It would then only be fair if the emperor also returned the kindness, in like manner, by giving her his entire kingdom and wealth.

Similarly, Imam Hussain (A.S.) gave away for Allah all his possession and his entire family. He sacrificed all he possessed. A just Allah would reward him by granting him authority over His entire Kingdom. The reward granted to those who weep over Imam Hussain (A.S.) is out of the grace of Imam Hussain (A.S.) and for his sake.

Do not consider just the drop of tear but the vast sacrifice for which the reward is granted. As for the first question, your Imam is conversing with you now". The Allama says, "On hearing these words I immediately came down from my horse and kissed his feet. As I lifted my head from his feet, I was alone."

But such traditions are not confined to Allama Hilli. A number of other Ulama have also been privileged with similar experiences. To conclude this discussion we should relate another episode well known amongst Shias which took place about two and a half centuries ago. It is reported by a student of that eminent Alim, Muqaddas-e-Ardabeli. He states, "One evening, on completion of my studies, when it was already pretty late in the night, I came out of my room into the courtyard of the Haram of Hazrat Amir (A.S.) when I suddenly noticed a person moving towards

the entrance to the Haram. I decided to follow him. He had not noticed me at all but I recognized him as the Muqaddase Ardabeli. I followed him stealthily until he reached the entrance to the Haram. The door was locked but on his arrival the padlock dropped, the door opened and he entered. Then I heard him conversing with someone inside. After a while he came out and the door locked again. He went on his way and I followed him, hiding myself from him. We got out of Najaf and I saw him going towards Masjide Kufa. I continued to follow him quietly so that he should not notice me. Eventually he entered Masjide Kufa and proceeded to the *Mehrabe Shahadat* of Hazrat Amir (A.S.). There he remained for a long time and then came out and set back for Najaf. Till then I had managed to remain concealed from him, but near the Masjide Hannana I could not control coughing and he immediately recognized me. He said, "Amir Alaam, what are you doing here?" I explained that I had been with him since he entered the Holy Haram and pleaded, "For the sake of Hazrat Amir (A.S.) please narrate to me all that had transpired this evening from the beginning; who you were conversing with in the Holy Haram and whom did you meet in Masjide Kufa?" He replied, "If you promise not to repeat what I tell you to any person whosoever during my lifetime, I will disclose the entire episode to you." I instantly made the promise. He proceeded to narrate, "I was perplexed by a few religious problems which I could not resolve so I thought I should present them to Hazrat Amir (A.S.). When I reached the entrance to the Haram I noticed that the padlock unlocked itself without any key and, so, I entered and beseeched Allah that I should obtain from Hazrat Amir (A.S.) the answers to the questions which had been troubling me. Soon I heard a voice from the holy grave directing me to proceed to Masjide Kufa and present my questions to the current Imam (A.S.). In compliance with this direction, I proceeded there and obtained from Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) all the answers to my problems and now I am returning home."

IMAMAT IN CONCEALMENT: HELPING THE FAITHFUL

We have seen how the Imam (A.S.) performs the functions of his office, how he helps preserve and propagate the faith and how he helps the Ulama resolve their religious problems. Does he, however, help the ordinary person in his ordinary life? Let us examine a few instances of how he extends his helping hand to Momineen caught in difficulties in the course of their travels and how he fulfils their worldly wishes.

The most common experiences that are heard narrated of how Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) has helped ordinary men relate to their difficulties in the course of their pilgrimage. Allama Majlisi (A.R.) sets out one such incident in his *Biharul Anwar* quoting his father, Muhammad Taqi Majlisi (A.R.) as the source. He states that during his time there lived a religious and pious person called Amir Ishak Ustrabadi who had performed forty Haj on foot and is buried in Kerbala. He was renowned as a person for the speed with which he covered long distances ("*Tayyil Ardih*"). One year while on one of his journeys to Haj he was in Isfahan when Allama Majlisi paid him a courtesy call and asked him how he came to acquire this quality. He explained that once he was on one of his trips to Haj with many pilgrims when at the seventh or eighth station from Makka he became very exhausted and remained far behind his companions who had gone on ahead of him and he had lost sight of them. He had also forgotten the way and became terrified in his confusion. He said he was very thirsty and in such a condition lost all hope and fell on the ground. His degree of despair was such that he even recited the *shahadatain* in preparation for his death and began to call Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) for help saying, "Ya Aba Saleh, please come to my help". Suddenly he noticed by his head a young, bright and handsome youth and impressed by his personality immediately saluted him. The youth replied to him, gave him water and asked him if he wanted to join his companions. Then he helped him mount onto his camel and they rode away. As Haji Amir Ishak was in the habit of reciting the *Hirze Yamani* daily, he started to recite it aloud. On several occasions this youth made

appropriate corrections. Suddenly, Haji Amir found himself in Makka and the youth asked him to descend. No sooner had he done so, there was no young man and no camel; he was by himself. Then it dawned on him that the youth was the current Imam Sahibul Amr (A.S.) and deeply regretted his failure to recognize him and his separation from the Imam. On the seventh day his companions arrived. They had lost hope of the survival of Haji Amir and were astonished to see him in Makka. Thus he explained how he acquired the title of *Tayyil Ardih*. Allama Muhammad Taqi Majlisi states that he recited the *Hirze Yamani* to Haji Amir so that he could obtain from him all the corrections that the Imam (A.S.) had taught.

It is reported in *Jannatul Ma'wa* by Seyyid Alikhan Musawi from a reliable Momin that he once returned from Haj in a group. On the way, they made a stop to rest as their pace had been fast. This pilgrim also rested but because of exhaustion was overtaken by sleep. When he woke up, he found that all his companions had gone and he was alone. He picked his belongings and started walking fast. He became so tired that he collapsed. He was convinced he would not survive and started to call for Imam-e-Zaman (A.S.). As he was calling for him he saw a person attired in costumes of the villagers riding a camel. The desperate traveller reports that as the rider approached him he called him by his name and asked him if he had been separated from his group and wished to be reunited with them. He then asked him to go near him, helped him climb onto the camel and rode it himself. After a few steps only the group was in sight and when it was close he said "Here are your companions". So saying he helped the traveller get down from the camel and went away.

Sayyid Muhammad Husaini has reported in his *Kifayatul Muhtadeen* from Hasan bin Hamza Alawi Tabari that one virtuous Mo'min has narrated that on one occasion he had proceeded on pilgrimage in the hot season and got separated from his group. He became so thirsty that he felt he was about to die and collapsed onto the ground. Suddenly he heard a horse galloping and opening his eyes saw an impressive, brilliant youth offering him water which was colder than ice and sweeter than honey. He reports he was saved from death. He asked the youth of his identity,

expressing his gratitude for such kindness. The youth said he was the Proof of Allah on earth and the one who would fill the earth with justice at the time when it would be infested with injustices and oppression. He said he was the son of Hasan bin Ali bin Muhammad bin Ali bin Musa bin Jafer bin Muhammad bin Ali bin Husein bin Ali bin Abi Talib (A.S.). He then ordered the traveller to close his eyes and when he ordered him to open them again he found himself with his group and the Imam (A.S.) had disappeared from his sight.

Let us now turn to examine how the Imam (A.S.) helps the pilgrims to the holy shrines of the Imams (A.S.). So many events have been reported of the assistance offered by various Imams to such pilgrims and so much is known of the assistance, in particular, granted by Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) that this chapter will be incomplete without a reference to a few of such reported events.

It is reported in *Al-Najmus Thaqib* on the authority of Allama Said Mahdi Qazwini that one 14th Shabaan he had left Hilla with a group of pilgrims for Kerbala for the 15th Shabaan. When they reached the banks of Hindia and crossed over to the West they noticed that pilgrims from Hilla, Najaf and neighbouring places had taken shelter in the houses of the families of Bani Toraf and their passage to Kerbala had been blocked as the Anizah had set out to rob the pilgrims. The Allama recited his Zohr prayers. Clouds began to gather and it began to drizzle. Suddenly he noticed that the pilgrims came out of the houses and walked in the direction of Kerbala. The Allama requested his Arab host to make enquiries. He set out to ascertain the situation and on his return reported that the Bani Toraf had prepared themselves to escort the pilgrims safely to Kerbala, even if they had to fight in the process. On hearing this, the Allama told his companions that the Bani Toraf had neither the courage nor the capacity to fight but it appeared to him that they were tired of keeping their guests any longer and had planned this trick to rid them from their houses. Truly, soon the pilgrims began to return but the Bani Toraf did not go back to the houses. They sat in the shades outside the houses. On noticing this situation, the Allama became deeply grieved and started praying to Allah in the name and for the sake of Muhammad and his Progeny (A.S.), to avert this calamity from the pilgrims. While

he was engrossed in such prayer he suddenly noticed a brilliant personality on a beautiful horse, the like of whom he had never seen before. He had a long spear in his hand and had rolled up his sleeves. After salaams he said that the Aniza had been removed from their path and that the pilgrims should now proceed. The Allama requested him to escort them on the journey and he immediately agreed. The Allama states that at that time there were only two and a half hours left before sunset. He asked for his horse but his Arab host pleaded that the Allama should not put his life and the lives of the remaining pilgrims in danger but that they should spend the night there. However, the Allama insisted on leaving stating that it was important for him to be in time for the Special Ziarah. So saying the Allama climbed onto his horse and the other pilgrims followed him. The personality who had arrived led the way like a lion until they reached the place where the Aniza had gathered but they saw the place totally abandoned and not even a sign of any person having been present. Suddenly the personality disappeared and no one saw the direction in which he went. Although the Allama all the time felt an inkling that he had seen him before he could not place him. It was only after he had disappeared that he recollected that he was the same personality who had visited him at his house in Hilla and had informed him of the victory of Sulemania, which episode has been described fully as the third event at pages 136-138 in the English translation of the book *Imame Zamaan Hazrat Mehdi (A.S.)*.

The Allama then realized that the personality was Hazrat *Sahebul Asr (A.S.)* and that it was due to his grace that despite the fact that the distance from the houses of Bani Toraf to Kerbala was about nine miles, it was covered in just one hour leaving them with one and a half hours before sunset when they arrived in Kerbala. The next day they made enquiries about the Aniza and learnt that they had set up an ambush to plunder the pilgrims but that a luminous personality on a horse passed from that direction and on seeing him they screamed, "flee from here or else death awaits you. A complete army of soldiers and horsemen is coming". On hearing this they were so frightened that in running away some of them even left their belongings behind and in a minute the whole area became empty. The Allama enquired from these reporters if they had noticed the personality and from their reply the Allama made out

that he was the same person who led them from Bani Toraf towards Kerbala.

Again it is reported in *Al-Najmus Thaqib* from the Aalim Mirza Ismail Sulmasi reporting from his illustrious father Mulla Zainul Abedin Sulmasi that during one hot summer an Iranian visited Samarrah for Ziarah. It was midday and the keeper of the keys of the Haram had just closed the Haram and was leaving. On hearing the steps of a pilgrim, he paused and asked the pilgrim to recite his Ziarah but the pilgrim desired that the Haram be kept open and that he should be able to recite his Ziarah with concentration inside the Haram. So he gave the keeper an *ashrafi* (gold coin) but he declined and said that he could not act contrary to the practice.

The pilgrim offered him a second *ashrafi* but he did not respond. A third *ashrafi* was offered to him, yet he declined. At that stage, the pilgrim, in utter despair, turned towards the Haram and said, "Maulana, may my father and mother be your sacrifice — I have come to you with the intention that I will perform your Ziarah with concentration and sincerity and you are observing the attitude of the keeper of the keys." On hearing this the keeper, pushed the pilgrim out, closed the door and walked away. He thought that the pilgrim had a lot of gold coins and would chase him to offer him more. However, he had just about set out to go that he saw three gentlemen approaching together, one of them slightly ahead of the other two and younger than them. He also held a spear in his hand. The keeper of the keys was stunned to see them and noticed that the personality with the spear in hand was looking at him with anger and annoyance, his eyes blazing with anger and moving his spear as he addressed the keeper of the keys, "O Mal'un, the son of Mal'un! had this person come to your house for your Ziarah that you refused him entry into the Haram?", Immediately, the other gentleman, who was the eldest of the three, signalled to this personality and mentioned that the keeper was a neighbour which made the personality hold the spear back. However, he was soon angered again and repeated the same words but the elder gentlemen again signalled to him to hold his hand. This was repeated the third time when the keeper of the keys became unconscious and fell to the ground. In the evening his relatives

came and carried him away in the same state of unconsciousness. He remained in that state for two days. Members of his family were weeping and crying. When he regained his senses he narrated the entire episode of the pilgrim and the arrival of the three gentlemen. His condition was such that he was constantly crying asking for help, requesting them to pour water on him as he was on fire. They kept pouring water on him but he kept crying. When they examined his leg they found that there was a dark spot the size of a coin and he said that was the place where the spear had struck him. Members of his family took him to Baghdad for treatment but the doctors could not help in any way. Then they took him to a renowned doctor in Basra but after a very thorough and careful examination he too was amazed to see this case. As he had found no physical disability or pathological cause for these complaints he could only say that it was a punishment from Allah and that the patient had perhaps misconducted himself against a friend of Allah. After this event those nursing him became despondent and returned from Basra. Eventually he died on arrival in Baghdad. The name of this person has been reported as Hasan.

The author of *Jannatul Ma'wa* states that the respected Agha Muhammad Qazwini had told him that among the attendants in Samarrah who robbed and oppressed the pilgrims was one Mustafa Jamud. He was particularly adamant on harassing the pilgrims and on many occasions troubled them considerably in the *Sardab*. He would interrupt them during their Ziarah, and would so behave himself that the concentration of the pilgrims would be diverted, he would make noises, ridicule them and could not bear to see them reciting their supplications. One night he saw Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) in a dream and he asked him, "How long will you continue harassing my visitors? You do not let them recite their Ziarah? What have you got to do with what they say or recite? Let them do what they wish." Suddenly he woke up and noticed that he had totally lost his power of hearing and his ears did not function at all. He could not hear anything. Thus the pilgrims were relieved from his interruptions and harassment during their *aamals*, *Ziarah*, supplications and *Istighatha*. Soon he died.

Another well known experience reported in *Jannatul Ma'wa* has been narrated by the pious scholar Muhammad Amili that once he was on his way to Mashad for Ziarah. He remained there for a long time because everytime he wished to join a group he failed to do so because of financial constraints. On one occasion as a group left he decided that he should join them at all costs as winter was approaching and he had no provision for it and feared that he would die of cold and that even if he was not able to catch up with the group and died on the way of hunger and thirst it would still be a relief for him. So after Zohr prayers, he recited the farewell Ziarah and went out of the city in the direction in which the pilgrims had left earlier. However, until sunset he had not caught up with them and it became dark. He had no provision for food or water and in that forest there were no trees except the thorny ones of *hantal*.

These trees bear fruit which resemble water melons but are extremely sour. He even tried to pluck them in the extreme hunger from which he suffered but did not succeed. He continued to walk until he came to a small hill where, to his great surprise, he found a spring of water and thanked Allah for having quenched his thirst. He was afraid of imminent death. He used the water to make *Wudhu* and said his Maghribain prayers. By then it had become even darker and he could hear noises of wild animals around him. He lost all hope of life. It was a dark night. There was total loneliness in a forest and the exhaustion and troubles of a long journey. In such condition only Allah and His Chosen Ones come to one's mind. He lay on the ground. Suddenly he saw a horseman riding towards him. He became convinced that his hour of death had arrived. On approaching him, the rider greeted him and he replied. The rider asked him his condition and he explained it to him fully. This man said, "You have three water melons with you. Why don't you eat one of them? Turn behind and look". He turned and found a tree with three ripe water melons on it. The rider said, "You are hungry. Eat one of them now, carry the remaining two with you and proceed on to this straight path. Then eat half of one of them at dawn and the other half at noon. But preserve the third one intact as it will come very handy and useful on some occasion. At Maghrib you will come to a black tent and the people in that tent will take you to your group." Having said this to him, this gentleman

disappeared from his sight. He gathered courage to get up and plucked the water melons and ate one of them. It was so sweet and scented that he had never eaten such a water melon before. Then he carried the other two water melons and proceeded to the path as directed by the gentleman. At sunrise he split one of the water melons into two and ate half of it and continued his walk. At noon he ate the remaining half. Exactly at sunset he saw the black tent. People from the tent rushed out and arrested him in anger. They took him on the suspicion of being a spy and presented him to their elder who angrily required him truthfully to say where he had come from or else he would be executed. He narrated his episode fully and truthfully but to no avail. He pleaded with them earnestly but they said, "O liar! the path from you which you claim to have arrived is impassable. Nobody uses it because either he would himself die or wild animals would cut him to pieces. Moreover the distance between that place and Mashad would take at least three days to cover. We give you another chance to tell the truth or else we will execute you." As they drew their swords, suddenly the third water melon dropped from his gown (Aba) and all their attention was attracted towards it. They queried him about it and again, he fully explained how he had acquired it. They all became stunned and said, "Firstly there is no trace of water in this desert. Secondly how can there be a tree of fruits which our eyes have not seen till today in this forest?" Then they sat to discuss the situation amongst themselves which made him believe that they were convinced of the veracity of his narration and that they became aware that his affair was a miracle of the Imam (A.S.). Suddenly their attitude changed, began to kiss his hand and treated him with the greatest of kindness and courtesy. They began to tear pieces from his gown and eventually took away the remainder of his gown as *tabarruk*. They gave him new clothes, kept him as their guests for two days and on the third day gave him ten tumans and three people to escort him to his group.

Let us now see how the Imam (A.S.) imparts information and education even from concealment. It is reported in *Jannatul Ma'wa* from that illustrious and eminent scholar Aqa Seyyid Mehdi Qazwini who was responsible for conversion of over 100,000 persons to the Ithnasheri faith after he had shifted from Najaf to Hilla. He had been engaged in guiding the Bani Zabid and was visiting them frequently in their island

which was situated between the Euphrates and the Tigris. He reports that once he visited a town on that island on which there were about 100 houses and a mausoleum which was thought to be on the grave of Hazrat Hamza, the son of Imam Musa Kazim (A.S.). People used to throng there for Ziarah and reported a number of miracles which they had observed there but the scholar never visited the grave as according to his knowledge, the Hazrat was buried in Tehran (Ray) where there is the mausoleum of Shah Abdul Azim. Once it so happened that the scholar was in that town and according to his custom he did not visit the place. The people of the town requested him to visit the shrine there but he declined stating that he did not recognise the place. By his such statement others were also discouraged from visiting it. Later he departed from the town and arrived in Mazidiya and stayed at the house of some Seyyid. At dawn he woke up and after he had completed Namaze Shab and was engrossed in supplications awaiting the time for morning prayers, there suddenly entered a Seyyid for whose virtue and piety he had very high regard. After salutations this Seyyid said to him, "Maulana, yesterday you were a guest in the town of Hamza but did not visit him." The scholar replied, "Yes I did not. Hazrat Hamza, the son of Hazrat Imam Musa Kasim (A.S.) is buried in Ray." The Seyyid replied that many such popular stories circulate that had no basis at all. He said that the grave in Ray was not of Hazrat Hamza, the son of Imam Musa Kazim of (A.S.) but of Hamza bin Qasim Allawi who was a very great scholar himself and had been mentioned in the books of *Rijal*. Immediately it dawned on this scholar that the Seyyid who was talking to him was a layman and did not belong to scholarship and had no particular knowledge of *Rijal* and traditions and, so, he must have heard about this from a scholar of some standing. However, he rose to check whether it was already time for prayers and this Seyyid also departed. The scholar said his morning prayers and after the supplications consulted the books *Rijal* which he had with him. To his surprise the books contained exactly the same information which the Seyyid had imparted to him. Later in the morning, the people from the town visited the scholar and amongst them was also the Seyyid. The scholar asked Seyyid, "From whom had you heard about the shrine of Hazrat Hamza which you mentioned to me when you visited me this morning before dawn prayers?" He totally denied having visited the scholar at all and said he had in fact been out

of the town at the hour and had spent the whole night outside town and having heard of the visit of the scholar, had decided to visit him for the first time on that occasion. Thereupon the scholar announced his episode and said it was obligatory on him to go back for the Ziarat of Hazrat Hamza and that he had no doubt at all that the person who had visited him after his predawn prayers was Hazrat *Sahebul Amr* (A.S.). All the people of that town accompanied him for the Ziarah of Hazrat Hamza. Since then the throng on the shrine has increased and people visit it from far away towns.

In this episode three eminent personalities have been mentioned: first is the son of Imam Musa Kazim (A.S.), Hazrat Hamza; the second is Abdul Azim bin Abdallah bin Ali bin Hassan bin Zaid bin Imam Hassan (A.S.) and the third is Abu Yahya Hamza bin Qasim bin Ali bin Hamza bin Hasan bin Abdallah bin Abbas bin Ali bin Abi Tallib (A.S.).

A highly respected scholar Sheikh Yusuf Bahraini who died in 1184 A.H., having attained the title *Lu'luatul Bahrain* has narrated from the people of Bahrain that Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) visited Aqa Sheikh Ibrahim Qatifi at his residence and asked him which was the verse in the holy book Quran which contained the greatest guidance. The Sheikh replied "Surely, those who deviate from Our signs are not hidden from Us. Is he who is cast into hellfire better, or he who comes without fear on the Day of Judgement? Act as you please, surely He sees what you do" (Surah 41, Ayat 40). Having heard this reply from the Sheikh, Imam (A.S.) acknowledged it and having given further guidance departed. As the Sheikh was not able to identify the Imam (A.S.) and thought him to be a person he knew, immediately on the departure of the Imam he asked the members of the household if the gentlemen who had just visited him had gone. All of them said that they had not seen him, that no one had been there and they had not seen any person entering or leaving.

Another famous experience is reported by Seyyid Muhammad Baqir bin Sayid Muhammad Sheriff Huseini Isfihani in his book *Noorul Uyun*. He states that once a few people in Bahrain agreed that each one of them would take turns to entertain to a meal a group of Momineen. So they

continued this practice until the turn of a person who did not have the means to afford it. He became so perplexed that in the evening he left the city and went to the forest. Suddenly he found a gentleman approach him and asked him to go to a certain merchant and tell him that Muhammad Bin Hasan had asked for twelve dinars for which he had vowed (*nazar*) be paid to him, and he could use them for the entertainment of the Momineen. So he went to this merchant and conveyed that message. The merchant asked him, "What! had he personally said this to you?" The Bahraini replied, "That is so." The merchant asked, "Do you know him?" The Bahraini replied, "No, I do not know him". The merchant said, "He is Hazrat Sahebaz Zamaan (A.S.) I had made a vow in his name of twelve dinars which I have with me". Then the merchant produced the money and accorded him great honour saying, "As my vow has been accepted by the Imam I wish you to give me half a dinar as *tabarruk*". The Bahraini did so and with greatest pleasure, took the money and returned home to make preparation for the feast. This episode is proof not only that the Imam is aware of the difficulties which his people encounter but, even without being called for help, meets them in their afflictions and solves their problems unsolicited and unrecognized.

We have seen how the Imam (A.S.), unseen and unnoticed, has been helping not only the erudites but also ordinary believers in their afflictions and difficulties, be they spiritual or secular. A common instance when his believers invoke his aid is in cases of severe illnesses. Numerous episodes have been reported of how the Imam has extended his curative hand to alleviate the suffering of his followers and restored them to health.

It is reported in *Biharul Anwar* from a reliable Momin that he lived in Najafe Ashraf in the house of one Husein Mudalla since AH 749. The house was adjacent to the North West courtyard of the Haram. Husein Mudalla was a very pious Momin living in it with his wife and children. Once he was attacked by paralysis and became totally invalid, unable to move at all. As a result of this affliction, his wife and children became destitute and even reached the point of starvation. During this period one

night after the family was asleep, they suddenly noticed brightness on the doors and walls of the house. They became astonished and began to wonder what it was. Husein answered, "Imame Zamaan (A.S.) has just arrived here and ordered me to get up. I pleaded that he was fully aware of my condition and that I could not even move an inch. The Imam held my hand and raised me. I suddenly realised that all my incapacity had disappeared and I was totally healthy. The Imam (A.S.) also directed that the door of the *Sabaat*, namely the 6th one, by which one I used to proceed for the *Ziarah* of my grandfather should be closed at night." After this Husein rose by himself and proceeded to the Haram of Hazrat Amir (A.S.) and also to thank Allah for His Mercy. Since that day the *Sabaat* became known as Sabatte Huseini Mudalla. People come to this place with their wishes to have them fulfilled by Hazrate Hujjat (A.S.) and a number of them have had their wishes fulfilled by him at this place.

Allama Mulla Muhammad Baqir Majlisi (A.R.) has reported in *Biharul Anwar* a number of incidents which took place during his own time. One such incident reported to him was that of a person from Kashan who had arrived in Najaf together with a number of companions en route to Makka for Haj. But on arrival in Najaf he became so ill that he could not move about at all. Thus he was not able to proceed to Makka with his companions who left him with a pious Momin who lived in a room in the courtyard of the Haram. During the day he would leave the sick man in the room, close the door and set out to look for *Durre Najaf* in the desert. As a result, the sick man became very lonely and distressed, locked up the whole day. Eventually, one day the sick man informed his host that he was very depressed and felt very lonely in the condition in which he lay and requested him to take him outside and leave him at some place and then proceed to his occupation. So when the host left the room, he carried him outside Najaf and left him at the place known as *Maqame Hazrate Hujjat* (A.S.). There the host washed his shirt in the fountain at that place, hung it on a tree to dry and went away to the desert. The sick man narrates, "For a long time I was brooding on my condition in sorrow and grief and contemplating my end, I suddenly noticed a very pleasant and brilliant young man enter the courtyard. He greeted me and entered the room and started saying prayers (Namaz) near the Mehrab with deep concentration. Never before had I witnessed a person saying

prayers in that way. When he completed his prayers he approached me and enquired about my condition. I told him with great affliction that I was neither getting cured nor was I dying to be relieved of my affliction. He said, "Do not be sad. The Almighty will soon bless you with both". So saying he went out. I noticed that the shirt which was on the tree had dropped down so I went and picked it up, washed it again and hung it on the tree. Suddenly I became conscious that a moment ago I was not able to move, yet now I had risen by myself, there was no pain any more, nor any difficulty. I was no longer sick and felt completely healthy. I realised that the young man was Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) himself and by His grace and favour Allah had granted me health. I ran outside to look for him everywhere but could not find him. I became extremely repentant that I had not recognized him from the beginning. In the meantime my host arrived and became astonished to see my condition. I narrated the entire episode to him and he too became grieved that he had missed the opportunity to meet the Imam (A.S.) and we returned to our room." It is reported that this Kashani continued to remain in the room for a long time until his friends returned from Haj but he became ill once again and died. He was buried in the courtyard of the Haram. Both his wishes became fulfilled in due course as promised by the Imam (A.S.): both health and death. Indeed, if one were to continue in this vein there are innumerable examples of the sick being cured by the Imam (A.S.).

IMAMAT IN CONCEALMENT: MEETING THE IMAM

A common complaint today amongst the youth is that whilst they are convinced that the Imam (A.S.) exists and performs his functions even by assisting the Mujtahids and also the ordinary man in problems, there is still no way for a faithful to meet him. Of course, as already discussed, the whole purpose of concealment would be defeated if he became accessible and available to every person at the pleasure of such person. Such ease of communication would negate concealment. There is no particular tradition from any Imam (A.S.) saying that a particular method can be adopted to meet the Imam (A.S.) but various people have succeeded to meet him by various means. Three such known and tested methods are to spend forty consecutive Tuesday nights at *Masjide Sahla* or to spend forty consecutive Thursday nights in prayer in the Haram of Imam Husein (A.S.) in Kerbala or at *Masjide Kufa*. We can consider some of the well known experiences.

Allama Seyyid Muhammad Baqir Qazwini Najafi was an eminent scholar. In 1244 AH he predicted that cholera would spread in Iraq in two years' time, a great number of people would die including himself and that then the disease would disappear. He claimed that he had obtained this information from Hazrat Amir (A.S.) in a dream. This was exactly what occurred. During those days he took part in the funeral of over 40,000 people and led the funeral prayers himself. His purity and sincerity were beyond question and were renowned. Maulana Seyyid Muhammad Razavi Najafi has reported in *Jannatul Ma'wa* from Seyyid Jafer, the son of Allama Qazvini, that once he followed his father to *Masjide Sahla* and on approaching the Mosque asked his father that he had heard from people that any person who prayed in *Masjide Sahla* for forty Tuesday nights would have the honour of seeing *Sahibul Amr* (A.S.). However, he had not seen any authoritative source of tradition for this belief. The Allama became excited and retorted, "Why, simply because you have not seen him? And if you do not see him, the belief

has no basis?" These and such other expressions disappointed the son considerably. However, they entered the Mosque which was at that time empty and started praying in the centre of the Mosque. Suddenly a gentleman emerged from *Maqame Hazrate Hujjat* (A.S.). Allama Qazvini greeted him and kissed his hands. When the gentleman moved aside, the Allama asked his son if he recognised the person. The son enquired if it was Imam Zamana (A.S.) himself and the father retorted, "Who else?". The son states that on hearing this he ran round the entire Mosque looking for him but could not find him anywhere.

It is reported in *Jannatul Ma'wa* from the eminent scholar Agha Seyyid Muhammad Kazami that in 1275 AH whilst he was in Najaf in pursuit of knowledge, he often heard from scholars and other reliable persons that a certain green grocer had the honour of audience with Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.). He immediately began a search for the green grocer until he traced him. He found him noble and trustworthy. In order to obtain a quiet moment when he could enquire about the meeting with Hazrat (A.S.) he began to associate with the green grocer to an extent that they became friends. By coincidence when he once went to *Masjide Sahla* on Tuesday night for prayer he met the green grocer at the door of the Mosque and regarding this a convenient moment to raise the topic, requested the green grocer to spend the evening in prayer with him. So they did. After completion of the prayers at *Masjide Sahla* they proceeded to *Masjid-e-Kufa* in accordance with the custom prevailing in those days. After the prayers in *Masjid-e-Kufa*, he requested the green grocer to narrate to him in detail the circumstances of his audience with the Imam (A.S.). He said, "I often heard from knowledgeable people that if a person, with the desire of meeting Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) performs *amale istijazah* in *Masjide Sahla* for forty consecutive Tuesday nights he would have the honour of meeting the Imam (A.S.). I became anxious to meet him and started this prayer attending the Mosque religiously every Tuesday evening without fail. I did not care if it was hot or cold, sunny or rainy. Almost a year passed when on a Tuesday afternoon I was walking out of Najaf, clouds gathered and it rained hard. I thought other people might already have reached the Mosque but on arriving there found it totally empty. Even the caretaker who used to attend the Mosque in the evening and at night was not present. The night was dark. Thunder

and lightning were terrifying and I decided that soon after the Maghrib prayers and *amale istijazah* I should leave. Whilst I was reciting *Namaze Istijazah* I felt that there was considerable light in the place known as *Maqame Hazarate Sahebz Zaman* (A.S.) and heard the voice of someone praying in that place. I was consoled that there were other pilgrims also in the Mosque and was able to complete my prayers peacefully. On completion of my prayers I went to the place and found that there was illumination there but no lamp. I became bewildered. I saw an impressive scholar standing up in *Namaz*. I concluded that he was not from Najaf. So, in accordance with the courtesy of that place, I recited the *Ziyarat* of Imam Zaman (A.S.) and the *Namaz* thereafter and then decided to request the personality to accompany me to *Masjid-e-Kufa* but his aura and charisma were such that I did not dare make that request. Outside it was very dark and it rained heavily. Suddenly, the personality turned to me and with a smile and affection asked me if I desired that he should accompany me to *Masjid-e-Kufa*. I promptly expressed my wish and added that such was the custom of the inhabitants of Najaf. He stood up and came out with me. I was elated and delighted throughout the journey in his company. There was light all the way and it was dry. The rain and cold prior to my meeting with the personality had all disappeared and I had forgotten about them all. The door at *Masjid-e-Kufa* was closed. So I knocked it. The caretaker asked who was at the door and when I requested him to open it, he queried as to where I was coming from in such rain and darkness. I replied that I had come from *Masjid-e-Sahla*. The caretaker opened the door and as I turned to request the personality to enter the mosque with me I did not find him. He had disappeared. There was then the same loneliness, darkness and torrential rain. I began to shout for him that the door had been opened and ran around looking for him but did not find him. The rain and cold had great effect on me and I had to enter the mosque regretting and repenting my failure to identify him while he was with me. I blamed myself that so many signs had become apparent but I had not become conscious of them. Although there was no lamp in *Maqame Sahebe Zaman* (A.S.) yet there was such great light that twenty lamps could not have emitted such brightness. Again the personality called me by my name although he did not know me nor had he seen me before. Prior to our departure from *Masjid-e-Sahla* there was darkness, thunder,

lightning and rain but when in his company till *Masjid-e-Kufa* there was such light that one could see every footstep printed on the earth which was totally dry and the air was soothing. However, once he disappeared at the door of *Masjid-e-Kufa* there was the same darkness, cold, rough weather and heavy rain. I became convinced that the personality was Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) whom I was deeply desirous to meet and for whose meeting I had endured terrible heat and cold. This was a great mercy of Allah on me for which I am always thankful to Him."

In the same book there is a report by Sheikh Baqir in respect of a very obedient son who had been serving his father faithfully. He was constantly in the service of his father and did not part from him except on Tuesday nights when he went to *Masjid-e-Sahla* for prayers. However a time came when he even gave up attending *Masjid-e-Sahla*. People enquired from him the reason for his absence there. He reported, "I attended the Mosque for forty consecutive Tuesday nights and on the fortieth occasion I could not leave for the Mosque in the afternoon and it was already dark when I took off. Although it was moonlit I was alone on the road and when I had covered two-thirds of the way I suddenly saw an Arab on the road coming towards me. He approached me and spoke to me in the local vernacular. He greeted me and asked me where I was going. I explained I was proceeding to *Masjid-e-Sahla*. He asked me if I had any food with me and I replied I did not have any. He asked me to check my pocket but I gave him the same reply. He became little excited so I put my hands in the pockets and discovered that I had a few currants which I had purchased for my child but had forgotten to give them to him. Then he said three times, "I advise you in respect of your old father, admonish you regarding him, order you about him." So saying he disappeared from my sight. Suddenly I became convinced that it was Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) who could not bear that I remained away from the service of my father even for one night. It is for this reason that I have abandoned my visits to the Mosque". This demonstrates the manner in which the Imam (A.S.) admonishes his followers.

It is reported in *Jannatul Ma'wa* by Sheikh Baqir Kadhami that there lived in Najaf a scholar by the name of Sheikh Muhammad Hasan Sarira who was in extreme financial distress. He was also so sick that he

coughed blood. Many times he went to neighbouring places in search for sustenance but did not get enough even for meagre expenditure. In the meantime he also became desirous of marrying a girl from a family in Najaf. The parents of this girl declined marriage in view of his financial incapacity. Finally he resorted to the course that was popular among the people in Najaf of spending forty Thursday nights in Masjid-e-Kufa to obtain audience with Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) and have his wishes fulfilled. Sheikh Muhammad Hasan reports, "When the fortieth night arrived it was cold, dark, the weather rough and it was raining. Somehow I managed to reach the Mosque but my coughing increased and I feared that I would vomit blood in the Mosque. I was shivering and in agony. At the same time I was anxious not to spoil everything on this last night. I had already encountered too many difficulties over the thirty nine nights but had not yet succeeded in my quest. I had brought coffee with me and prepared a small fire to heat it. Suddenly I saw an impressive gentleman approaching the Mosque. I thought him to be an Arab from the neighbouring villages wishing to have some coffee. I feared that if I offered it to him I would be left with none. He came close to me and greeted me by my name. I replied him but I could not recognise him at all. I was astonished how he knew my name and speculated that he may have been a resident of the neighbouring villages who came to Najaf now and again and happened to know me. So I enquired if he was of a particular tribe but he said he was not. I then enquired if he belonged to a particular Jamaat but he said he did not. Then I just uttered a few words of amusement in a joke. He smiled and said, "It does not matter from where I come or where I belong but why have you come here and what is the purpose of your visit?". The tone and voice was so sweet that I was attracted towards him. I offered him coffee. He drank a little from it and returned it to me asking me to finish it. I did so unconsciously and said, "You have been sent by Allah to be my companion in my loneliness. Let us proceed to the shrine of Hazrat Muslim (A.S.)." But he insisted on knowing my problems. I explained my poverty, sickness and desire to marry and added that the Mullas of Najaf aggravated my problems by showing me this remedy of forty nights in the Mosque. Having heard this he said, "You will recover from your sickness and will soon be able to marry the girl you desire but poverty will remain with you till your death." I did not pay any particular attention to these words but requested

that we should proceed towards Hazrat Muslim (A.S.). He agreed and we both entered the Mosque. He suggested that we should pray the Namaz of respect to the Mosque (*Tahiyya-e-masjid*). He recited the Sura of Fateha in such beautiful tone, manner and voice which I had never heard before. It suddenly dawned on me that he may be Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.). In the very course of the prayer I felt that a brilliant light encompassed him which dazzled my eyes and I became awestruck. I could not even break my prayers. Somehow I managed to complete the two rakaats only to see the light ascend into the sky, travel towards the shrine of Hazrat Muslim (A.S.) and disappear. I began to weep uncontrollably but was incapable of moving forward. I remained seated where I was repenting of my misbehaviour until dawn. I then started to ponder over his words and suddenly realised that I had no pain in the chest any more nor any cough. Such circumstances arose that within one week I married the girl I desired but have remained poor.”

It is reported in the same book from the scholar Sheikh Ali Rashti that on one occasion he was travelling towards Najaf having completed Ziarat in Kerbala and boarded a boat in which there were merchants travelling to Hilla. They were merry. However, one person was aloof and kept away from their revelry. They all had to come down and walk along the bank as the water became very shallow and suddenly he met the quiet person and enquired from him about the other travellers. He explained that they were his relatives but of different sect. His father also belonged to their sect but his mother was a Shia. He added that he too had once been of their sect but was converted to Shiaism by the grace of Hazrat Sahebuz Zaman (A.S.). He asked him to elaborate and he said his name was Yaqut and was a businessman. Once he had left Hilla to make purchases in the villages and returned with a group of other people of Hilla. They stopped at a certain place to rest. He was overcome by sleep and when he woke up, he found that his companions had left him and he could find no trace of them. In a state of panic he picked up his luggage and started to track his companions but he was lost and became fearful of wild animals. In such a condition, he began to call for the help of the three Khalifas and the Sheikhs but received no response. Suddenly, it occurred to him that his mother had always mentioned to him that their Imam was alive, his title was Abu Saleh and showed the pa

to those who had lost their way and helped the helpless and those in distress. So he made a promise to Allah that he was invoking the Sahebuz Zaman (A.S.) and that if he saved him from his predicament he would embrace his mother's faith. After this, he called for help from this Imam (A.S.). Suddenly he noticed an impressive personage walking alongside him. He had a turban and showed him the way and asked him to change his faith to the sect of his mother. He added that he would soon reach a village in which the inhabitants were all Shias. He pleaded to the personality to accompany him to the village but he declined adding, "Thousands of people in a number of places call for my help and it is necessary for me to heed to their calls". So saying he disappeared from his sight. He reports that he had to walk only a little further but actually had covered a long distance to his home. Indeed his companions reached there a day later. He reported this episode to Agha Seyyid Mehdi Qazdini who taught him rules of religion. He then wished he could have had another opportunity of meeting the Imam (A.S.) and the Seyyid advised him to spend forty Thursday nights in the Haram of Imam Husein (A.S.). So he did but on the fortieth Thursday night on reaching the gate of the city he found Government officials demanding entry permits from the people seeking to enter Kerbala. He did not have such a permit and was confused. There was a huge crowd at the gate. He even attempted to steal entry into the city but did not get an opportunity. Suddenly he saw Hazrat *Sahebul Amr* (A.S.) at the gate and states, "He came out, held my hand and took me into the city in such a way that nobody noticed us". Then as he turned towards the Imam, he had already disappeared.

But these are methods that are more easily practised by people living in Iraq. Even for those in distant countries less arduous methods have been experienced. For example, a very well known and celebrated episode is of a student of religion who, in his predicament, became desirous of obtaining an audience with the Imam (A.S.). He undertook the exercise of spending forty consecutive Thursday nights in the Haram of Imam Husein (A.S.) and not having obtained audience became deeply disappointed. However, the following Friday morning he went as he always did, to the shop of a grocer. There he found a very impressive personality sitting in the shop. He naturally greeted him. The personality replied the greeting and asked the young man what his problem was as he appeared

deeply disturbed. Again naturally the student expressed his entire experience. The personality asked, "Why did you spend forty Thursday nights in the Haram of Imam Husein (A.S.) only to meet and see your Imam? Ask this grocer, I come here every Friday morning to enquire after him. He does not have to look for me." So saying the personality went out of sight. The student was astonished. He turned to the grocer who said, "It is true he visits me every Friday morning." The student asked, "What did you do to earn this honour?" The grocer replied, "I only fulfil all my obligations (WAJIBAT) and refrain from all prohibited acts. I take care to earn my livelihood honestly." Thus is the answer provided for every faithful. To meet the Imam (A.S.) we need to fulfil all our obligations and refrain from all prohibitions and the Imam will visit us himself. Our misfortune is that we do not wish to comply with his rules and yet complain that he is out of sight!

There are also supplications to be recited to see the Imam (A.S.). These will be discussed in the Fifth and Sixth chapters.

When the Imam (A.S.) performs his duties with such kindness towards us, let us examine what are our duties towards him.

OUR DUTIES TOWARDS THE IMAM (A.S.): SUPPLICATIONS

We have seen how the Imam (A.S.) conducts his Imamatus despite his concealment and, in particular, how he discharges his duties both to the faith, in its sustenance and enhancement, and to his followers, in alleviating their afflictions. Indeed, he is so close to and concerned about us that our predicaments become his problems and he is readily available to rescue us. What, then, are our duties to him? Should we not, at least out of gratitude and to prove our affinity and affiliation to him, remember him and make him feel that we are his true followers?

Thus, it is our first and foremost duty to sincerely and affectionately remember him and recite various supplications, *salawat* and invocations for his help in times of difficulty. A number of these have already been taught to us by our Imams (A.S.). In this brief chapter we can discuss only a few of them. It may be pertinent to confine ourselves to the famous work, *Mafatihul Jinan* by Sheikh Abbas Qummi. As there have been various editions of it, it will not be useful to refer to page numbers but as the arrangement in all the editions is the same, there should be little difficulty in tracing the particular part to which reference will be made.

To start with *salawat*, and deal with only two of them, one finds an important one set out in the fourth part dealing with the Aamal of Friday. It is the last topic under the heading. Sheikh Abbas Qummi states that Friday has a special connection with the Current Imam (A.S.). He was born on that day and it is reported that he will re-appear on that day. Thus it is a day of greater importance than any other day of the week to express our *intezar* (anxiety for his return) and earn greater thawab than on any other day. He then sets out the *salawat* reported by Abul Hasan Zarrab to have been taught to him by the 12th Imam (A.S.) himself. Sheikh Abbas Qummi states that according to various reports the *salawat* is so important that if one is not able to recite any other supplication after the Asr prayers, one should not in any event miss this particular *salawat* because of its particular virtues. It is the *salawat* which starts with *Bis*

Millahirrahmaanirrahim, Allahumma Swalli Alaa Muhammedin Seyyidil Mursalin Wakhatemin Nabiyyin Another *salawat* appears almost at the end of the book in the portion dealing with the *salawat* on all the fourteen Masumeen (A.S.). This is the portion that follows immediately after the *Ziarate Jamia*. There is a specific *salawat* on the Twelfth Imam (A.S.). It is a brief *salawat* starting, *Allahumma Swalli Alaa Waliyyika Wabni Auliyaik*. It is a moving *salawat* with earnest supplication for his protection and assistance by Allah. It is so brief that unfortunate is he who misses its recitation. It is a *salawat* taught by Imam Hasan Askari (A.S.) in 255 A.H. and is reported from authentic sources.

Turning now to invocations, the most famous, important and effective one is known as the *Istighatha* (the Appeal). It is in the *Mafatihul Jinan* in the 7th chapter which starts with the *Dua-e Tawassul*. In that chapter the 11th supplication is the famous *Dua-e Faraj (Ilahi Adhumalbalaa)* which we shall discuss later. The 12th, is the famous *Dua-e-Hujjat* (A.S.) (*Allahummarzuqna Tawfiqat-Twa-aa*) followed by the 13th *Ilahi Bihaaqqi Mannajaak*. All these three are famous supplications usually known by heart by all Shia students. Then follows the *Istighatha* which is the 14th subject in that chapter. Seyyid Ali Khan states in *Kalema Tayyib* that whenever you wish to invoke Hazrate Hujjat (A.S.) one should recite two rakaats namaz with any sura after sura-e Hamd but preferably sura *Inna Fatahna* (Ch. 48) in the first rakaat and *Idha Jaa Nasrullahi* (Ch. 110) in the second. One should then, preferably, be under open sky and facing Qibla recite the invocation. It starts with salutations and follows with a prayer for his speedy and smooth return. Immediately after the verse from the Holy Book *Wanuridu Annamunna ...* follows the supplication *Ya Mawla Ya Sahebaz Zamaan Yabna Rasullillah* and at that stage one should seek one's wishes which, by the grace of Allah, will be accepted by Him. One should then continue with the invocation to the end. The last portion is an expression of yearning to the 12th Imam (A.S.) to intercede to have our wishes accepted by Allah. Numerous instances are known, not only from the past but even today of this invocation having been used in times of grave affliction and having proved expeditiously effective. A famous and publicly known example is of the way it was invoked in 1956 by Marhum Muhammad Jaffer Rashid Nathani. He will be well remembered for, *inter alia*, the

numerous visits he paid to the Masumeen in Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Once when on a similar mission with a group of *zawwars*, he was taking off from Kampala for the Middle East. His entire group reported at the airport just as the manifest was being closed. He pleaded to the airline officials to include them but was turned down. He persisted in his efforts and even approached the captain but he refused, got into the cockpit and the doors of the plane were closed. Just as the engine was started, Marhum laid his prayer mat, recited the two rakaats and this Isthighatha.

While he was still reciting it, the plane took off, only to return to the tarmac, the captain suspecting a technical fault which he wished verified and corrected, if necessary. The plane landed and the engineers became busy. Marhum made another approach to the airline officials who, finding there was so much time available, accepted the entire group. Soon was the inspection completed, the engineers and the captain were all satisfied that there was no technical fault and the plane took off again.

It is important that we should, everyday without fail, send salutations to our current Imam (A.S.). A number of them are contained in *Mafatihul Jinan* in the portion dealing with *Ziarah on Sahebul Amr* (A.S.). The one much recommended by the scholars is the first *ziarah* starting with the words *Salamun Alaa Ali Yasin*. Again there is a *salawat* immediately after the *ziarah*. The practice of sending salutation to him after every namaz is, of-course, most laudable. It ensures that at least three times a day we remember him, respect him and salute him. Of course, it is almost unforgivable for a loving and loyal Shia not to send salutations on a Friday. The most commonly recited *ziarah* on that day is the *ziarah* for Friday which is dedicated to the 12th Imam (A.S.). This is contained in the *Mafatihul Jinan* in the fifth chapter immediately after the *Aamal* of Friday. As it is recited in our mosques every Friday and is a brief one, its full translation is given here so that Shia students not well versed with Arabic can understand its meaning and significance when they recite it on Fridays:

Salaams to you, O the proof of Allah on His earth

Salaam on you, the witness of Allah in His creation

Salaam on you, O the light of Allah which guides those seeking guidance and comforts the believers.

Salaam on you, O righteous and respectful

Salaam on you, O friend to consult

Salaam on you, O the ark of salvation

Salaam on you, O the reality of life

Salaam on you, and may Allah send His blessings on you and on your pure and purified Family

Salaam on you, and may Allah hasten fulfilment of His promise of help to you and the manifestation of your reappearance.

Salaam on you, O my Master, I am your servant well knowing of your predecessors and those to follow you. I seek nearness to Allah the High through you and your family and anxiously await your re-appearance and the re-appearance of truth by your hand. I beseech Allah to send His blessings on Muhammad and his progeny and to include me among those anxiously waiting for you, your followers and helpers against your enemies and to be martyred in your cause and presence from amongst your friends.

O my Master, O the current Imam, may the blessings of Allah be on you and your family. Today is Friday which is dedicated to you and fixed for your re-appearance and for comfort of the believers by your hand and the death of the infidels by your sword. And O Master, I am your guest for this day and seeking your shelter and charity and O Master, you are so generous from the family of the benevolent and honourable and commanded to be a host to provide protection and shelter. So protect me and shelter me and may the blessings of Allah be on you and on your pure family."

We must also examine some supplications relating to Hazrat Hujja

(A.S.). Four of them have been set out in *Mafatihul Jinan* immediately after the *ziarah* on the Hazrat (A.S.). The first of these is, of course, *Dua-e Nudba*. This has been reported from authentic sources including *Misbahulzair* by Seyyid Ibne Taus. It is recommended to be recited during the four Idds, namely, Idd el Fitr, Idd el Adha, Idd el Ghadir and Fridays. It is a fantastic *dua* broadly split into three parts. The first is a historical portion which sets out the arrival of the prophets culminating in the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) followed by the short history on Hazrat Ali (A.S.) and the remaining Imams (A.S.). The second portion sets out the various qualities of Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) by way of salutations to him and, lastly, is a moving lamentation over the grief that a loyal Shia feels by the concealment of the Imam (A.S.). The length of the *dua* precludes a complete translation in this brief chapter. The second matter discussed in the *Mafatih*, immediately after *Dua-e Nudba* is a *ziarah* to be recited every morning after Fajr prayers. Allama Majlisi in *Biharaul Anwar* recommends that immediately after the *ziarah* one should press ones right hand on to the left as though pledging allegiance to the Imam.

The third is *Dua-e Ahad*. It is reported from Imam Ja'fer Sadiq (A.S.) that whoever recites this *dua* for forty days, after morning prayers will be amongst the helpers of the 12th Imam (A.S.). Should he die before the reappearance of the Imam (A.S.) Allah will raise him from his grave to enable him to present himself to the Imam (A.S.). Moreover, Allah will reward him with one thousand *hasanah* and forgive him one thousand sins for each word recited of this *dua*. A translation of this *dua* is as follows:-

O Allah the Sustainer of the Great Light, the Exalted Throne and the tempestuous sea, the revealer of the *Taurat*, *Injil* and *Zabur* the Sustainer of the shade and the heat, the Revealer of the great Quran, the Sustainer of the honoured angels, the Prophets and the Messengers.

O Allah I beseech You by Your benevolent countenance and its brilliance and eternal kingdom; O the Ever-Living, O the Self subsisting, by Your name which illuminates the heavens and the earths and by Your name by which the predecessors and the posterities are reformed, O the Ever-present before any living thing existed and the Everlasting

even after all life will cease. O Ever-living even when there was no life at all. O One who resurrects the dead and brings death to the living, O Ever-living, there is no God except You.

O Allah, convey to our Master, the Imam (A.S.) the guide, the guided, the one established in authority by Your command, may Your blessings be on him and on his pure ancestors, from all the faithful male and female, in the East and the West of the world, in the plains or on the mountains, on the lands and in the sea, and from me and my parents, blessings that equal in weight the 'Throne' of Allah, the ink of His words and such as only encompassed by His knowledge and covered by His book.

O Allah I renew on the dawn of this day and all the days of the remainder of my life my pledge, covenant and allegiance to him, as my obligation, which I shall neither ever contravene nor neglect.

O Allah include me amongst his helpers, defenders, those fulfilling his wishes and commands, his defenders, the fore-runners to carry out his intentions and those to be martyred in his presence.

O Allah should death intervene between me and his reappearance — the death which You have made inevitable on Your servants — let me out from my grave covered in my shroud, my sword unsheathed, my spear poised responding to the call of the caller in the cities and deserts.

O Allah grace me with a sight of the appearance of one rightly guided and the finest of the praise worthy and cool my eyes with a sight of one to whom I am attentive and hasten his return, render his re-appearance smooth and widen his path and lead me onto his path and cause his orders to be executed and strengthen his back. O Allah populate Your cities through him and revive Your servants for indeed You have said and Your words are true; "Mischief has shown its face on the lands and in the seas on account of what the hands of men have wrought". (30:41)

O Allah present this from us to Your friend and the son of the daughter of Your Prophet who bears the name of Your Messenger until he

destroys all untruth and manifests the truth fully.

O Allah make him the refuge for Your oppressed servants and a helper for him who has no other helper besides You and the reviver of the commandments in Your book which has been neglected and the strengthener of the sciences in Your religion and the traditions of Your Prophet. May Allah's blessings be upon him and his progeny.

O Allah place him among those whom You have protected from the oppression of the oppressors.

O Allah please Your Prophet Muhammad, may the blessings of Allah be on him and his progeny, and those who will obey the invitation of the Imam and have mercy on our state of abasement after his appearance.

O Allah spare us this grief from this Ummah by his reappearance and hasten his re-appearance for "verily they (hypocrites) regard it to be far distant and we see it very near" (70:6,7) by Your mercy, O the most Merciful."

On completion of this dua pat your right thigh with the right hand three times and recite the following *Al Ajal, Al Ajal, Ya Maulaya Ya Sahebaz Zamaan* — hasten, hasten, O my Master O Master of the current time."

Sheikh Abbas Qummi then sets out the fourth supplication on the authority of Imam Reza (A.S.) as set out in *Misbah* in the *aamal* of Friday. Mention must, however, be made of one more *dua* contained in the first appendix to the *Mafatihul Jinan* under the heading "*Dua-e ghaibate Imam-e-Zamman*." It is the 7th subject discussed in the first appendix. Sheikh Abbas Qummi states from authentic sources that Sheikh Abu Amr, the first deputy of Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) had taught this supplication to Abu Ali Muhammad bin Humman. Seyyid Ibne Taus has recommended in *JamaalulUshbuu* the recitation of this *dua* every Friday after Asr prayers and has placed such weight on it as to state that if one cannot recite any other supplication, this one must not be missed as he regards this supplication as a special grace of Allah showered especially on us. It is a *dua* which starts with the words, *Allahumma Arrifni Nafsaka*

and is renowned amongst Shias for constant recitation.

This chapter would be incomplete without mention of the efforts we must make to enable us see our Imam (A.S.). That is why *Dua-e Ahad* is regarded to be so important. The *dua* so strongly recommended by Seyyid Ibne Taus also contains a special supplication for seeing him. Imam Ja'fer Sadiq (A.S.) has taught us that if a person recites Sura *Bani Israil* on every Friday eve (i.e. Thursday night), he will not die until he has seen Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) and when he dies he will be amongst his companions. A small *dua* but very efficacious for seeing the Imam (A.S.) is the *salawat*: *Allahumma Swalle Alaa Muhammadin Wa-ale Muhammad Wa-ajjil Farajahum* and must be recited many times every day. Indeed, how can a Shia fail constantly to pray for the early return of his Imam from concealment?

OUR DUTIES TOWARDS THE IMAM (A.S.)

We have discussed some of the *duas* which we need to recite to establish our loyalty and affinity towards our Twelfth Imam (A.S.) and also to establish our *Intizar*. We have covered some of the important supplications but we also need to discuss a tradition which has been accepted as authentic by our historians. It is a renowned tradition known as the Hadith of Seyyid Rashti. It has been reported to us from authoritative sources including the *Mifatihul-Jinan* by Sheikh Abbas Qummi. In *Al-Najmus Thaqib* it has been cited from Saleh Taqi Seyyid Hashim Musavi who was a merchant residing in Risht. He was well known as a pious person extremely particular about strict observance of the rules of religion and who meticulously performed all the prayers and Ziarah and also paid all the dues ordered in religion. He reports that in the year 1280 A.H. he went to Tabriz on his way to Makka for pilgrimage and was a guest at the house of Haji Safarali who was a merchant in Tabriz. He reports "As I was not able to find a caravan of pilgrims during those days, I was worried. In the meantime, Haji Jabbar of Isfahan was proceeding towards Tarabuzan with goods and I decided to hire a horse and join him. When we reached the first station, we were joined by three other gentlemen who were persuaded to join us by Haji Safarali. They were Haji Mulla Baqir Tabrizi, Haji Seyyid Husain Tabrizi and Haji Ali. We all proceeded from the first station together and reached a place called *Raznatur-Rum*. From there we were moving towards Tarabuzan. Between these two towns the leader of the caravan, Haji Jabbar, warned us that the journey ahead was a dangerous one and that we should all be ready in time and should all remain together in the same group until we pass the dangerous area. Usually, we would ride leisurely almost at the tail end of the caravan but that day we all left before dawn and stayed together in the group. We had hardly travelled half a mile or three quarters of the mile when it suddenly became pitch dark followed by a strong wind and heavy storm. All the members of the caravan covered their heads and increased their pace. I also attempted to gallop faster along to catch them. However, the distance between me and them

increased and they appeared to be further away from me. The weather became even foggier, so much so that the members of the group were no longer visible to me. By then I was clearly separated from the group and was on my own. I decided to get off my horse and sit by the roadside until sunrise. I was in deep anxiety as I had with me about 600 Tumans. I decided to stay there till sunrise and return to the station from which I had started to engage a few guides to show me the way and protect me during the journey until I rejoined the caravan. Suddenly, to my utter amazement, I saw a garden on the opposite side. I noticed a gardener clearing snow from the trees. I then noticed him walking towards me and he asked me in Farsi, 'Who are you?' I replied, 'My companions in our caravan have proceeded far ahead of me and I have been separated from them and am totally ignorant of the way ahead'. I noticed that this personality had a luminous face. He said to me, 'Why don't you recite *Tahajjud*, (popularly known as *Namaze Shab*) so that you may find your way?' Immediately I became engaged in reciting the Namaz and the personality left me. Soon after I had completed the Namaz, that personality returned to me and asked, 'Why are you still here? Why have you not gone as yet?' I replied, 'I still have not discovered the way. I do not know in which direction to move.' This personality said, 'Recite *Ziarat-e-Jamia*.' However I did not know the *Ziarah* by heart and although I have been fortunate to visit the holy shrines on a number of occasions and have recited *Ziarat-e-Jamia* so many times, I do not know it by heart even today but on that day, after the personality left, I stood up to recite the *Ziarah* and, to my amazement, I recited the entire *Ziarah* by heart. Only the aura of the personality made me start reciting the *Ziarah* and I suddenly found that the phrases flowed naturally, in proper sequence. Soon after I had completed the recitation, this personality returned and queried, 'Are you still here? Have you not gone away?' This time, I could not even bear to listen to the question and reply it. I broke down in tears and started weeping. The personality asked, 'But why are you weeping?' I replied, 'I have not yet discovered the path.' The personality said, 'Recite *Ziarat-e-Ashura*'. Although I had recited *Ziarat-e-Ashura* on numerous occasions before, I have never managed to learn it by heart. The aura of this personality, however, was such that I immediately began to recite *Ziarat-e-Ashura* and again, to my utter astonishment, I was able to recite it by heart, verse by verse in proper sequence. I then recited the salutations, and also *Dua-e-Alqama*. Soon

after I had completed, this personality came back and again asked, 'Have you not yet gone?' This time, I pleaded, 'I will remain here till sunrise'. This personality said, 'Come on, I will take you to your caravan'. He mounted on his mule and picked up his spade, and said to me, 'Climb on behind me'. I did so gratefully and held the reins of my horse and started to pull him but he resisted. The horse did not come along with me. So this personality took away the reins from my hands, shifted his spade into his left hand and led the horse. This time the horse obediently followed. As we moved along, he put his hands on my thigh and asked, 'Why don't you recite *Namaz-e-Tahajud, Nafila, Nafila, Nafila.*' He said it three times. Then he said, 'Why don't you recite *Ziarat-e-Ashura?*' Likewise he repeated thrice '*Ashura ... Ashura ... Ashura ...*' Then he said, 'Why don't you recite *Ziarat-e-Jamia? ... Jamia ... Jamia ... Jamia ...*' He repeated thrice. As he was advising me in this manner he suddenly said, 'Look, your caravan has just reached the river bank and is descending to make ablution (*Wudhu*) for morning prayers.' He then helped me dismount.

I attempted to mount on to my horse but could not do so. He descended from his mule, rested his spade in the snow and helped me climb onto my horse. He then directed the head of my horse towards the caravan. I began to ponder who this personality would be, particularly because he was speaking to me in Farsi, in an area in which one could only find people speaking Turkish! Again, the majority of the people in the area were Christians and he re-united me with my companions so speedily. As these thoughts crossed my mind and I turned to say, 'Thank you' to him, I found nobody there, not even a trace of the mule or its rider". The traditions relating to him clearly demonstrate that such acts of kindness and of rescuing the helpless in dangerous predicaments can only be the generosity of the Imam himself.

In addition to the supplications and salutations we have discussed, we now have a recommendation from no lesser a personality than the Imam himself in respect of *Namaz-e-Shab, Ziarat-e-Jamia* and *Ziarat-e-Ashura*. How important must they be when the recommendation comes from such a source? They are all well known and the *Ziarat-e-Jamia* and *Ziarat-e-Ashura* are set out in the *Mifatihul-Jinan*. This tradition thus proves that *Ziarat-e-Ashura* and *Ziarat-e-Jamia* are not salutations to be

offered, as most of us do, only once a year!

There are various other supplications recommended to us from authoritative sources but we do not have the occasion here to cover them all. However, mention must be made of a very small *Dua* which has not only come to us from the highest sources but carries the highest importance.

It is simply this: *Allahumma Swalle Ala Muhammadin Waali Muhammad wa Ajjil Farajahum*. There is a reliable tradition from Imam Jafer Sadiq (A.S.) that a person who recites this *Dua* after the Fajr and Zohr prayers will not die without being blessed with the vision of Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) during his life time. Another tradition from Imam Jafer Sadiq (A.S.) states that he who recites this small *dua Allahumma Swalle Ala Muhammadin Waali Muhammad wa Ajjil Farajahum* 100 times after *Salat-ul-Asr* will have all calamities averted from him by the Grace of Allah. We have already discussed the importance of the *Dua* taught by Sheikh Tusi *Allahumma Arrifni Nafsi* and also the *Dua-e-Nudba* but those who do not have the time to devote to these long supplications on Fridays after *Salat-ul-Asr*, can at least recite this short *dua* for, the tradition clearly states that whoever recites this *dua* 100 times sincerely wishing the quick re-appearance of Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) will by the Grace of Allah have all the difficulties averted from him and, indeed, the tradition proceeds to say that angels surround the place where this *dua* is recited and pray to Allah for one reciting it. What can be more essential and welcome in these days than all difficulties to be averted from us?

Such then is the importance of *Duas*. We have seen how considerate and compassionate the Imam (A.S.) is towards us, it is our basic and fundamental duty to continuously to pray for him.

We must always pray for his speedy re-appearance, his safety and his well being. Not that he needs these prayers from us, for his protection is promised by Allah himself, but they constitute evidence of our loyalty towards him. Traditions reveal that just as we recite supplications of *Dua-e-Nudba*, *ALLAHUMMA ARRIFNI NAFSAKA*, *ALLAHUMMA SWALLE ALA MUHAMMADIN WA ALE MUHAMMAD WAAJJIL FARAJAHUM* so does he continuously pray for us. This should bind us even more in gratitude and duty to him. A tradition in this connection

is reported in *Anis-al-Abedin* that Ibne Taus (A.R.) was once in Samarra and proceeded to Holy *Sardab* where he found Hazrat-Sahib-ul-Amr (A.S.) in prayers. Well known is the keen inquisitiveness of Sheikh Ibne Taus to ascertain the supplications the Imams (A.S.) taught. So he went close to the Imam (A.S.) to hear the supplications which was:

“O Lord, our shias and our devotees have been born from the remnants of our light (noor) and the remainder of our creation and they have reposed their trust in us and their love is for us and their confidence in our intercession for them to you. They have committed a number of sins in their faith and their sins are our burden. Their affinity and association is to us and they place total reliance and dependence on us. We stand surety for them. We are their central pillar and our happiness lies in seeing you forgive their sins. And O Lord correct their errors in their affairs with each other and for the khums that they pay reward them with entry into paradise and keep them distant and safe from the fire and punishment of hell and do not occasion our friends to incur your wrath together with our enemies in one place”.

We should be deeply indebted to him and the least we ought to do is to pray after each Namaz for his safety and success.

Besides supplications there are six other duties we need mention here. We must at all times remember that the legitimate ruler in this world is only Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) and that all the temporal rulers and kings have deprived him of his true place in the world. *Ziarat-e Jamia* is an apt reminder on this matter. We cannot discuss all the passages in that *Ziarah* but need refer to at least one passage where the *Ziarah* reads: *Farraghibu Ankum Mariq Wallazimu Lakum Lahiq, Wal Mukassiru fi Haqqikum Zahi, Wal Haqqu Maakum wa fi kum wa Minkum wa Ilaykum*”, (Those who have run away from you are strayed and those who have followed you have become united with you and those who have failed to recognize your rights fully have been lost. For *Haq*, the right, is yours and it is with you, and it is from you and it is towards you.) Thus one can see how right revolves around them; it is from them, it is within them, it is towards them.

Another duty is to remember that changes and innovations have been

made in the rules of religion and that the friends and followers of the family of the Prophet are few and that they are despised. We must, therefore, remain in grief for the situation in which we are and be in constant expectation of the arrival of Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.). We should know that Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) is constantly with us and should constantly expect his re-appearance and be conscious of our salutations and service to him. This, indeed, is the complaint we make every evening in the Holy month of Ramadhan in the recitation of the *Dua-e-Iftetah*, a dua itself taught by Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.). In the last portion of that dua he says “*Allahumma inna Nashku ilaika faqda Nabiyyina Salawatul Ilahi Alayhi wa Alihi Waghaibata waliyyina, wa kathrata Aduwwina, wa Qillata Adadina, wa Shidata’ Ifitanibina*”. We complain to Allah that His Prophet (S.A.W.W.) has departed from us and that our Imam (A.S.) is in concealment and the number of our enemies has increased and our number has decreased and the times are such that the people of the world are uniting against us. How true is this passage today and so the prayer ends, “*Waswalleh ala Muhammaddin Waalihi, Waainna ala Zalika Bifathin Minka Tuajjiluh*” — so send your choicest blessings on Muhammad and his progeny and help us with early success. “*Wa Bidhurrin Takshifuh*” — and spare us the calamities, “*Wa Nasrin Tuizuh*”. And grant us victory. “*Wa Sultani Haqqin Tuzhiruh*” and the early return of that rightful Sultan. “*Wa Rahmatin Minka Tujjalilu naha Wa Aafiyatin minka tulbisunnaha Birahmatika ya Arhamarrahimin*” — And Your graces and Your mercy may descend on us and clothe us with health for the sake of Your mercy.” This, then, is the quality of the supplications we have received from him.

It is also the duty of every friend and follower of Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) to ensure that the true religion survives, the believers remain in faith and that all endeavours are made for the propagation of the faith. Indeed one of the basic duties of Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) himself, is the propagation of the faith and every step taken by a believer in this direction is, therefore helping him in the discharge of this duty. This is the duty of us all and not only the leaders of the community or those engaged in running religious schools. Each one has not only to assist in the implementation of laid out programmes but also to initiate new programmes to ensure the survival and strength of the religion in modern times and beyond. Publication of religious books is an important duty, and particularly

their publication in a language understood by the majority of the youths at a given time. Therefore, translation of books into the language more easily understood is also a vital duty. As mere publication of books may not be enough, there is also a duty to open and run religious schools and ensure that the facilities to run them remain permanent.

The fourth duty is to give charity for the protection and safety of Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.). We constantly give charity for the protection of our children, in times of affliction and when we set out on a journey. It is also our duty to give charity for the protection of our spiritual father; we should give *Sadaqa* in his name. Not that he is in need of such prayer or charity from us for his protection. Indeed, that we are able to give *Sadaqa* in his name is his grace on us. The act is purely a manifestation of our loyalty towards him, of our veneration for him. Just as we pray to Allah to send blessings on the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) as a sign of our reverence towards him, so must we offer charity in the name of the Twelfth Imam (A.S.) in the same spirit.

The next duty is that whenever in any discussion or at any time the name of Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) is mentioned we should stand up and place our right hand on our head. There is a hadith from the eighth Imam (A.S.) that we should do so as a mark of our respect and reverence for him.

Another duty we have is to recite Quran for him and perform pilgrimage (Haj) for him. If we are not able to do ourselves, we could send a *Niabah* for him and not only for Haj but also for *Ziarat* to the Holy shrines of our Imams.

OUR DUTIES TOWARDS THE IMAM (A.S.): SEEKING HIS ASSISTANCE

The last duty we wish to discuss is that of seeking assistance from him when we are in difficulties. Just as it is his duty to heed our calls for help when we are in distress and redress our grievances, we are by the same token under an obligation to invoke his aid in our needs.

In Chapter Five we have already discussed the invocations cited in *Mafatihul Jinan*. In particular, the *Istigatha* is one of the most efficacious means of seeking his assistance. If there is no emergency and one needs to see the Imam to seek clarification on a matter, then we have seen how we can meet him by using the forty visits to *Masjid e Sahla* or *Masjid e Kufa* or the Haram of Kerbala.

Another tried and tested method is of petitioning the Imam (The *Aridhah*). In his book the late Haji Muhammad Jaffer Sheriff Dewji discussed this topic in Chapter 25 (p. 126 in the English Translation). He cited the famous case of Aqua Mirza Ebrahim Shirazi and how the petitions sent to the Imam are vetted by Hazrat Salman Farsi. Another example he cites is of Seyyid Muhammad Abbas, a resident of Jabalul Amil. We have already seen the case of Abul Qassim Jafer ibne Qawlawayh and how he managed to petition the Imam (A.S.) and how it was delivered to him as he was fixing the Black Stone. (page 133 in the English translation of Mulla Muhammad Jaffer's work). Two more cases can be cited here to show other methods used to reach the Imam.

Ibne Taus (A.R.) reports in his book *Farajul Humam* from Rashid Abu Abbas ibne Maimun that Sheikh Dar'um bin Abifaras migrated t

Kadhmain from Hilla in distress in fear of his life and hid himself in the cemetery of the Quraish there for two months. Sheikh Rashid quotes that he had occasion to meet him and inform him that he was going to Samarra for *Ziarat*. He asked Sheikh Rashid to carry his petition and place it in the *qubbah* in the basement (*Sardab*) when there was nobody around. The *Sardab* is the place from which the Imam (A.S.) is reported to have gone into concealment. He requested the Sheikh to go to the place next morning to see if the *aridhah* was still there or not and if he did not find the petition there he should not reveal about it to anyone. Sheikh Rashid reports that he did as he was told and when the next day he went to check he did not find the letter where he had placed it. When he returned to Kadhmain he found that the Sheikh had moved back to Hilla. Some time later when he visited Hilla he went to see the Sheikh and told him that his wish had been granted. This demonstrates yet another method of petitioning the Imam (A.S.).

Aqa Nuri Tabrisi has reported in *Al-Najmus Thaqib* that the scholar Mirza Hasan Naini, the son of Sheikhul Islam, Mirza Abdulrahman Naini learned from his brother Mirza Muhammad Said who was pursuing religious knowledge that in 1285 he contracted severe pain in his leg and it began to get worse. He had developed a tumour that prevented any movement and though a doctor managed to relieve the pain temporarily there was a relapse and a near painful paralysis set in. He suffered thus for a year and when a cholera epidemic broke out he was moved to another place. In the neighbouring village a famous doctor by the name of Agha Yusuf was called in to treat the patient but he too saw no hope of recovery. When no other way could be found they approached their pious and learned uncle who used to petition the Imam (A.S.) on behalf of the afflicted and succeeded in having them cured of their maladies. The mother of the patient went to this alim, Mirza Abu Talib, seeking his assistance. Mirza Abu Talib wrote out the petition and asked the mother to take it to a well and drop it there. The mother somehow managed to drag the ailing son to the well and they dropped the *aridhah* on a Friday as it approached the last hours of the day. A few days later Mirza Muhammad Hasan saw a dream in which he had visions of three horsemen approaching his house from the desert. He understood

that the person leading the three was Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) himself and he had come to heal his brother. The Imam came to the patient and touching his body with the spear he had in his hand told him to get up and go to receive his uncle who had come back from a long journey.

He understood that his uncle who had gone away for long and had been the cause of concern and anxiety for the family had come back. The patient rose at the command of the Imam (A.S.) and ran to welcome his uncle. His eyes opened. It was already dawn. He went to his brother and woke him up to narrate to him how Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) had healed him of his affliction. Everyone was utterly amazed to see that a person who could not place a foot on the floor was walking about cured. The news spread like wildfire in the city and everyone thronged to witness the cure effected by the Imam (A.S.). In a week all the wounds had disappeared. A few days later the long lost uncle also came back. Thus, the Imam (A.S.) once again in his miraculous ways brought happiness where there was distress.

We have seen how the Imam (A.S.) comes to our aid and succour when all hope is lost. We have seen how he helps people in their travels, illnesses, impecuniosity and particularly those stranded enroute to or from Hajj or from the *Ziarat* of the Holy Shrines. In fact, there is a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) enjoining us to seek help from the Imam (A.S.) when in distress.

It is reported in *Al-Najmus Thaqib* quoting from *Biharul Anwar* the version of Abu Wafaa Shirazi. He states, "I was arrested by Abu Ilyas and imprisoned. It also came to my knowledge that he was considering executing me. I beseeched help from Allah over my calamity and invoked the intercession of Imam Zainul Abedin (A.S.). I also invoked the intercession of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) and all the Masumeen. One Friday eve (Shabe Jumaa) I went to sleep after completing my prayers. I saw the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) in my dream and he said, "Do not invoke my intercession or the intercession of my daughter or my

two sons for worldly matters but only for the affairs of the Hereafter. For the affliction that has befallen you, in seeking the help of Allah you must invoke my brother Abul Hasan who can take revenge on the person who is oppressing you." I said, "O Messenger of Allah, he has himself suffered from such injustices, and the injustices that befell Fatema-Zehra (A.S.) who was deprived of her inheritance and has exercised patience. Then how will he avenge the injustice on me?" The Prophet (S.A.W.W.) looked at him in surprise and said, "This was all because I had obtained a promise from him to remain patient which he fulfilled and it was my command which he accomplished. But he does avenge those who inflict injustices on his friends. Ali Ibne Husein (A.S.) grants succour from Kings and the harm of the satans. Muhammad Ibne Ali (A.S.) and Jafer Ibne Muhammad (A.S.) are the means to acquire obedience to Allah and His pleasure. Musa bin Jafer (A.S.) provides sound health, Ali Ibne Musa (A.S.) provides safety in journeys, on land or water, Muhammad Ibne Ali (A.S.) should be invoked to obtain sustenance from Allah. Ali Ibne Muhammad (A.S.) should be invoked for performing Nawafil, kindness towards others and obedience. He should be made the intercessor in prayers for such qualities. Hasan Ibne Ali (A.S.) should be sought for the affairs of the Hereafter but the current Imam (A.S.) should be called when the knife is on one's neck." Then the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) with his holy hands pointed to the holy neck and then continued, "He will definitely respond to your call for he is the rescuer of every victim. So say, *Ya Sahebazaman Agithni, Ya Sahebazaman Adrikni*". So, I began to call him by those words in that very dream and one horseman with a *Herba* in hand which emitted light right into the skies approached me and descended from the horse.

I said, "O my Master, please help me from the danger of this tyrant in whose clutches I am held." He said, "I have already done so."

The next morning Abu Ilyas called me and asked me whom he had invoked for help? I replied, "The same person to whom the helpless and the hapless present their complaints." As to the statement in this dream by the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) that the help of the current Imam (A.S.)

should be invoked only when the knife has reached the neck, it does not mean that his help should be invoked only in such dire circumstances or that seeking such help is limited to him but is an indication that in all affairs, whether worldly or religious, which reach a stage when none can help and a person becomes helpless then one should call for help from Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) and he will definitely respond, for it is the function of the Imam (A.S.) to help those who have none else to come to their aid.

Let us examine yet another instance of how he comes to the aid of the helpless. In *Al-Najmus Thaqib* there is a report about the pious Sheikh Muhammad Tahir Najafi. For a number of years he was looking after *Masjid-e-Kufa* and lived in the Masjid with his wife and children. He was very pious and religious. In his last days he had become totally blind. He states that for a number of years, owing to differences between two groups traffic of pilgrims had almost ceased in Najaf. Even students of religion stopped going to Najaf which distressed him considerably. His personal life was also affected as he had a large family and also maintained a few orphans. He had almost reached the state of starvation. One evening there was no food in the house at all and the children were crying. In sheer desperation and despair, he prayed to Allah and said, "O Allah now I seek nothing from You save that I should see my Master." Suddenly an impressive personality arrived. He thought this must be some king but he also had a turban (Ammama) on his head. He started saying prayers and the brightness on his face grew such that it was no longer possible even to look at him. Suddenly he turned towards Sheikh Tahir and said, "O Tahir which King do you think I am?" He replied, "O my Master, you are the King of Kings and the leader of the entire universe." He said, "O Tahir! You will get what you want. Now what do you want? Don't we look after you all everyday? Are not all your actions (Amaal) presented before us?" These words of majesty made such an impression on him that he could not reply at all. Praise be to Allah that since then the gates of sustenance opened up for him and he was never in need again.

It is reported in *Jannatual Ma'awa* from Maulana Salmasi, the clerk of Bahrool Uloom Aqa Seyyid Mehdi Tabatabai in Makka that although Bahrool Uloom was far away from home his charitable disposition knew no bounds. He did not pay attention to his clerk's warnings about money running out. One day the clerk informed him that they had no money left and the Allama made no reply. As usual, after dawn he went to the Kaaba to perform *tawaf* and on return asked for the *hookah*. Suddenly, there was a knock on the door and the Allama himself rose to open the door. He ordered the clerk to clear away the hookah from there. As the door opened, an impressive Arab person entered and sat. The Allama sat opposite him in a posture of humility and submission. Soon after, the personality rose to go. The Allama himself saw him to the door, kissed his hand and helped him onto his ride. When Bahrool Uloom returned his face was flushed. He gave the clerk a piece of paper and asked him to take it to a money-changer at *Kohe Safa* and bring back whatever he was given.

The clerk went to *Kohe Safa*, handed the note to the money-changer who kissed the note and asked the clerk to bring four porters. There was so much money that four porters were needed to carry it back to the house.

Several days later the clerk decided to visit the moneychanger to find who the author of the note was. But, to his amazement, there was no money-changer to be found. When he inquired about the money-changer from the neighbouring shops he was told that there never was any money-changer there. The clerk understood immediately that he had witnessed Allah's grace through the hands of the Imam (A.S.).

It is reported in *Dar us Salaam* by Seyyid Baqir Isfahani that his practice was that on Tuesday night he would stay in *Masjid-e-Sahla* the whole night till Wednesday morning and then go to *Masjid e Kufa* where he would spend the afternoon and night and return to Najaf the next day. He ran out of food and there was nowhere he could buy food. He was hungry but continued in his prayers. Suddenly, an impressive man

entered and took out food. Seyyid Baqir felt the pang of hunger and wished he would be invited to partake of the food. He was invited by the man but the Seyyid politely declined. However the person insisted and Seyyid Baqir had to join him. When he had his fill, the Seyyid saw the personality take away the utensils and enter a room in the Mosque. Seyyid Baqir waited for him to come back but after waiting a long time he decided to go and look for him. When he went into the room he saw no one, nor any trace of any person having been there. No one could have gone out without Seyyid noticing for there was no other door. It struck him then that it could have been none other but Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) himself who had given him food.

Finally, we must discuss how the Imam (A.S.) has himself taught us the dua *Allahumma Adhumal Balaa* which is familiar to us and which, by the Grace of Allah, we recite so regularly. Sheikh Fazil Bin Hasan Tabrisi has reported in his book *Kumuz-al-najat* that this dua was taught by the current Imam (A.S.) to Abul Hasan Muhammad Bin Abul Laith who, at the time, hid himself in a graveyard of the Quraish out of fear of his life in Baghdad. By virtue of this dua his life was saved. The Imam taught him the dua as is known to us. But when he mentioned, *Ya Sahebaz Zamaan* he pointed towards himself which not only proved his identity but also indicated that at the time of uttering these words our minds must be directed towards him.

SOCIO-CULTURAL SIGNS HERALDING THE REAPPEARANCE OF THE IMAM (A.S.)

We have so far discussed how the Imam (A.S.) conducts his Imamah, although in concealment, and we have also discussed our various duties to him. The question that follows naturally is: For how long do we have to suffer this concealment and remain without his physical presence? The answer is not as difficult as it would appear at first sight. Fortunately, our Imams (A.S.) had anticipated that we would be troubled by these questions and it is no coincidence that practically every Imam has given us some guidance on this matter. This question of *ghaybah* has become very significant as there is an allegation that it is an innovation of Shias. However, the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) has himself discussed the question of *ghaybah* and so has each Imam, right from Hazrat Ali (A.S.) to the Eleventh Imam (A.S.) indicating even the date of the birth of the Twelfth Imam (A.S.) and the date of his *ghaybah* and the period of his reappearance long before the division between Shias and Sunnis surfaced. Indeed the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) spoke about this subject at various periods of his life. The answer to our question given by our Imams (A.S.) is that he will reappear in the last days of the world. So the question that follows naturally is when will the last days of the world arrive? The answer is that if we are looking for the era of the last days, we are already in what is commonly known as *Akheruz-Zaman*. The second question, then, is when will he reappear? Will it be tomorrow? Out of concern for us, our Imams (A.S.) have discussed this matter at great length. For the sake of convenience, we will divide this topic into three: the socio-cultural signs, the geo-political aspects of the signs, and the signs heralding his imminent appearance. When we come to the last topic we shall see that, there are nine distinct signs which will usher his reappearance. As we examine those portents, we will notice that definite months have been identified for the appearance of these signs. One definite sign is that eight months before his reappearance we would be able to know exactly when it would happen. We know, almost certainly,

that in a certain year after the month of Ramadhan his re-emergence will be imminent. So we know that we are progressing towards his reappearance. This chapter needed to be preceded by a discussion on our duties to him, for this period may be our last opportunity to fulfil our duties towards him and seek his pleasure before his actual reappearance. Although we dare not say exactly how long that period will last we certainly are in it. And if we are vigilant and conscious we will be able to notice the advance we are making in it. For example, those who have been fortunate enough to visit Najaf and Kufa, will have noticed the gradual assimilation between the two. One of the predictions is that when those two towns amalgamate, then the last days will have come. In that respect we are living in a very interesting period. It is a period of transition, from a period of suffering during his concealment to a period of victory under him. And, as always, the period of transition is a difficult one.

It is not possible to say with certainty on what date he will reappear but once certain signs emerge we will be able to know when it will be. The next question is the duration between the first such sign and the last one. Although we will discuss the answer to that question in greater details, it is worth mentioning, in passing, that it will be of about eight months. So we will have that period to prepare ourselves to welcome him. But it will be a very difficult period and a decision to join him will have to be made spontaneously. He will re-emerge and make his call and only those who respond immediately will be with him. Those who will consider winding-up their businesses or closing their books first, will miss the opportunity. However, a period of eight months should be enough to prod one out of slumber. The most difficult question of them all is how long will it be before the first of those nine signs appear. This is the question to which we do not have a positive answer. But we can see how we are progressively advancing into that period when we can hope for salvation. What then are these signs which we must anticipate? And why, then, should we believe that we are already in that era? A tradition of the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) himself provides the answer to these questions and to the controversy that all this notion about a Mahdi and his arrival is a fiction concocted by the Shias during the Abbasid reign in order to provide an answer to the non-existence of their Imam.

There are traditions of the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) himself who has told us how the Mahdi will come. One point on which traditions are unanimous is that the period before his reappearance will be one of injustices and instability, of evil and oppression, of dissension, war, violence and atheism. Each of these will be discussed in greater detail. It is, indeed, a period of contradiction, for, man believes that he is progressing towards civilisation, indeed the prime of civilisation, education and science. And yet, the traditions suggest that he is will degenerate into the abyss of moral degradation. This again, was predicted by the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) himself. We get a tradition from no less an authentic source than his close and celebrated companion Jabir Bin Abdillah Ansari. This tradition is reported in *Biharul Anwar*. He reports that after *Hajjatul Widaa*, the last pilgrimage the Prophet made, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) stood near the Kaaba, and called his people to listen to him. How important must that message have been? What is even more significant is that the message was not only for those who were present but he said in express words, "Listen to me carefully so that you transmit these words of mine to those who are absent today." So, obviously, the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) wished those words to reach us also. We thank Allah that we are able to recall those words. Then he began to weep. As he wept, the entire congregation wept and after a while the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) began, "My people, a time will come when kings and rulers will be tyrannical." This, then is the first sign of the *Akheruz-Zaman* (the last days). Have we already not experienced that? There have been such tyrants that we have had a king in the centre of Africa who was a cannibal. We also experience tyranny today in many countries. In one sense or another it abounds in the East and the West. So, oppressive measures taken by the rulers is the first sign the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) mentioned. The second is, wealthy persons will become miserly. The Prophet (S.A.W.W.) continued, "Ulama will be greedy of worldly possessions." Ulama who lead their lives in hunger and thirst to propagate Islam are rare today. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) continued, "Beggars will be imposters and children will lack modesty." We can judge for ourselves if we are not already in that era from the way children conduct themselves immodestly, even before their parents. "Old people will be wicked" and the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) wept again. Salman then rose and asked, "O Master when will these things take

place?" The Prophet (S.A.W.W.) replied, "O Salman it will happen when there will be a shortage of erudites (Ulama)." Indeed one hadith says, that people will go to the mosque and will wait as long as an hour for someone they can recognize as an Aalim to lead prayers for them and yet will have to pray individually without an Aalim to lead prayers for them. Fortunately, we have not yet reached that stage. "Payment of *Zakat* will be stopped." There is already a controversy amongst us whether *Zakat* or *Khums* is payable or not. "Things forbidden will be openly practised." One other sign is that there will be no "*Amrbil-Maruf*" and "*Nahyanilmunkar*". He added, "There will be prayer calls from the mosques but people will be engrossed in worldly matters. Love for worldly possessions will increase, religious knowledge will have no value and will be undermined". Haji Muhammad Jaffer in his book mentions a tradition from the sixth Imam (A.S.) that men, when informed of the command of Allah will immediately say, "This is not logical to me." They will consider their opinions superior to the divine order. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) continued, "People will lie to each other in conversations." "Backbiting will be a source of pleasure." Do we not gather in holy places and backbite against other Momineen? The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) mentioned that as a sign. "People will not hesitate to amass ill-gotten wealth and will regard it as booty. The elders will not have affection for the young and the young will also not have any regard for the old people. So bear in mind that when such a time comes, the curse of God will be upon them. A stone, red in colour, will rise, and big hail stones will drop from sky." "Faces will become ugly and there will be frequent earthquakes and landslides. "People will not offer prayers on time, but will follow their passions, there will be excessive indulgence and drinking, parents will be rebuked by their children, men will obey their womenfolk, neighbours will oppress their neighbours; elders will lose compassion and youngsters will be shameless. People will build palatial and solid residences, servants will be persecuted, false evidence will be common, one will be jealous of one's own brother, partners will betray one another, mutual sincerity and affection will diminish, adultery will become the order of the day, men will regard female attire as desirable for themselves. Modesty among women will cease to exist. Hearts will be full of pride and arrogance. Acts of obliging others will become rare and crimes will increase". Such

complaints already abound. No international law conference takes place without every country complaining of increase in the rate of crime and the delays in dealing with them by the courts. "Men will wish for praise and yearn for wealth. Singing will be considered a form of culture and considerable money will be spent on it." What country is there in the world today in which singing is not accepted as part of culture? We seem to forget that the injunctions against singing and music from the Imams (A.S.) are very strict. Indeed when Dajjal comes, he will come with a musical instrument as his weapon to conquer people's hearts. A clear hadith from the Imam (A.S.) is that those who are used to music will certainly fall prey to him because they will be attracted towards him for his music. Dajjal will exploit this vulnerability. However, those whose ears are not attuned to music and keep away from songs will be able to resist him without any effort. The Prophet (S.A.W.W.) continued, "People will indulge in merry-making, pastime and become oblivious of the hereafter." Merry-making and pastime are already the order of the day today. This expression is alarming for do we really have time to waste in such indulgences? The Prophet (S.A.W.W.) continued, "Piety and self-control will wane and avarice and greed will increase; there will be numerous strifes and turmoils." We will see how one country will seek to conquer another. "Mosques will echo with the calls for prayers, but hearts will be devoid of faith. A true Momin will be considered a lowly person and an apostate will be considered respectable. Faces of people will remain human but their hearts will be devilish. The Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an "What, do you think we created you in vain, and that you will not be returned to us?" (23:115). The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) continued, "Had there not been good and pious people among you Allah would not have sent rain upon you nor have brought forth vegetation. I wonder at people whose wealth is their God. Their desires are long but their lives short."

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) added: "There will come a time when the stomach will be treated as God, (that is people will do anything and everything to fill their stomach without any fear of God). Women will occupy their thoughts and men will be subservient to and be dictated by them. Money will be their religion; wealth and possessions will take precedence over religion, and people will ignore it for the sake of money.

Qur'an will be taught as fashion only. Many mosques will be constructed but the hearts of those visiting them will lack faith. Muezzin will be from amongst the worst people. They will present themselves as religious-minded but infact will be out and out materialistic."

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) then warned: "Remember, when such a time comes, Allah will inflict four afflictions; oppression by the rulers, famine and high inflation, persecution by administrative officials and idol-worship." The companions expressed surprise and asked, "O Master, what! Muslims and idol-worship?" "Yes", replied the Prophet, (S.A.W.W.) "The Dirham will be the idol."

To answer the question we first posed as to whether we are already in the era of the last days or not, we can now ask ourselves if the four afflictions outlined by the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) abound. Does the world suffer from the oppression of the ruling authority today? Is the world already suffering from famine and rocketing prices of daily needs? Do we suffer from persecutions by administrative officials everyday? Is man already a worshipper of wealth? If we are already in that era, then our obligation to fulfil the duties we have already discussed is so much greater, so much more compelling as time may be running out.

The question asked by the companion, "What? A Muslim, and idol worshipping?" indicates that the misdeeds forewarned by the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) would be perpetrated by Muslims. Thus we have both a warning and a challenge from him that we would be guilty of such acts. Indeed, although the companion could not stomach that Muslims would be involved in such idol worshipping, we see that already happening today as was predicted centuries ago!

Hazrat Ali (A.S.) has given us numerous traditions on this subject also. One comes from no less a source than Kumail, from whom we have received the Dua we recite every Thursday evening. One can imagine the high standing of this particular companion to be taught such an important Dua by Hazrat Amir (A.S.). He reports that one day he was with Hazrat Amir (A.S.) and it suddenly dawned on him to inquire from

him when the last days would come. They were then in the mosque at Kufa and Hazrat Amir asked him to accompany him into the Bazaar. They walked until they came to a place where today stands the mausoleum of Kumail. Hazrat said to Kumail, "This is the place where you will be called upon to abuse me." Kumail shuddered and shivered and said, "How can one even think of that? It can never happen." Imam replied, "Yes, this will happen". Kumail trembled but Imam consoled him, "Do not panic, you will not do so but for that you will be killed on the spot." Kumail was deeply relieved, smiled and said, "Thanks to Allah, that is of no consequence in comparison with what you said before." Hazrat replied, "Kumail, that will be your attitude even on that day and at this place you will be buried. In the last days a Mausoleum will come up on your grave." It is amazing how many traditions we have in respect of places in Kufa and Najaf but that is primarily because those were the places where our Imams were. The Imam went on to say, "Houses will spring up around your Mausoleum". Today there is hardly any empty space in that area. But then the Imam added, "In each of these houses there will dwell a devil, a shaitan. So Kumail began to wonder — devils around his Mausoleum. The Imam then said, "Not only will the devils dwell in the houses, they will project their appearances on top of the roofs." Kumail asked, "How will that happen?" Hazrat Amir said, "On top of each house in which the devil will be living, there will be an antenna." Kumail could not understand the word 'antenna' as we understand it today. Now it is a household name. More serious than the fact that Kumail could not understand it is the fact that when the tradition became reported the Ulama who received it through a chain of transmission started looking up all Arabic dictionaries for the word 'antenna'. Not being an Arabic word, they, of course, did not find it in any dictionary. Eventually, they reported the tradition with the word 'antenna' adding a footnote that the word was used by the Imam meant a projection over the roofs.

Another tradition says that the fourth Imam (A.S.) predicted that in the last days people will move around with instruments of songs in their pockets. The companions wondered how this could ever happen. Indeed even the Ulama reporting the tradition added a footnote to say that the tradition was authentic and well reported but they were not able to

visualise how people would carry such implements in their pockets. Today it is a familiar sight.

It is not possible to be exhaustive on this subject but these are a few of the signs that are thought provoking. Can there be any doubt that we are already in that era?

So, the eight duties we have already examined become more pertinent today than ever before. In particular, we must continue to pray to Allah to save us from the calamities of the times.

THE GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICTS BEFORE THE REAPPEARANCE OF THE IMAM (A.S.)

We have in the preceding chapter discussed the predictions as to the socio-cultural signs that will herald the last days. We next examine a few of the reported ahadith relating to geopolitical conflicts that will arise before the re-appearance of the Imam A.S. The following ahadith have been reported in Qayamat-e-Sugra citing from Noor-ul-Anwar.

According to the Masumeen (A.S.) Muslim countries will seek aid from non Muslim countries — a phenomenon that is already evident in a number of Muslim countries.

The prediction from Hazrat Ali A.S. is that the Hashimite Kingdom will cease to exist. The last king will be a young boy. He will be weak, inexperienced and following the advice of others. Well, how much of this can be applied to the present king is a matter of opinion but such is the sign about the last king after whom the Hashimite Kingdom will come to an end. The moment we notice that we should know that the Reappearance of our Awaited Imam (A.S.) is close. It has been reported that in the last days Arabs will be aimless people; none will render them true help and they will act on their own whims. It will be apparent that they will be totally aimless and will not find help from even those who will claim to be their allies. But an interesting point to ponder is whether Arabs have any aim even today.

The predictions about Iran are very well known; that there would be an Emperor who would be acting contrary to the dictates of Islam and would even ordain women to remove their veils. His downfall would be brought about by an *Alim* and, thereafter, his glory would fade and his empire cease to exist. The prediction is that after him the form of government will also change. Concomitant with it is another prediction that there will be a civil war in Iran resulting in bloodshed; or a severe

tug-of-war will take place between two factions in Iran and about 80,000 persons will be killed. Another unfortunate prediction is that as the days of the advent of the Imam draws closer, the factions in Iran will grow wider and their differences will get deeper. Iran will eventually be divided into different autonomous districts. It is certainly within the will of Allah to prevent any such occurrence. We can only pray to Him that may the people of Iran ever remain united, until they meet with the Twelfth Imam (A.S.).

Two other signs have already come true. It was said that a new canal would be dug from the river Euphrates passing through Kufa and will bring with it prosperity. The city would then grow in size and population, and eventually merge with the city of Najaf. Those of us who have been fortunate enough to visit those places know that this canal has already been dug bringing prosperity to Kufa and, indeed, the city has not only grown but has become overpopulated.

Another prediction which has almost come true is that 60 imposters will claim to be Prophets. By their charm, their persuasion, and their personality, they will misguide the people. Of the 60 that were prophesied, 58 false claimants have already emerged since the days of the Prophet (S.A.W.W.). We have only two more to witness.

And another sign is that from the progeny of Abu Talib, twelve persons will claim to be either Imam or Vicegerent of Imam or the Mahdi. It appears we still have to suffer a few more before we get the true Mahdi. We have been made aware of the qualities of the genuine Imam, and the signs that will herald his emergence that we can no longer be misled by any of them, whatever their charm and however impressive their personality.

But whilst we are discussing the relations between different cities, we may now discuss a few more cities and countries and what has been foretold about them so that we can know when the advent will be and how close we are to it. In *Manaqib* of Ibne Shakar Ashub it is reported from Hazrat Amir (A.S.) that he was once asked to interpret the verse from the Holy Book "Not a town there is but we shall destroy it before

the Day of Judgement" (17:58). In the course of his sermon, Hazrat Amir A.S. came to the days of the last era and then discussed what would happen to various cities and he is reported to have said that 'Sumerkand' which is in Russia, Juje, Khwarim, Isfahan and Kufa will be destroyed by Turks. It is now almost agreed by historians that Turks in 'Ahadith' means the Russians of today. As we know, geopolitically the world today is different from what it was in the days of Hazrat Amir (A.S.) and of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.). Their task was to convey these signs to people who perhaps were not as knowledgeable as we are today, who did not learn the details of an Atlas in their classrooms and indeed even the Atlas of those days was different. Russia did not have much significance in those days. It was dominated by the Turks. But Turks did not mean exactly the people of Turkey of today but those who were descendants of the Prophet Noah. It is reported that the Turks (Russians) will even destroy Isfahan and Kufa. We will deal with their incursion into Iraq in greater detail. Further predictions are that Hamadan and Ray will be destroyed by Qazwin. It will be noticed that Qazwin is in Iran, Ray is in or just close to Teheran. Those of us who have been fortunate to visit Teheran, particularly Shah Abdul Azim will know exactly where Ray is, so it can be seen that the factions in Iran will not only be quarrelling amongst themselves and fighting one other but will literally bring destruction to each other in the days to come. Medina and the areas of the Persian Gulf will be ravaged by famine and hunger. And Hazrat Amir (A.S.) then proceeds to say that Makka will be destroyed by Ethiopia. We may wonder how Ethiopia is connected but there is such clear prophesy by Hazrat Amir (A.S.) himself. Basra and Baikh will be drowned.

Sind, that is in Pakistan, will be ransacked and destroyed by India which will in turn will be destroyed by Tibet; almost immediately thereafter Tibet will be destroyed by China. Yemen will be ravaged by rulers, some parts of Syria will be ruined by gases. Hazrat Amir (A.S.) adds that Naishapur will be ravaged. Again, Naishapur is in Iran. It is the place to which our Eighth Imam A.S. went from Khurasan and it is there that he delivered that celebrated Hadith, "La ila ha illaallahu hisni, man dakhala hisni amina min adhabi, walakin bishartiha wa shurutiha wa ana min shuruti ha": ('La ilaha illallah' is my strong fortress. Whoever enters it

is safe from my punishment. But his entry is subject to conditions of which I am one.) Azarbaijan will be ransacked by armies and thunderbolts. What in those days was interpreted as thunderbolts may well be atomic bombs of today though we can never be certain. There will be famines and Baghdad will also be destroyed. That is a general picture.

Going into greater details on Syria and Iraq, Hazrat Amir A.S. said that a war would break out in which Syria would be bombed. Now part of that prediction is perhaps already true; Syria has been bombed, in the last two decades, at least three times. But the prediction goes further and says a hundred thousand people will be killed. "Allah will then grace the Momins and punish the Kafirs. Beware at that time. Horses with yellow flags will come from the west. They will reach Syria. There is a village named "Harsa", very close to Damascus which will sink into the ground."

Asbagh bin Nabata, a close companion to whom we are so grateful, interposed a question to Hazrat Amir (A.S.) about the verse of the Holy Book which said "Then we gave back to you the turn to prevail over them and we secured you, assisted you with wealth and children and we made you a greater host, we made you stronger than them" (17:6). Hazrat Amir A.S. in interpreting that verse said, "There are some signs and portents in it; first is the sign of Kufa, ditches will be dug around the city for fear of enemies. Flags will be torn or burnt in the streets of Kufa and the Great Mosque of Kufa will be empty for forty days as there will be none to offer prayers in it." This is a clear sign for us for the emergence of the Twelfth Imam A.S. Indeed another portent is that enemies will attack that great Mosque, destroy its courtyard and even the wall of the Mosque of Kufa will be pulled down. Christians will claim control over the area and three flags will be hoisted simultaneously at the mosque of Kufa. Bloodshed will be common; there will be such a blood bath that both the killer and the killed will go to Hell. One cannot imagine the frightful situation of the people of that time that both the killer and the killed should proceed to Hell. Neither will be in the right. A pious man, a *Nafse Zakia* will be murdered at the back of the Mosque of Kufa with seventy other pious persons. Between *Rukn* and *Maqam* in Makka another pious person will be murdered. Such are the terrifying prophecies made in respect of these places.

Coming closer to the capital of Iraq, Baghdad, Hazrat Imam Jafer Sadiq (A.S.) in a speech (reported in *Asar -e-Qayamat*) said: "There will be founded a city named Baghdad. It will be so full of sins that divine punishments will be concentrated there: unprecedented calamities, like epidemics, famines, floods in the River Tigris, torrential rains and cyclones will occur. Destruction of the city will begin when there will gather three types of flags in that city. The first will be a yellow flag. The yellow flag will come from North Africa, west of Egypt, another flag from western areas and the third flag from the surrounding areas". The surrounding areas will also want to fly their flags there. As to what these yellow flags are let us turn to a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) reported in *Malahim Wal Fetan*. "Run for your safety when you see yellow flags in Egypt. They will emerge in Egypt. When they reach Syria you must act quickly. Run away to the skies if you can. Else seek protection on the earth wheresoever you can find it". It is said that these people with the yellow flags will emerge from the Maghrib. The Maghrib comprises present day Morocco, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt and it is from that area that this group will emerge to fight. They will be carrying yellow flags. They will not only conquer all those areas, they will also penetrate Syria and ultimately Iraq. The Prophet (S.A.W.W.) has warned strongly about these people with yellow flags and their aim appears to be to seize power, and wreak destruction. At the same time, there will be people with black flags who will emerge from the other side, Iran. Abdullah Bin Omar is reported to have said in Kaaba that black flags will come from the east of Iraq, which is Iran, and yellow flags from the west. They will fight in Syria and indeed a cataclysm will ensue. Hasan Basri is reported to have said that this group with black flags will be in the vicinity of Teheran. A person from Iran by the name of Shoaib Ibn Saleh Tamimi will lead a revolt. His complexion will be wheatish, with a broad chest and a rough beard. He will lead four thousand people attired in white clothes with black flags. He will bear or claim to carry the banner of Imam Mahdi A.S. He will be invincible in his battles and will overcome those with yellow flags. In the same work Muhammad Hanafia is reported to have said that the black flag will first belong to Bani Abbas but thereafter to people from Khurasan. There seems to be a slight contradiction as to whether the city named is Khurasan or Teheran? But the reports could well be reconciled if they

mean that from Khurasan, they will come to Teheran where they will merge into a full army. Their caps will be black and clothes white. So again we see a unanimity in the description of the flag. The leader of their group has been identified as Shoaib Ibne Saleh Tamimi. They will defeat the hosts of Sufiani (who will be discussed in the next chapter) and then reach the city of Jerusalem. They will then hand over the authority to Imam Mahdi (A.S.) and help him. Three hundred Syrians will aid Shoaib Ibne Saleh. The period between the revolt of Shoaib Ibne Saleh and the reappearance of the Imam (A.S.) is seventy-two months. At least now we have got closer to knowing exactly from when we can start hoping that in six years' time, we would have the Imam (A.S.) reappear. But there is another tradition which reduces the period to only seventy-three days, from seventy-two months.

Coming back to the story of Kufa, we have now identified the two flags. The third flag will be from the outskirts of Kufa. The place will be riddled with oppression, revolts and calamities.

As to modern political entities, we may briefly examine what their role politically is going to be. In this area the task of interpreting the traditions eleven to thirteen centuries old becomes formidable, particularly if they were narrated in circumstances when the present political and geographical setup did not exist at all.

In this work, we cannot go into the details of how rules of interpretation of ahadith have been formed but accepting them as they are from the Ulema and historians, we can take guidance from them to understand the traditions.

From one of such traditions, it appears that the current influence of the United States on Arabia's political structure will fade and Russia will eventually gain entry forcibly into Arabia. It is reported in the same work from Hozafa Yamani that the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) said, "Fight them (the Russians) when you see them in Arabia, fight them till they are defeated. Otherwise you will lose your dignity, God's help be with you." This appears so frightful that the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) invokes Allah's help for the Arabs of that day. But the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) is

even more emphatic in the following predictions. He says, "Resurrection will not come unless a war with the Russians takes place. These are red people, small eyed and flat nosed, with faces hard like tampered iron". Apparently they will not only enter Arabia but also Iraq. "They will advance rapidly towards Tigris. I visualise their fast yellow vehicles marching in line towards that River." The Prophet (S.A.W.W.) then says, "I visualise the Russians astride short-eared horses". This one is difficult to decipher. He adds, "They will tie their steeds by the Banks of the River." He then says, "My followers will have to fight with people with broad faces, small eyes and rough features," almost resembling the description in the previous Hadith. "Three encounters will take place." It appears that the Russians will persist in their endeavours to control Arabia and the Middle East. "First my people will save themselves by flight. In the second encounter half of my people will be killed while others spared. But in the third encounter the enemies will score a victory, that is the Turks (the Russians). By God, their vehicles will be parked around the mosques of the Muslims. My community will be at its wit's end. They will run away in throngs taking their belongings and loading them on whatever they find."

It appears that even the Iranians will have to fight the Russians. Russia will encroach her way into Iran. Imam Hasan (A.S.) has reported that the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) said "The Day of Judgement will not come before Momineen encounters the people with shallow and broad faces followed by another encounter with people whose shoes are made of hairs." The first are the Russians and the second are the Kurds. We know that the Kurds are on the borders of three Islamic countries: Iran, Iraq and Turkey. One of them has already a Rule of Momineen today so, it is apparent to us that the Iranians will have to fight the Kurds. But whoever they may be, when we see a Momineen government having to fight Russians and Kurds, we should know the days of the advent of the Imam are close.

Reference in the Hadith to *Banu Qantura* has been interpreted to mean reference to the Chinese. The prophecy about them is absolutely clear. In "Al-Malahim Wal Fitan" it is stated that Abdullah Bin Omar has reported from the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) himself that the Chinese

will rout the people of Khurasan and humiliate them. So, their first target will be Iran, and they will then advance till they reach a certain place in Palestine where date is grown. Thereafter they will issue a warning to the people of Basra to evacuate their land. So the Chinese will get into Iraq. Thereafter they will divide themselves into three groups; one group will advance towards the West, a second group will advance to Syria and the third will remain in Iraq to maintain defence against the enemies. They will wage war at three places, between the areas of Euphrates and Tigris, at Maze Hamar, (which is a village in North of Syria) and at the bank of Tigris, very close to Basra. They will control the crossroads and passers-by will have to pay one hundred dinars toll which will keep on increasing with time." The Prophet (S.A.W.W.) then continues, "During that time bearers of big flags will tear down small flags. These countries will continue there until there will come a group of people with broad faces and small eyes. They will pass through Kurdistan (which is an area of Iraq) and rout the Kurds." So that is how the Kurds will meet their end after fighting the Iranians and the Iraqis. It is the Chinese who will destroy them.

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) continued "After that the Chinese will challenge the Arabs. Severe battles will take place as a result of which cities will be depopulated. To make the situation worse, earthquakes and landslides will take place and many areas will sink. People will flee everywhere. Among the first to be destroyed is the city of Baghdad. Thereafter devastation of Egypt will begin. When these signs appear in Syria, death will be common. After that the Europeans will start manoeuvring". Another Hadith says that the Chinese would have got into Iraq. Indeed the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) is said to have added that then Arab rule will end. He was asked how Arab rule would end. He said, It will be ended by *Banu Qantura*, i.e. the Chinese. The Hadith says, "When the Chinese will have routed Arabia in this way, the Arabs will seek help from their allies and receive it but it will not be adequate. Russia will then intervene and offer to help Arabs in fighting the Chinese." It appears that the Russians will impose the condition that any Chinese or non-Arabs arrested or made prisoner of war be handed over to the Russians. The Arabs will find this a little difficult to swallow. They will then look to their allies, and will ask them to join hands with Russia

in beating off China, the allies will scoff at this and ironically accuse the Arabs of losing faith in Islam, deserting their Allies and preferring to receive help from Russia. So, Russia will be kept out and it appears the allies will step in. And they will score a fantastic victory in that particular war. But then there will be a huge booty to be gained out of that war. The allies will claim that they should take away all the booty themselves because they will have won the victories, unassisted by Arabia and indeed having come in after Arabia will have sought help from Russia. Arabia, on the other hand, will claim that the booty was recovered on Arabian soil and, therefore, should remain in Arabia. That conflict will continue. Arabia will not succeed in obtaining anything out of their allies.

It is reported in Qayamat-e-Sugra citing "Oqdatud-Durr" that Hazrat Amir (A.S.) has said that the Mahdi will not appear until one-third of the world population will die by being killed and one-third will die as a result of epidemics.

Frightful and frightening as all this may be, the remedy is only one; constantly to seek refuge from Allah so that He helps us refrain from sins and constant prayer that we should be among the companions of Hazrat Mahdi (A.S.).

THE LAST SIGNS HERALDING REAPPEARANCE

The signs discussed in the previous two chapters will have brought us close to the reappearance of the Imam A.S. In order to enable us to identify the era almost immediately preceding the re-appearance, the Masumeen A.S. have provided us with further indicators.

There is a Hadith from Imam Muhammad Baqir A.S. that for three or seven consecutive days, one will see reddish yellow fire raging in the East which is a sure sign that the advent of the Imam A.S. will be imminent. Some commentators have interpreted this Hadith to suggest nuclear explosion. Indeed as much of the world as its two-thirds will have been destroyed. Yet one finds that the lust for blood will not have been quenched and two more wars will follow as a matter of course, one after the other. The signs described by Aimmah Alaihimussalaam are that these two wars are almost a necessary pre-requisite to the *Zuhur* of the Imam A.S.

First, the emergence of the *Sufiani*. In so far as the *Sufiani* is concerned, we know for sure from the Hadith of Imam Muhammad Baqir A.S. as well as other Imams as reported in *Qiyamat-e-Sugra* by Syed Muhammad Abbas Qamar Zaidi. *Sufiani* will emerge in Palestine, where he will start a revolt in the month of Rajab. He will be a ruthless rebel and his rule will last for eight consecutive months. That is to say, that it will start in Rajab and it will stretch into Safar of the ensuing year. The narration is that after he starts the revolt in Palestine, he will march towards North Africa and conquer and rule Egypt for four consecutive months. He will then move further west. He will conquer Tunisia, Algeria and go as far as Morocco. His greed will then make him come back east to Palestine and conquer Jordan and from Jordan get to Syria. He will cause tremendous destruction and chaos in Syria but he will find it a suitable shelter and will make Damascus his headquarters. This person, *Sufiani*, has been specifically described by Aimmah A.S. as an ugly, blistered,

green-eyed, cross-eyed person who will be an enemy of the friends of the *Ahlul-bait*.

Imam Ali (A.S.) has said that Sufiani's hatred of the devotees of the *Ahlul-bait* will be such that any person named Ali, Fatema, Hasan, Husein, Zainab, Ruqaiya will be arrested and beheaded straight away without further investigations. In fact he will cause so much havoc that people will be living in terror. Whilst a good number of us perhaps today merely recite *Allahummaswalli Alla Muhammadin Waali Muhammad Waajil Farajahum* as a matter of course, the people in those times will whole-heartedly be praying for emergence of Imam Mahdi A.S. Indeed the order of the day will be that there will be a general command from the administration that any person detected to be a follower of the *Ahlul-bait* should immediately be reported to the authorities. There will be guards moving around watching for any sign that would indicate that the person is a devotee of *Ahlul-bait*. Indeed, neighbours will be commanded to report neighbours, and the situation will become so awful, so atrocious, that fathers will report their children, brothers will report their brothers, neighbours will find no safety from their neighbours, each reporting the other only to obtain sufficient rewards from the administration to survive in those difficult days of hardship. But apart from these torture and oppression that will prevail, the Jewish soldiers acting for *Sufiani*, over seventy thousand of them, will be so ruthless that there will be no woman whose chastity nor no man whose neck will be safe. Traditions reveal quite clearly that almost all of the seventy thousand in the army of *Sufiani* will be illegitimate children. They will be ruthless and will cause chaos, they will not only attack chastity, they will also attack humanity and there will be open daylight robbery. Indeed in those days to find sustenance will be so difficult that Ahadith go so far as to say that a father will be prepared to give away a young beautiful daughter only to obtain a loaf of bread for his sustenance. Such will be the intensity of suffering that will be imposed upon the public by *Sufiani*. The *Sufiani* terrors will not end there. From Syria he will march into Iraq and he will cause untold horror there also. He will reach the Mosque of Kufa, and destroy its walls but then somehow he will become frightened. What exactly will scare him away is not clear from the traditions but he will flee back to Syria. One would have thought the oppression of *Sufiani*

would cool off, but that will not be so. He will then embark upon attacking Medina. Ahadith say that the tortures and destruction caused by Muslim bin Aqaba in the history we already know of will be insignificant compared to the destruction and chaos that *Sufiani* will cause in Medina, so much so that the *Mimber* of the Prophet, (S.A.W.W.) will be ripped. The Holy House of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) which contains his grave will be pulled down and used as a stable. Horses will be tied in that Holy place.

Not content with all that, *Sufiani* will then decide to attack Makka. And his purpose in attacking Makka will be twofold, firstly to completely demolish the Holy Kaaba and secondly, ruthlessly to kill the entire population of Makka. So his army will set out via Baghdad but, as Allah would have it, when they get between Medina and Makka, in the desert of Baida, suddenly one night they will hear a voice from the sky which will say, "O Baida eat up the entire army of *Sufiani*" and it is said that the entire army numbering almost 100,000 persons will all be swallowed up by the earth, except for two. And those two who will be spared will narrate that the army was swallowed up by the land in such a way that there would not even be a trace of a single man of the army. Their vehicles, their weapons and all materials will be buried along with them in one full swoop. The two who will be spared will suddenly encounter an angel. He will slap both of them turning their faces right round, looking behind instead of front. And that will be the time when Imam A.S. will already have reappeared in Makka. He will establish his authority in the Holy Mosque at Makka in the Haram. The angel will then order one of them calling him *Bashir*, "O *Bashir*, go straight to Makka, into the Haram and inform the Imam A.S. that *Sufiani*'s army has been swallowed up by the land". *Bashir* means a person who sends good tidings. The other will be called *Nazir* who will be ordered to go to *Sufiani* and tell him that the Mahdi A.S. has already appeared. He should proceed straight to Makka and declare allegiance to him.

We have just discussed the details of the tortures of which he will be the cause, the murders and massacres which he will mastermind and ultimately answer for. Indeed, he will prepare himself to attack the Imam (A.S.) but will not have the courage. It is said that the Imam will then

move from Makka and go to Medina. Once in Medina he will decide to go after Sufiani to allay the fears of the people. Despite losing the whole army swallowed up by the land his lust to kill and loot will not have abated. People will be beseeching Hazrat Hujjat A.S. who would already have reappeared to come to their salvation. Hazrat Hujjat A.S. will march to Syria. At this point the traditions differ; one says that the Imam A.S. will catch him in Syria and kill him in Damascus. The other tradition says that Sufiani realizing the Imam is in hot pursuit will escape to Palestine where the Imam A.S. will eventually catch him in Jerusalem. There will be a direct confrontation at *Baitul Muqaddas* and Sufiani will be killed at the holy hands of the Imam A.S. However, the traditions are unanimous that by then Hazrat Isa A.S. will already have descended on earth in Damascus and he will participate in attacking the remnants of the army of Sufiani and kill a number of them. Indeed, he will be with the Imam (A.S.) when Sufiani meets his fate. If the Imam (A.S.) reappears in Muharram it will be a full month before Sufiani will be killed. The *Aimma Alaihimussalaam* have repeatedly fore-warned us about Sufiani, simply because of his intense hatred for the devotees of the *Ahlul-bait*. Perhaps the persecution of the followers of *Ahlul bait* in the days of the Omayyad and Abbaside rulers was less intense than what awaits at the hands of Sufiani.

But whilst there will be such terror and tyranny, there will also be another army of hope, mercy and salvation. It is said that a Seyyid descendant of Imam Hasan A.S. known as Seyyide Hasani, will start a revolution in Iraq. He will rise at Dailam near Qazvin. People of Talakhan will immediately join him in great numbers and his slogan will be *Amr bil Maaruf wa Nahy anil Munkar*. We have already seen how in those days *Amr bil Maaruf wa Nahy Anil Munkar* will be impossible. How many of us see our friends doing wrong today and are not able to correct them? How many of us see wrongs done publicly and are not able to redress them? But in those days the situation will be beyond control and yet this Seyyide Hasani will embark on such a mission. Propagating his mission he will move right down to Kerman and upto Multan. He will then decide to get into Iraq and see how he can confront Sufiani and how he can put right the wrongs of the day. He will decide to travel by sea and so he will get into the Gulf and eventually land in Basra. He will influence the

region around Basra. News will reach him that the Imam (A.S.) has appeared in Makka. At this stage he will concentrate how to meet the Imam A.S. Imam Jafer-e-Sadiq A.S. reports quite categorically that when this news will reach Seyyide Hasani he will be convinced that the claim is of the true Imam Mahdi A.S. and not of an imposter. However, to satisfy his army he will make investigations. He will receive a word that the Imam has already left Makka and is on his way to Medina from where he will be proceeding to Kufa. So Seyyide Hasani with his entire army, will divert his journey from Basra to Kufa, where he will have audience with the Imam A.S. However Shaitan will still be alive on that day. He will cause chaos. A number of people in the army of Seyyide Hasani will challenge the authenticity of the Imam A.S., so Seyyide Hasani will ask for proof. He will, it is said in the traditions, ask for the *Ammama* (turban) of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) and the Imam A.S. will produce it. He will then ask for the *Asaa* (the walking stick) of the Prophet (S.A.W.W.), the Imam (A.S.) will produce it. But he will seek further proof and the Imam A.S. will prove it by hitting it on the ground and immediately a tree will grow and in split seconds will sprout branches and leaves and blossom into fruits. The speed at which this will happen will be unnatural and unheard of. Even that will not satisfy the Seyyid's army. They will ask for further proof. The Imam A.S. will then embark upon providing proof of his own. He will produce the Standard, *The Alam* which will have been unfolded. It is said that the Standard has been used only twice. In the war at *BADR* and in the war of *JAMAL*. They will ask the Imam for proof that this is the same Standard. The Imam will instruct the Standard: "disclose your identity". It is said that the flag will become vocal and will say "I am now being held by the rightful descendant of the Prophet, the true Mahdi of the day." The Imam will then produce *Zulfiqar*, (the sword) which will become vocal and will say "I am in the hands of the rightful owner of mine, the true descendant of the Prophet and the true Mahdi of this day". Even that will not satisfy them. The Imam will then produce the *Asaa* of Nabi Musa. They will ask for proof that it is the walking stick of Nabi Musa. So the Imam A.S. will repeat the miracle Nabi Musa performed when facing Pharaoh. He will hit it on the stone and twelve streams of water will immediately flow out of it. The Imam will then ask if the army is not yet satisfied with his proofs. He will produce the ring of Nabi Suleiman. When Nabi Suleiman

wore the ring, immediately all the birds would come in and gather near him and speak to him and he would speak to them in their language. That episode will be repeated. Birds will gather round the Imam (A.S.); and will later disperse. After that Seyyide Hasani himself will ask the Imam, "I know that the Holy Prophet had an Armour which can only fit his true descendant and nobody else." Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) will produce that Armour and will first give it to Seyyide Hasani. And the Imam will then say "Wear it on you". Seyyide Hasani will then start trembling. He will say "I did not ask for proof. I only asked for this to convince my army. My body is not capable of taking this from your hands." The Imam will insist. The Armour will not fit Seyyide Hasani. The Imam will then challenge anybody else to try it on. The Imam will eventually put it on himself. It will be a perfect fit. With all these signs the Imam will say, "I have now given you sufficient proof that I am the Mahdi of the time." At that time the majority of the army of Seyyide Hasani will declare allegiance to the Imam (A.S.), but 4,000 Yemenis who will be followers of Zaid who was the son of the Fourth Imam (A.S.). Although he never proclaimed to be an Imam some people regarded him so. They will refuse to swear allegiance. For three days they will be persuaded but on their refusal to swear allegiance to the Imam A.S. will be killed.

Two signs are absolutely inevitable. It is only after the emergence of Seyyide-e-Hasani and Sufiani that the Imam's arrival can be expected. But the Ahadith are clear also that all these three events, the emergence of Sufiani in Palestine, the emergence of Seyyid-e-Hasani from Iran and the emergence of the Imam (A.S.) in Makka will take place during the same period of twelve months. That will be the crucial time.

Thus the position at that stage will be one of chaos caused by Sufiani on the one hand and the attempts by Seyyide-e-Hasani to bring people back to religion on the other. In between these two, the Imam (A.S.) will re-appear and will kill all the enemies so as to bring about justice and equity in the world. Apart from these, there are two other smaller events that will happen. A revolution will take place in Yemen and the rebels will go right up to Makka but will eventually be pushed back. Another person will rise in Kuwait causing great dissension. Propagating his ideology he will move right up to Syria where eventually he will be killed, perhaps

by Sufiani.

The last eight months before the *Zuhur* will have very clear signs, infact we can even start with about 11 months before *Zuhur*. Imam Jafer-Sadiq A.S. has said to Jabir-Jaafi that in the month of Safar preceding the emergence of the Imam A.S. there will appear a comet, known as *Al Qarb Zushifa*. The Imam A.S. says that this comet had been seen when the Abassid Khalifa visited Khorasan. It had become visible just before the destruction of the followers of Nabi Nuh. It emerged when Ibrahim was being thrown into the fire by Namrud. It was visible before destruction of the Pharaoh in the time of Musa and it rose when Yahya Ibne Zakaria, (John the Baptist) was murdered in Damascus. So the appearance of this comet has always been accompanied by dire events: when Ibrahim was to be killed, when a complete Ummah of Nuh was to be wiped out, when Nafs-e-Zakia, or Yahya ibn Zakaria was to be killed. This comet will again appear in the month of Safar before the 'Zuhur'. It is also recorded that a two-tailed star will appear in the sky before the advent of Imam Mahdi A.S. and it will be so bright that it will shine like a full moon. That will also be in the month of Safar. Then we do not know much of what is to follow for a few months but when we come to the eighth month before Zuhur, the month of Jamadi-us-thani, it is said that from the 16th of Jamadi-us-thani to the 10th of Rajab there will be incessant and torrential rain which will cause great damage. In a way it will be welcome because for three years preceding that period there will have been famine and drought. There will not have been a drop of rain in the whole world for three years before that; this is why people will be prepared to give away their daughters in lieu of a loaf of bread. The rains will last upto the 10th of Rajab when Sufiani will emerge. One calamity will be followed by another. Rajab will see another sign. There will be a vision of a hand in the sun and a human face will be seen in the moon and will startle the people. In that month numerous other miracles will begin to appear. In the succeeding month, the holy month of Ramadhan, there will be a lunar eclipse at the end of the month and a solar eclipse in the middle of the month. The ordinary position will be reversed. It will shock the people. It is said that this will be a positive sign and that it will be the last holy month before the emergence of the Imam A.S. But something even more remarkable will happen in that holy month. The

Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) has said that soon after the middle of that month which Imam Jafer-e-Sadiq has elucidated as 23rd of Ramadhan, Momineen should spend the whole of that night in prayer. It will not only be a *lailatul Juma* (Friday eve) but also *Lailatul Qadr* and the next morning they should lock themselves in their houses. In fact, every effort should be made to keep away from glass. Doors should be so bolted that nothing should penetrate through them, because the Holy Prophet and the Imam A.S. have warned that at about mid-day, a shriek will be heard from the sky and it will be so powerful that it will be heard all over the world and so strong that it will cause untold horrors and destruction. The Prophet (S.A.W.W.) has taught us, "When that period comes, prostrate and recite *SUBHANAL QUDDUS, RABBUNAL QUDDUS*" and he said that those who would continue with this recitation would be spared any harm from that shriek. Ahadith say that at least three loud voices will be heard in that month. What will follow in Shawwal will be great upheavals. The month of Zilqaad will see rifts everywhere and in Zilhajj, caravans of Hujjaj will be looted, and the road to pilgrimage will be blocked. What will happen during Zilhajj will be horrible, but the horrors that will occur in Muharram are absolutely beyond description and it is said that it is in that month of Muharram that there will be the final emergence of the Imam A.S. These briefly will be the signs that will portray with certainty the arrival of the Imam (A.S.). The exact date is not known, even by the Imam A.S. himself — only Allah knows.

But as far as it was possible for Aimma Alaihimusalam to guide us, this is the pattern that has been unfolded. As was apparent from our discussion the happenings of early days are more speculative in regard to the emergence of the Imam. But as we progress nearer to the time of 'Zuhur' we are able to tell with exactitude from the signs the emergence of the Imam A.S.

Hazrat Ali A.S. has said that nine definite signs will precede the emergence of Hazrat Mahdi (A.S.). First, he says, Dajjal will emerge. Secondly, a loud voice will be heard from the sky. Thirdly, Sufiani will appear and wage a fierce war. Fourthly, the army of Sufiani will be swallowed by a sudden opening of the land between Makka and Medina

in the desert of Baida. Fifthly, a revered wise saint will be murdered in Makka. Traditions have it that this will happen on the 23rd of Zilhajj and that this *Nafse Zakia* will be of Hashimite descent. Sixth, a Seyyid descendant of Imam Hasan A.S. will emerge with his army, the army of Scyyid-e-Hasani and an image of a man will appear in the sky opposite the sun. We have seen how this will happen in the month of Shabaan. There will be two eclipses in the holy month of Ramadhan contrary to the normal order and calculation and the eclipse of the moon. The last is that on three occasions a loud voice from the sky will be heard in the holy month of Ramadhan. According to Hazrat Ali A.S. these signs are absolute pre-requisites to the re-emergence of the Imam (A.S.). Finally, Imam Jafer-Sadiq A.S. was asked "When such will be the chaos and the insufferable calamities of the time, how do we spare ourselves from going astray?" Indeed Ahadith show that at that time a number of people will go astray; their logic will be simply this "There is so much suffering, so much agony, so much tyranny, so much oppression and yet the Imam has not arrived. There is no Imam at all," and they will lose faith completely. Indeed, Ahadith say that at that time living the life of a Momin will be like treading on the edge of a sharp knife. Imam A.S. was asked how one could come through the turmoil patiently and bear the sufferings until the emergence of Imam A.S. He taught us a small dua, "*Ya Allah, Ya Rahmanu, Ya Rahim, Ya Muqallibal Qulub, Thabbit qalbi ala dinik*".

THE REAPPEARANCE

We have already seen how two forces, that of Sufiani and the other of Seyyide Hasani will be pitted against each other. We have also observed how Sufiani would have already traversed North Africa into the Middle East and would reach Syria and Iraq and then move into Medina with the aim of getting into Makka to destroy the Holy Kaaba. From the opposite end, a force of salvation led by a Seyyide Hasani would already have been moving out of Iran into Afghanistan through Pakistan, the Gulf and into Basra from where it would proceed towards Kufa. Thus the force of Satan and the force of Salvation would set out in this way. There will be extreme affliction to mankind at the time. Such will be the situation that people at that time will earnestly pray for the *Zuhur* (reappearance) of the IMAM ZAMAN A.S. and it will also be the time when the IMAM A.S. will feel that his return is imminent.

As we have seen before, nobody knows for sure when exactly he will reappear. But our Aima Alaihimussalam have told us about different signs that will herald his reappearance. When these two forces clash, that will be the curtain-raiser to his reappearance. We also discussed at the very beginning the various abodes of Hazrat Hujjat A.S., particularly the *Jaziratul Khadhra*. We also saw that the Imam (A.S.) is present at every place but his Kingdom is in that place. When the time will arrive the Imam (A.S.) will move out of *Jaziratul Khadhra* and into Makka.

He will await the orders of Allah for reappearance. While the Imam will be in Makka the Sword *Zulfikar*, that we have already discussed will come out by itself from the sheath and standing before the Imam A.S. will address the Imam in these words: "O Qaime Ali Muhammad, the time for you to hold me in your hand and bring justice to the world has arrived." The Imam A.S. will hold the sword and that will be the first indication to him of the command from Allah to reappear. Immediately,

thereafter, the Standard that we have talked about that was used only on two occasions previously: during the battle of BADR and during the battle of JAMAL, will also present itself to the Imam (A.S.) and will address the Imam, "The Time has come for you to carry me in your hand." And when these two stand before the Imam A.S. he will know that the command from Allah has come. That very evening the Imam A.S. will enter the Kaaba donning the yellow turban of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.).

He will also be wearing the sandals of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.), carry the stick of the Holy Prophet and to disguise his reappearance he will have a few goats in front of him; in that fashion he will enter the Holy Kaaba, it will be almost midnight on Thursday. The Ahadith say that it will be Friday, the day of Ashura, when he will reappear. The exact year is unknown; various Ahadith have quoted various years, but all the traditions are unanimous that it will be an odd year. He will place himself, as we have discussed, between *Maqame Ibrahim* and *Rukne Yamani* with his back against the Holy Kaaba. He will make a general proclamation, "O men chosen to assist me, now is the time for you to come to my aid straight away". And the first to respond to this call will be, of course, Jibrael. He will come down from the Heavens with word from Allah that the final command on earth would from that moment be of Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.), that whatever he ordered would be fulfilled. He will then swear allegiance (*Bay'ah*) to the Imam (A.S.). Immediately, thereafter Mikael will come, followed by the *Jinnat*. It is also reported that the four Prophets who are in concealment, Hazrat Isa A.S., Hazrat Khizr A.S., Hazrat Ilias A.S. and Hazrat Idris A.S. will each come in succession and declare allegiance to the Imam A.S. All this will take place unnoticeably. But immediately after sunrise, Jibrael will proceed to *Baitul Muqaddas* and from there he will make a general announcement to the whole world and he will start with the verse of the Holy Book: "*Ja'al Haq Wazahaqal Batil, innal Batila kana Zahuqa*" (17:81): Truth has emerged, falsehood has vanished for falsehood is but a thing for banishment. And then he will proclaim the reappearance of Hazrat Hujjat A.S. and call upon all Momineen immediately to go to Makka to assist him. As soon as this call from Jibrael will be announced 313 companions of Hazrat Hujjat A.S. will arrive in Makka. Hazrat Amir

A.S. and Imam Jafer-e-Sadiq (A.S.) have even given a list of their names and the places from where they will come. These will be the really chosen companions of Hazrat Hujjat A.S. It is said they will be people of eminent piety, great knowledge and absolutely steadfast in their determination and faith towards Hazrat A.S. After their appearance they will prepare themselves for the task of enforcing the orders from the Imam A.S. In the meantime, others who are not amongst the 313 but will have heard the voice of Jibrael calling men to the aid of Hazrat Hujjat A.S., will be of three types: the first category will be of those who the moment they hear the call will leave their homes, their children, wives, their business affairs, and all worldly matters. They will simply step out of their houses and of them it is said that the moment they take one step out of their homes, immediately they will find themselves at *Maqame Ibrahim* in Makka. This will be a miracle that Providence will grant them because of their resolute faith and zeal in the path of Allah. Another category of people will be those who will say "Right! The call has come and we must go, but we must first sort a few things out, we have a duty to our wives, and our children." Such people will find that the day has passed and they have missed the chance of being with the Imam (A.S.). Urgent will be the need to act with promptitude because at dusk another call will be heard. This will be the voice of Shaitan announcing, "O people, listen! Your god has emerged in the forests of Yabis (in Palestine) and his name is Othman bin Ambasad of the Ommayyad family and is a descendant of Yazid bin Muawiyah. Proceed to him and swear allegiance to him so that you are guided to the right path." This will be the time when people will get into doubt. Thus it is important from now to know what is to happen to be able to distinguish between the calls. Those who will have wavered in the morning will be unable to join the Imam (A.S.). There will, of course, be the third category of persons who will accept the second call and will belie the first. But Allah, to help us will immediately after the second call, send another call to belie the call from Shaitan. This will again be a call from Jibrael to say "This second call is a lie and do not follow it". It is also said that this call from Jibrael will be heard everywhere by different nationalities in their own tongues. The Afghans will hear it in the Afghani language, the Indians, in Hindi or Urdu. The final count is that apart from 313 who will have already been with the Imam A.S. 1000 more people will have gathered around

the Imam A.S. And that will be the time when the Imam A.S. will feel his complete army is with him to proceed for his mission. People in Makka will then be stunned to see all the activity at the Kaaba. They will ask each other what is happening, they will not be able to make out the 313 or the 1000, except that four people will have come from Makka and when they will consult them they will divulge that it is Hazrat-e-Hujjat A.S. who has reappeared and the task of bringing justice and peace on earth had started. And at about this time after the second call, there will appear the *Bashir* and the *Nazir* we have already talked about. We have discussed how Sufiani's army will have moved out of Medina to go to Makka and on the way in the desert of Baida they will all be swallowed up by the earth except two people and how the angel will come and slap both of them so that their faces, will be turned back towards their backs. *Bashir* will have arrived in Makka and will give the Imam A.S. the good tidings of the army of Sufiani having been swallowed up by land in the desert. As a result of this good news the Imam A.S. will turn his face back to its normal position and he will also join the army of the Imam A.S. What will happen next is a little debatable as there are two versions as to whether *Dabbatul Ardh* will emerge at that stage or whether he will emerge at a later date. *Dabbatul Ardh* is the person who will move around with a stick and whenever he sees a Momin he will inscribe the word *Momin* on the forehead of that Momin and if he sees, a disbeliever, he will inscribe on his forehead *Kafir*. And it is said that those will be the times when persons will address each other as "*Ya Momin*" or "*Ya Kafir*". But it is unclear whether it will be immediately after the arrival of Hazrat Hujjat A.S. or later and whether it is one of the signs portending the advent of the Imam A.S. or portending the advent of *Qiyamah*.

Immediately thereafter, the Imam A.S. will embark upon bringing peace and justice to Makka. He will gather the people of Makka who will declare allegiance to him, faithfully or unfaithfully. The Imam A.S. will appoint a Governor in Makka and his first task thereafter will be to proceed to Medina. His main concern all along will be Sufiani but before that he will want to get to Medina because Sufiani will have ransacked Medina, the pulpit of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) will have been smashed, the site of the Prophet's grave will have been converted into a stable for horses. The Imam's first concern will be to put that right. But

as he will move out of Makka he will get the news that Makkans have rebelled and have killed his Governor. He will return to Makka to fight them and they will go on their knees to seek his pardon. He will pardon them on the promise that they will conduct themselves as good Muslims. He will appoint another Governor but the moment he leaves Makka, there will be another rebellion and the second Governor will be killed. As a result of these murders the Imam A.S. will then return. He will refuse to pardon even those who in their usual hypocritical manner will appear repentant.

The first battle the Imam A.S. will fight will be on the soil of Makka. And traditions show that it will be such a fierce battle that for about 10 miles in Makka there will only be streams of blood flowing through the streets. One can imagine how heretical the people living in the vicinity of the Holy Kaaba would be! If there is one institution in the world today that can inspire faith and good conduct it is the Kaaba, and it is startling how those who will have been nourished and nurtured in the very bosom of the holy place will turn out to be people who will deserve such treatment at the just hands of a kind Imam. However, after that the Imam (A.S.) will appoint a third governor in Makka and will proceed towards Medina. There the Imam A.S. will fight his second battle against the disbelievers and those who will have opposed him and it is again said that a bloody battle will ensue and a considerable number of people will die.

Immediately after that, the Imam (A.S.) although keen to move towards Sufiani, who will still be in Syria, will divert towards Kufa because his urgent duty will be to establish his Kingdom. So he will go to Kufa which will become his headquarters, exactly where Hazrat Ali A.S. established his capital and *Masjid-e-Sahla*, will be his exchequer. His residence will be in Najaf. But the Kufa of that time will not be the Kufa of today. Kufa will have merged with Najaf. By this time Kufa will have expanded so much that it will almost merge into Karbala. It is said this Kufa will be 54 sq. miles. However, when the Imam (A.S.) will reach Kufa, he will have to fight a third battle which we have already discussed. There he will meet Seyyide-e-Hasani who will ask for proof from the Imam (A.S.) who will present them. Almost the whole of his army of over

70,000 will declare allegiance except the 4000 Zaidis. They will reject the Imam A.S. despite a moratorium of three days that the Imam A.S. will give them. At the end of the three days, the Imam A.S. will wage a war against the Zaidis so that ultimately even Kufa will be purified. Once Kufa comes under his control and his Kingdom established, the Imam A.S. will move towards Sufiani.

It is not a matter of surprise that of the two forces that will then be attempting to prevail on earth, the Imam (A.S.) should first heed the forces of salvation, the forces of Momineen, and then act against the heretic and the heathens. He will then proceed towards Syria with his full army. Sufiani will have heard the news that the Imam A.S. was approaching and he also will assemble an army at the border of Syria. When the Imam A.S. reaches there it will be dawn. And at that time it is said he will line up his army for morning prayers but he will not lead the prayers. Some Momineen will urge him to do so. At first he will say it is not yet time but when it will be time for FAJR they will then try to persuade him to start prayers and he will ultimately be obliged to declare that he is waiting for a personality who was due to emerge that dawn. Soon thereafter Hazrat Isa A.S. will descend from the fourth heaven and when he appears Hazrat Hujjat A.S. will ask him to lead prayers and his answer will be, "At the moment you are the Hujjat of Allah on earth, how dare I lead you in prayers". He will then hold Imam's hand and will physically lead the Imam to the mihrab. Immediately after those prayers, the battle with Sufiani will commence.

Traditions are unanimous in proclaiming that Prophet Isa will participate in the war under the command of Hazrat Hujjat A.S. As previously stated there is another hadith which states that Sufiani will escape to Jerusalem where he will be captured and killed by the Imam A.S. Once the Sufiani is killed there will be considerable relaxation of tension for we have seen what ravages Sufiani will wreak and at least the prayers of Momineen for salvation from the hands of Sufiani will have been answered. The Imam A.S. will then move straight towards Palestine and *Baitul-Muqaddas*. His next concern will be to rebuild Jerusalem. For by then, Sufiani will have completely ruined the Mosque of *Baitul Muqaddas*. The Imam A.S. will undertake that task and in Palestine he will again

face opposition and confrontation from the Jews. This time Hazrat Hujjat A.S. will be predominant. He will physically go and break all the crosses that will have been entrenched in Palestine, he will even break all symbols of Mary. He will proclaim *Shahadatain* and will order people to do so too. 70,000 or more Jews will be killed in that way alone. Once Palestine will have come under total control, rebuilding the Mosque will commence.

Meanwhile the Imam A.S. will move onto the other parts of the world. His first target will be Rome, because Rome and Constantinople will at that time be the headquarters of Christianity and it will be important to subjugate that influence and bring it under the jurisdiction of Islam. Both Rome and Constantinople will fall. After that the significant point is that the Imam A.S. will send an army to India because there will still be people in India who will not have declared allegiance to the Imam A.S. There will be a bloody war in India also. Of course, India will be conquered, but it is significant to note that even after the conquest of India a portion of the army will be left there to meet with Dajjal.

One Hadith is that Dajjal will emerge from India. However, with the conquest of India all the treasures in India will be in the hands of the Imam A.S. By his command the earth will disgorge its hidden treasures. It is amazing that even to that day there will be so much treasure under the earth in India, apart from the treasures in Egypt, which will all be used towards renovation of the mosques in Jerusalem.

However, to revert to Dajjal it will be 18 days after the appearance of the Imam A.S. that he will announce his appearance. Now this is a very significant portent because the emergence of Dajjal is one of the very important signs that must occur after the advent of the Imam. It must occur 18 days after the advent of the Imam and Dajjal will be killed at the hands of the Imam A.S. This is important, because a number of people have made false claims to have been the Mahdi; for example, we know that the Qadianis believe that the Mahdi has already arrived. And it is significant that when he was asked, "If you really are the Mahdi where is Dajjal? And how have you conquered the Dajjal?", helpless as he was, he pointed to the trains of those days, saying that the train

which moves on rails was the Dajjal and the conquest of the train was the conquest of the Dajjal. One can see how inadequate the answer was and how wrong the Bahaiis are because the emergence of the Dajjal is a Hadith from the Prophet (S.A.W.W.). All the traditionalists, be they Shia, Sunni, Shafi and Hanafi, etc. have accepted the emergence of the Dajjal and his being killed at the hands of the Mahdi.

The story of Dajjal is a long one. It appears that his life is longer than that of Hazrat Hujjat A.S. in terms of physical living. It is said that he was born during the time of the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) and the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) had even visited him. Indeed, one Hadith from Abdullah Ibn Omar reported in *Kamaluddin* is that the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) visited Dajjal on three occasions, before the birth of Dajjal the Prophet had already warned his people of his emergence, the serious and catastrophic consequences of his reappearance to Momineen and he warned them, and through them he passed the warning to us, to beware of his reappearance and to be cautious of him at the time. The visit of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) to the house of Dajjal is set out in the English translation of Imam Zaman Hazrat Mahdi (A.S.) on pages 107 and 108.

It is said that after the visit of the Prophet and his companions, Dajjal wanted to cause harm to the Prophet so he first placed stones on his way so that the Prophet may stumble over them but before the Prophet could reach there, Jibrael descended and removed all the stones and cleared the path. Then, it is said, Dajjal even went into Masjid-e-Nabawi wishing physically to attack the Prophet and the companions around him but at that time the Prophet prayed to Allah to remove that danger from him. Jibrael descended, held Dajjal by the neck and threw him out onto an Island where he has remained imprisoned since.

One Hadith is that he will emerge from a mountain in India and will then proceed towards Palestine. Another Hadith is that he will emerge from a suburb of Isfahan called Yahudis, he will collect his army and march. His slogan will be "I am your God, I have all the virtues you need, I have all the ability and competence to fulfil your requirements. I have Heaven and I hold Hell. Those who will declare allegiance to me, I shall put them

into Heaven straight away and those who will not, I will fight them and put into Hell." And at that moment, it is said, will be a moment of most delicate trial for Momineen living at that time, for various reasons. First of all, for three consecutive three preceding years severe famine and drought will rage. And we have already discussed how people will be prepared to give away their beautiful young daughters for a loaf of bread that he will offer them. And people will think that the hill behind him is a mountain of food, and the smoky hill before him is a fountain for them. And so he will claim. At the same time he will have two hills moving with him. On the right will be a hill where people will see gardens with trees laden with fruits and on his left, they will see a replica of hell with scorpions, serpents and such horrid things and then his proclamation that "those who declare allegiance to me I will put them in my Heaven and those who oppose me, I will put them into Hell". At that time of famine and drought, hunger and thirst, how difficult will it be to resist this person! He will have an army of 70,000 Jews with him. Dajaal will proceed with his carriage which reportedly will last for forty days. The Imam A.S. will decide that he will have a direct confrontation with Dajaal. So he will set out from Palestine. Eventually there will be a heavy battle in Syria and there Dajaal will be killed at the hands of the Imam A.S. and that will be the end of Dajaal and his menace.

From then onwards, there will be peace and tranquillity after a period of torture and tyranny. It will be the period when the Imam A.S. will spread equity and justice on earth in place of oppression and inequities. It is then said that it will be an era in which Momineen will be accustomed to Taqwa, they will live in piety; there will be no blatant sinning nor greed. In fact, it will be a period of bliss. To quote only two or three instances, it will be a period in which even women sitting at home will be masters of Ahadith and the Qur'an. Another tradition says that a lady will be able to travel alone from Yemen in the south right upto Damascus in the north at night unmolested, unhindered and above all without fear of any nature whatsoever. And it will also be a period in which the wishes of Momineen will be fulfilled at their behest. It will be the height of joy and happiness that we have been talking about. And the great thing about it will be that the anxiety of the Momineen all along will be just one, the pleasure of Allah. This era will be followed by the return of each of our

Aimma Alaihimusalaam, some during the lifetime of Hazrat Hujjat A.S., others after his martyrdom. They will conduct their governments, one after the other.

We have been cautioned on how Dajjal will be able to attract people by his musical notes and those of us accustomed to music will fall prey to him. There is also a panacea shown for those who do not want to fall prey to Dajjal by Aimma Alaihimusalaam so that when that period arrives we are not tempted to fall into his trap. And the panacea offered to us is that when Dajjal comes we must keep our distance and not speak to him. The first thing to do is just to recite *Suratul Hamd*. It is said that if a person will recite *Suratul Hamd* and will then blow on to Dajjal he will become totally helpless. And the faith of the Momineen in his faith will be such that he will not succumb to Dajjal. We have noticed that whilst frightening things have been foretold, medicines for their cure have also been given to us.

The description of Hazrat Hujjat A.S.

His complexion will be fair (pinkish), he will be broad with big shoulder bones and muscular. On his back there will be two spots, one of the colour of his skin and the other resembling that of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.). He will have a round head, beautiful long hairs reaching upto the shoulders, centrally combed, bright face, broad forehead, thick black beard, slender nose, big bright and well set eyes, broad eyebrows, bright white teeth, a spot on one cheek, his cheeks will be thin. He will look young almost 40 years of age.

Dajjal

He will be a one-eyed monster. His right eye will be useless and will appear as a lump of red meat, his left eye will shine on his forehead, he will ride a massive red and hairy donkey whose legs will be black from thigh bones to knees and white from knees to hooves.

THE RETURN

“Ja-al Haq wazahaqal batil innal batila kana zahuqa” (17:81): Truth has emerged, falsehood has vanished for falsehood is but a thing for banishment.

We now proceed to consider how the Rule of Hazrat Hujjat A.S. will prevail in the world and how Allah will fulfil another of his promises in the Holy Book in the verse “Huwallazi Arsalahu bil Huda wa dinil haq liyuzhira-hu ala ddini kullihi walau karihal mushrikun”, i.e. it is Allah, who will bestow the apostleship on His Prophet and endow him with guidance (Bil Huda) and the true religion (wa dinil Haq) which (liyuzhirau ala ddini kulih) true religion he will grant supremacy and superiority over all other religions, however much the Mushrikin (the polytheists) may detest such superiority. The question that arises here is how and when will Allah grant this superiority. Indeed it was Abu Basir who put this question to Imam Jafer Sadiq A.S. “We saw the times of the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) but we did not see how supremacy or superiority was given to Islam over all religions. And since then we have seen the reign of six Aimmah Alaihimussalaam and yet we have not seen this cherished promise come true.” In reply Imam Jafer Sadiq A.S. said, “The promise will come true when the *Qaim Alimohammad* (A.S.) will emerge and establish his rule over the entire face of the world.” At that time the words “Liyuzhirahu ala ddini Kullih” will come true, for we have seen, and will continue to see, how polytheists and heretics will be guided towards the true religion. We saw how *Dajjal* will be dealt with and eventually killed by Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) and from then onwards the entire mission of Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) will be to spread justice and peace on this earth: “Yamlaul Ardha Qistan wa adlah, kama muliat dhulman wa juara” (“He will fill the earth with justice as it will have been carpeted with injustices”). All the atrocities of *Dajjal*, of *Sufiani* and the other problems that would have arisen in the world before the *Zuhur* will be

replaced by a reign of total peace. It will be a rule in which there will be no sins being committed by any person and in which, it is said, even the rule of *Qaza Namaz* will literally have been abolished for there will be none who will not perform his prayers at the commencement of its time. But this process will not end at purification of those living then, but another process will commence. There will follow *Rajaat*, in which the most wicked and vicious of people who lived before his advent and who committed horrifying atrocities will be revived, so will those on whom those atrocities were committed, and justice will then be dispensed between the oppressor and the oppressed. And this process will also be carried out by Hazrat Hujjat A.S. It is said that he will not need any witnesses to administer justice. For indeed, it will not be easy to obtain witnesses because not all the dead will be revived. He will conduct his process of justice by his knowledge (*ilme la dunn*) bestowed upon him by Allah. He will need no witnesses, he will need no court evidence. Yet whatever he will present as the truth having taken place in the days bygone will readily be accepted as the truth by those subject to his justice. And during this process, we might wonder who would be more entitled and deserving of justice than Imam Hussain A.S. We have been mourning the atrocities and cruelties afflicted on him, his companions and his dear and near ones for centuries. So, it is said that the first person who will be resurrected will be Imam Hussain A.S. He will come back to earth with all his 72 companions who were martyred on Ashura day on the plains of Karbala, and it is said that with him will be his 10,000 other companions. They will be people who will have mourned him so dearly, will have manifested their affections so deeply and so sincerely that they will deserve to be with him on that day. In fact one tradition says that at that time every Momin who will sincerely have uttered "*Yalaitani kuntu maakum fa-afuza maakum*" meaning "I only wish I could have been with you so that I too could have attained the high salvation achieved by you", (the address we all make in the *Ziarat-e-Shuhada-e-Karbala*) will also be given an opportunity to return to earth with Imam Husein A.S. By a tradition of Imam Jafer Sadiq A.S. about 70,000 Momineen will come out of their graves from *Wadius-Salaam* alone (*Wadius-Salam* is the celebrated grave yard in Najaf, where it is only Momineen are buried). On the other hand, simultaneously, Yez will be brought back to life and Omar ibn Sa'd together with the en-

army which was in Karbala on Ashura day and then a battle will ensue. This will again be on the plains of Karbala and each one who perpetrated cruelty on the day of Ashura will get a taste of justice at the hands of Hazrat Mahdi (A.S.). The entire army that will be fighting will be under his command. Indeed, traditions note that Yezid will be the first to be dealt with by Hazrat Hujjat A.S. and will die at his holy hands. He will be followed by Omar bin Sa'd and Shimr, both of whom will be slain at the hands of Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.), and then the rest, in turn, one after the other. Indeed, Imam Hussain A.S. himself predicted all this on the day of Ashura to his companions and this tradition reaches us from no less an authoritative source than Imam Muhammad Baqir A.S. He says that on the day of Ashura Imam Hussain A.S. gathered his companions and revealed all this to them. He told them what would happen on that day and how they would all be massacred in a matter of a few hours and how after that they would live with the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) in heaven for a while and after that they would all be revived. This is a clear prediction given by Imam Hussain A.S. to his companions and the hadith clearly mentions the word *Rajaat*, the day of return. He says, "I will be the first to emerge from my grave. We will fight the enemies of Allah and the angels who had never descended on earth before will come down to assist us as will Jibrael, Mikael and Israfil. And at that time, The Prophet (S.A.W.W.), Hazrat Ali (A.S.) and my brother Hazrat Hasan (A.S.) and all the A'imma descended from me will be with us. The Holy Prophet will unfurl his flag and hand it together with his sword to Hazrat Mahdi A.S. All of you my companions will remain with me and we will stay in the world for as long a period as Allah will wish. Then Hazrat Ali (A.S.) will hand to me the sword of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) and he will send me with an army to the East of the world (presumably Asia). There I will fight the irreligious enemies of Allah and kill them. I will reach India and conquer this sub-continent and will clean the place of polytheists and infidels. I will destroy all the animals on earth whose meat is forbidden. I will call the Christians, the Jews and all the polytheists to the Right Path. Those who will remain recalcitrant I will kill them. In that era Allah will protect the believers from all calamities and sicknesses and bestow on them blessings and mercy. Branches of trees will be heavily laden with fruits. Those fruits generally available only in summer will also be found in winter. And those usually seen only

in winter will also grow in summer". These are the words of the Hadith from Imam Hussain A.S. himself, thirteen centuries ago. This hadith goes on to say that even after the completion of the process of meting out justice to Yezid and his followers on the plains of Karbala, Imam Hussain A.S. will continue to live under the Imamate of Hazrat Mahdi A.S. who will be the Imam of the time. It is not clear how long Hazrat Mahdi A.S. will then continue his rule. There are conflicting traditions; one hadith says his rule will last seven years but there is another hadith which says that each of those seven years will be like ten years of ours, so the total comes to seventy years. Another hadith mentions 309 years. But one thing which is certain from the Ahadith is that with Imam Hussain A.S. there will not only be his 10,000 men and his companions, but also Angels. It is important to mention them because as we know that on the day of *Ashura* angels descended at Karbala by the permission of Allah to offer help to Imam Hussain A.S. There was a group of 4,000 under the leadership of an Angel called Mansukh entreating the Imam (A.S.) to accept help but the Imam A.S. declined any help from them. However, they became so despondent that they were unwilling to return to heaven and remained by the body of Imam Hussain A.S. mourning him. It is said they are in Karbala to the present day mourning on the grave of Imam Hussain A.S. receiving, welcoming and congratulating all visitors who visit that Mausoleum. It is said that if a pilgrim to Karbala becomes sick, they attend on him, and should he die they accompany him to the grave, all the time praying to Allah for forgiveness of all his sins. These angels would no doubt deserve to accompany Imam Hussain A.S. back to this world and it is said they will play a considerable role on the day on which justice will be meted out to the army of Yezid. By then the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) will also have returned and his main task will be to deal with Satan. It is reported that of all the wicked beings, one who simply cannot be overlooked is Satan who will come with a gigantic army to confront the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.). According to traditions a fierce battle will ensue in Iraq and eventually the devil will be killed at the hands of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) on the banks of the River Euphrates. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) will, according to traditions, live for a short period of seven years (but, again, if each year is like the ten of our years his life will be seventy years) and he will be buried in Medina in exactly the place where he rests now. After the Holy Prophet

(S.A.W.W.), Hazrat Ali A.S. will rule. By then Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) will also have been martyred. The circumstances of his martyrdom are clear from traditions. Although by then, the polytheists will have been cleared and purified and will have become Muslims, one Jewish woman by the name of Sahida or Sadiya or Muntahiya will hide herself in a tree and hurl a stone on Hazrat Hujjat (A.S.) so hard as he will be passing by that it will fatally wound him and eventually cause his martyrdom. Imam Hussain (A.S.) will give him *Ghusl Kafan* lead the salatul Mayyit of Hazrat Hujjat A.S. and bury him. Thereafter Imam Hussain (A.S.) will take over the reins of authority. The traditions are unanimous that he will rule for such a long time that his eye-brows will almost reach his eyes. Hazrat Ali (A.S.) will also rule the world for a very long period. After him each Imam will take his turn. A question that arises is that when there will be three or four Imams together who will take precedence in leading prayers. The answer is, so long as the Prophet (S.A.W.W.) will be present he will lead prayers and then during the period of Hazrat Ali A.S., he alone will lead the prayers, but after him the A'imma (A.S.) will amongst themselves ask each other to lead and whoever is asked to lead prayers will perform the functions of an Imam. This rule of peace and piety will prevail for a long time. Traditions suggest up to 8,000 years but, all the traditions are unanimous that this era will end, 40 days before the day of Judgement. Then will come the other signs like the trumpet, the gathering and the other portents before the Day of Judgement. Such will be the long period of virtue to be enjoyed by the people and vice will exist no more. Indeed it will be a state of quasi heaven on earth.

There are many Ahadith from the Holy Prophet S.A.W.W., Hazrat Ali (A.S.) and Imam Jafer Sadiq (A.S.) on *Rajaat* and various verses in the Holy Qur'an on *Rajaat*. We often read of "Wanuridu ann munn alal lazina studhifu wanajalahum aimmatan wanajalahumul warithin" (28:5): "And we desired to bestow a favour upon those who were deemed weak in the land, and to make them the heirs". The only way in which one can prove that this inheritance will be handed to "A'imma" is through *Rajaat*, and indeed we look forward to the *Zuhur* of *Qaime Ali Muhammad A.S.* so that this favour of Allah is duly bestowed on those Twelve who so richly deserve it. But the more common proof we have is in *Ziarat-e-Warith* which comes to us from Imam Jafer Sadiq A.S. We say "Wa

ushhidullaha wamalaikatahu wa anbiyaahu, wa rusulahu, anni bikum mominin wabi iyabikum mukin,”: “And I hold Allah, His angels, His Prophets and His Messengers as my witnesses that I am fully convinced in you and in your return”. That is the testimony we give almost every Thursday evening, some of us perhaps everyday, in *Ziarat-e-Warith*. Another authoritative source is *Ziarat-e-Jamia* which amply illustrates and proves for us the doctrine of The Return, “*Rajaat*”. This impeccable, immaculate *Ziarat* exclusive and exquisite has come to us from no lesser an authority than the Tenth Imam (A.S.). The words of that paragraph are “Mominun bi iyabikum” (I bear witness to what is bestowed upon you), “Musadiqun bi Rajatikum” (I confirm the truth about your returning). The word *Rajaat* itself has been employed in this *Ziarat* by the Tenth Imam (A.S.) It says, “I accept, acknowledge that there will be a return, *Rajatikum*” of all of you i.e. the Aimmah. *Ziarat-e-Jamia* is the *Ziarat* addressed to all Aimmah and it is particularly important to note that when we recite this *Ziarat* on Shab-e-Juma or other days we make a particular niyyat that we are addressing all Aimmah including the Twelfth Imam (A.S.). That special emphasis is his right for he is the Imam of our age and the address uses the word most categorically. It says “Musadiqun bi Rajatikum” and at the end of the paragraph reiterates this prediction. The next phrase is “Muntazirun li amrikum” (I await your authority), which again is proof of *Rajaat*, “Murtaqibun li daulatikum” (I am anxious to see your authority and rule), “Akhizum bi kaulikum” (I accept your words), “Amilun bi amrikum” (I am keen to act on your commandments), “Mustajirun bikum” (I seek protection from you), “Zairun lakum” (I am your visitor), “Aizun bi quburikum” (I seek refuge at your shrines) “Mustashifiun ilallahi azzawajallah bikum” (I seek your intercession with Allah), “Wamutaqarribun bikum ilaihi” (and I seek nearness to Him through you). “Wamukaddimuqum amama talibati, wahawaiji, wairadati fi kulli ahwali wa umuri” (I place you ahead of me, I present you to Allah on my behalf in respect of all my wishes, all my desires and all my wants in all phases and in all my affairs), “Muminun bisirrikum wa alaniyatikum” (I believe in all things known and unknown about you). By secrets there is the secret of the rule of Hazrat Hujjat A.S. “Wa alaniyatikum” (and all which is manifest from you) “Wa shahidikum” “Wa ghaibikum” (and what is manifest of your performance and your state which is unseen). “Wa awwalikum wa akhirikum” (and I believe

as much in the last of you as I do in the first of you), "Wa mufawwizun fidhalika kullihi ilaikum" (and I repose trust in you all, for all my affairs), "wa musallimun fihi" (and make submission on to you all in these respects) "wa qalbi lakum musalimun" (and my heart bows down before you all in submission to you), "Wa ra'yee lakum tabaun" (and my opinions are subservient to yours) "wa nusrati lakum mu-ada" (and my assistance is always available and ready for you) "hatta" (to the day) "Yuhyiya Allaha Ta'alla" "dinahu bikum" (to the day when Allah will re enliven His religion through you). Eleven Aimmahs have been martyred. They are not with us and the one who is left is in Ghaybah. How else does Allah revive his religion through them except through *Zuhur* of Hazrat Hujjat A.S. and the *Rajaat* of the other Imams? "Wayaraddukum fi ayyamihi" (and until He returns you into His rule). The "Return" is expressly stated, "Wa yuzhirukum liadlihi" (and through you He will manifest His justice), "Wa yumakkinukum fi ardhi" (and He will bestow His authority on you over the whole of His land), "famaakum maakum la ma'a ghairikum" (for I belong to you, I am with you, emphatically with you and not with any but you) "amantu bikum" (I bear testimony on you all); "Watawalaitu akhirakum bima tawalaitu bihi awwalakum" (and I accept as my spiritual leader the last of you as much as I accept as spiritual leader the first of you.) This Ziarat, then is authentic proof of the doctrine of *Rajaat* and how it will be realized.

GLOSSARY

AHLUL-BAIT:Household of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.);

AKHERUZ ZAMAN:The last days before the reappearance of the Mahdi (A.S.);

ARIDHAH:Petition;

BAHRUL ABYATH:The white sea;

BAITUL MUQADDAS:The Holy Mosque in Jerusalem;

BAY'AH:Allegiance;

DABBATUL ARDH:The person who will stride the world and imprint on foreheads of people "Ya Momin" or "Ya Kafir" as will be applicable to them;

DURRE NAJAF:A kind of precious stone;

GHAIBAH:Concealment;

GHAIBAT-E-KUBRA:The long concealment;

GHAIBAT-E-SUGRA:The transitional concealment;

HAJARE ASWAD:The Black Stone in the Holy Kaaba;

HASANAHA:Merit;

HERBA:Spear;

HIJRAH:The migration of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W.) from Me to Medina;

HIRZE YAMANI:Amulet for protection;

HOOKAH:Tobacco-pipe with a long flexible tube through which smoke is drawn through water in a vase and so cooled;

INTEZAR:Waiting;

ISTIGATHA:Invocation;

JAZIA:Religious tax levied on non-muslims;

JAZIRATUL KHADHRA:The Green Islands;

JINNAT:Arabic plural of jinn;

MEHRAB:A recess in a mosque indicating direction of prayer;

MEHRABE SHAHADAT:The Mehrab in which Hazrat Ali (A.S.) was assassinated;

NAFSE ZAKIA:A pious soul;

NAZAR:Vow;

NIABAH:Performance of an act on behalf of another as an agent;

QUBBAH:Dome;

RAJAAT:The return of the Holy Prophet and the Imams (A.S.) after the reappearance of the Mahdi (A.S.);

SADAQA:Charity;

SARDAB:Basement;

SHAHADAH:Martyrdom;

SHAHADATIN:The two statements as to faith in unity of Allah and the prophethood of the Holy Prophet;

TABARRUK:Blessed food or thing;

TAHAJJUD:Namaz-e-Shab, pre dawn prayers;

ZAWWARS:Visitors;

ZIARAH:Audience with a living Imam, visit to a Holy Shrine of an Imam;

ZUHUR:Reappearance of the Mahdi (A.S.);

