

The Divine, Prophet and Imams' Rights in Islam

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Rights vary from one to another according to values of favors. A friend has his own familiar rights that are a degree lower than these of the affectionate brother who joins the tie of relation to the tie of kindness. The right of the brother, in a like fashion, comes after that of parents, because of their superior favors to sons.

Through such standard, we can realize the grand value of the divine rights that excel any other rights, because God is the grandest Benefactor Who created man and has conferred upon him with innumerable varieties of graces:

"Have you not seen that Allah has made all that is in the heavens and the earth, subservient to you (human beings), and has extended and perfected for you His apparent and unseen bounties? (31:20)."

"Had you wanted to count the bounties of Allah, you would not have been able to do it. (14:34)"
Anyhow, we now have to refer to some of these infinite rights that come after the belief in God, His Oneness, His having the attributes of perfection, and His being too far above everything .that does not befit Him

Worship .1

Imam as-Sejjad (a) said:

"The greatest of Allah's right against you is that you should worship Him and should avoid associating anything with Him. If you have applied this sincerely, Allah will grant you the characteristic that He will save your needs of this worldly life and your life to come and will keep for you that whichever you desire from the both." 369 Semantically, worship is the utmost servility and submission. On that account, except the Grandest Benefactor God, no one deserves to be worshipped.

Terminologically, worship is to carry out the orders diligently.

As a proof on the greatness of worship that leave prominent effects on man's life is that God has made it the grand purpose beyond the creation:

"We have created jinn and human beings only that they might worship Me. I do not expect to receive any sustenance from them or that they should feed Me. It is Allah Who is the Sustainer and the Lord of invincible strength (51:56-8)."

Undoubtedly, God is completely Self-Sufficient as He dispenses with the worship of His

creatures- neither the obedience of the pious serves Him nor does the disobedience of the defiant harm Him. He has imposed worship upon the creatures for their own interests so that they will benefit by the traits and advantages of worship, which is one of the strongest incentives that concentrate the beliefs and build up faith in the spirits since it reminds of God and His rewards and warns against His punishment and reminds of the Prophet (s).

The concepts of faith fade away in the mentality of the servant who neglects, and, subsequently, forgets worship of His Lord. Belief is the large tree whose blooming shadows cover all Muslims. Worship is the factor that protects and supplies that tree with elements of growth. It is the strongest factor that achieves balance between the spiritual and material powers that pull man back and forth. Man, however, cannot attain pleasure unless these two elements are equal. To prove this, we say that the prevalence of the material elements on man causes him to be slaved by false authorities of materiality and to be inclined towards selfishness, egotism- all for achieving his material desires. Such being the case, it is necessary to rein the defiance of materiality by strengthening the spiritual aspects and supplying man with mental energies guarding against evils and guiding to righteousness.

Through its spiritual rays and incessant reminding of God, worship can achieve the previously mentioned necessities. Worship, after all, is a test examining the dimensions of faith, which is a hidden secret that nothing can divulge except rites of worship.

Because worship requires suffering of efforts, the fulfillment of its rites has become a sign of firmness of faith. To neglect such rites, on the other hand, has become a sign of frailty of faith.

Prayer, for example, is indeed a difficult task, but not for the submissive to God. Fasting requires self-control against desires of food and sex. The hajj requires expenditure and suffering of efforts. The Zakat is to give from the wealth that you love and maintain. Jihad is to .sacrifice oneself for the sake of the duty. All these are difficult missions

Obedience .2

Obedience stands for submitting to God and carrying out all His instructions. It is an honorable trait that brings about pleasure: "One who obeys Allah and His Messenger will certainly achieve a great success. (33:71)" "Whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger will be admitted to the gardens wherein streams flow. Allah will make whoever turns away suffer a painful torment (48:17)."

Imam al-Hasan (a) said: "If you seek power without the need for a clan and dignity without the need of authority, you should leave the humility of the disobedience to Allah to the honor of the ".obedience to Him

Thankfulness .3

Thankfulness is to appreciate the graces and use them in fields satisfying the benefactor. It is an ideal trait that is blessed by reason and law and necessitated by conscience. For the All-benefactor Whose graces are innumerable and favors are infinite, gratitude should be expressed more meaningfully:

"Remember when your Lord said to you, 'If you give thanks, I shall give you greater (favors), but if you deny the Truth, know that My retribution is severe' (14:7)."

The Prophet (s) said: "Verily, he who serves food and thanks Allah for so will be rewarded as same as those who fast just for gaining the rewards of Allah, and he who is cured and thanks Allah for curing him will be rewarded as same as the diseased who is steadfast against that disease for the sake of Allah, and he who gives alms and thanks Allah for so will be rewarded as same as him who is deprived of sustenance, but he shows patience for the sake of Allah."

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Trust in God .4

Trust in God is to rely upon Him and commend all affairs to Him by diverting from anyone or anything else:

"If Allah is your helper, no one can defeat you. However, if He abandons you, who would help you? The true believers trust in Allah. (3:160)"

"('Allah is Sufficient for the needs of whoever trusts in Him. (65:3

RIGHTS OF THE PROPHET

Our great Prophet Mohammed (s) was the ideal in all aspects of perfection. God selected him among the creatures and conferred upon him with the loftiest traits that He gave to the prophets. All glories and dignities are gathered in the personality of Prophet Mohammed (s); therefore, he became the head and the seal of the prophets.

In less than twenty-five years, he, out of his giant efforts and eternal principles, could achieve splendid spiritual victories and religious attainments that cannot be achieved by others even if they take the period of many centuries. He came with the most perfect divine code that is best befitting the stages of life and achieving the worldly and religious spiritual and material pleasures to humankind. Hence, he could take people out of the murk of disbelief to the light of Islam. Besides, he made his nation the most perfect in religion, the most knowledgeable, the highest in fields of ethics, and the most elevated in fields of civilization. In the cause of achieving all these, the Prophet (s) suffered such unprecedented forms of terrors and ordeals.

On that account, any author is too short to calculate the favors and rights of the Prophet (s)

that are done and imposed upon Muslims, whatever he writes. Nevertheless, we can, in such a brief essay, refer to some of these rights. First of all, the rights of the Prophet Mohammed (s) are to believe in his prophecy and all that which he conveyed on behalf of God, and to believe that he is the chief of the messengers of :God and the seal of the prophets. Then come the following rights

Obedience to the Prophet: .1

Like the obedience to God, the obedience to Prophet Mohammed (s) is an obligation since he is the representative of God. The meaning of this obedience is to follow his code and apply his eternal principles that achieved happiness and success for Muslims so long as they adhered to them. Thus, Muslims became the target of humility when they rejected these principles.

Enjoining to the compliance with the Prophet Mohammed (s) and warning against the disobedience and defiance to him, God says: "Take only what the Messenger gives to you and desist from what he forbids you. Have fear of Allah; Allah is severe in His retribution (59:7)."

"The believing men and women must not feel free to do something in their affairs other than that which has been already decided for them by Allah and His Messenger. One who disobeys Allah and His Messenger is in plain error. (33:36)"

"Whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger will be admitted to the gardens wherein streams flow and wherein they will live forever. This is the greatest triumph. Whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger and breaks His rules will be admitted to the fire wherein they will live forever, suffering a humiliating torment. (4:13-4)"

"Disgrace will strike those who oppose Allah and His Messenger. Allah has decreed, "I and My ".(Messenger shall certainly triumph." Allah is All-powerful and Majestic (58:20-1

Love for the Prophet .2

Reasons of love and admiration vary according to the tendencies of lovers. Some people love beauty, others love heroism, others love liberality, and so on. In the personality of Prophet Mohammed (s), one can find all factors of love and admiration. He was an unparalleled model and a unique example. God gathered all signs of beauty and perfection and all secrets of attraction in his personality. In front of Prophet Mohammed (s), man can do nothing but expressing his love and respect to him.

Describing the features of the Prophet Mohammed (s), Amir ul-Mu'minin (a) said:

"The Prophet of Allah was white-reddish, black-eyed, lank-haired, bushy-bearded, hairy, and his neck was as same as a silver pitcher in whose clavicles gold is flowing. Like a bar of thread, his hair extends from the upper part of his chest to his navel. Other than this, he has no hair on

his belly or breast. He is big-handed and big footed. His walking is as same as pulling the feet from rocks. His coming is as same as descending a slope. When he turns his face, his whole body turns. He is neither short nor tall. His sweat on the face glitters like pearls and smells sweeter than musk." 371

"He was the most openhanded, the most broad-minded, the most truthful, the most faithful, the most tractable, and the most sociable. He who sees him from far away stands in awe of him, and who associates with him from near loves him. I have never seen, and I will not see, his like." 372

Because of the aforesaid features and moralities, all people, despite their variant trends of love, have loved him—for his unmatched heroism, heroes have loved him. For his being the ideal example of generosity, the generous have loved him. For his unique worship, worshippers have loved him. For his supreme ideality in nature and ethics, his sincere companions loved him.

Amir ul-Mu'minin (a) narrated that, once, one of Ansar, 373 said to the Prophet (s): "God's Messenger, I cannot depart you! As soon as I enter my house, you jump in my mind. I therefore leave my home and come to see you, out of my love for you. A question has occurred to me. How can I see you when you will be elevated to the highest point of Paradise?" Hence, God revealed His saying: "One who obeys Allah and the Messenger is the friend of the Prophets, saints, martyrs, and the righteous ones to whom Allah has granted His favors. They are the best friends that one can have (4:69)"

The Prophet (s) summoned that man and recited this Verse before him, as good tidings." 374

- Anas narrated: A Beduin came to the Prophet (s) -we were happy whenever a Beduin asks the Prophet- to ask him when would the Hour of Resurrection fall. Before answering the man, the time of a prayer fell; therefore, the Prophet (s) came to offer it. After the prayer, the Prophet (s) asked about the man who had asked about the falling of the Hour of Resurrection. When the man came before him, the Prophet (s) asked: "What have you prepared for encountering that Hour?" The man answered: "I, in fact, have not prepared many prayers and days of fasting. I, however, love God and His Messenger." The Prophet (s) commented: "Man will be attached to the one he loves." This prophetic statement was the second-most gladdening thing after Islam.

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Imam as-Sadiq (a) narrated: An oilman loved the Prophet (s) very much to the degree that he used to come to look at him before he would do any job. As he realized this thing from that oilman, the Prophet used to raise himself -when he was sitting- so that the man would see him.

One day, the man, as usual, took a look at the Prophet (s) before he would go to his job. He,

very soon, came back. When the Prophet (s) noticed that, he waved to him to sit down. The man sat before the Prophet (s), who asked him about his unusual coming back. The man said: "God's Messenger, by Him Who has sent you with the right I swear, your picture covered my heart totally that I could not go for my job; therefore, I came back to you." The Prophet (s) addressed nice words to that man and supplicated to God for his good." For several days, the Prophet (s) could not see that man. When he missed him, the Prophet (s) asked the others about him, and they answered that they, too, could not see him several days ago. The Prophet (s), accompanied by his companions, came to the market to ask about him. He found his shop locked, and the others informed him that the man had died. They also told that he was trustworthy and truthful, but he had one bad manner-he used to look covetingly at women.

The Prophet (s) commented: "He loved me very much. Allah will surely forgive him even if he was fraudulent in weighing and measuring." 376

Blessing the Prophet .3

God says:

"Allah showers His blessings upon the Prophet and the angels, too, do. Believers, pray for the Prophet and greet him thoroughly. (33:56)"

People used to show different styles of reverence towards the great personalities for their efforts for the sake of their nations. Such being the case, it is not strange to show respect whenever the holy name of the Prophet (s), who is the most reverent and venerable of all, is said or heard.

The holy Verse expresses the utmost honoring of God and the angels to the Prophet (s) - God showers His blessings upon the Prophet and the angels, too, do-, and then it addresses to the believers to reverence him by seeking God to bless and greet him- believers, pray for the Prophet and greet him thoroughly-.

Using such a thrilling, attractive style, the words of the Ahl ul-Bayt (a) go on explaining the merits of seeking God's blessings for the Prophet (s).

His son narrated that Abu Hamza said: I, once, asked Imam as-Sadiq (a) about the exegesis of God's saying: "Allah showers His blessings upon the Prophet and the angels, too, do. Believers, pray for the Prophet and greet him thoroughly. (33:56)"

He answered: "The blessing of Allah is mercy to the Prophet (s), and the blessing of the angels is purification to him, and the blessing of people is supplication for him. To 'great him thoroughly,' means to submit to that whichever is -authentically- related to him."

I asked: "How should we bless Mohammed and his family?" The Imam (a) replied: "You should

:say

صَلَوَاتُ اللَّهِ وَصَلَوَاتُ مَلَائِكَتِهِ وَأَنْبِيَائِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَجَمِيعِ خَلْقِهِ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ ، وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَيْهِمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

The blessings of Allah and the blessings of His angels, prophets, messengers, and all creatures be upon Mohammed and the family of Mohammed. And peace and Allah's mercy and blessings be upon him and them."

I asked: "What is the reward that one will win if he utters such blessings for the Prophet and his family?"

The Imam (a) answered: "The reward is that he will be acquitted from all of his sins, as if he has just left his mother's womb." 377

"For him who utters the blessings for Mohammed and his family ten times, Allah and His angels will bless him one hundred times, and if he utters the blessings one hundred times, Allah and His angels will bless him one thousand times. This is the significance of Allah's saying:

"It is He who forgives you and His angels pray for you so that He will take you out of darkness into light. Allah is All-merciful to the believers. (33:43)" 378

"Before blessing the Prophet and his family, every supplication is prevented to reach the heavens." 379

"The heaviest thing in the balance of a servant's deeds will be the blessings for the Prophet and his family. As a man's evildoings are heavier than his good deeds, the Prophet (s) comes to add the blessings for him and his family to the scale in which his good deeds are put. Thus, his good deeds become heavier than the evildoings." 380

Imam ar-Ridha (a) said: "He who fails to expiate his sins should give much of the blessings for Mohammed and his family, for they destroy the sins."

The Prophet (s) said: "Do not utter the imperfect blessings for me."

They asked: "What is the imperfect blessings?"

He answered: "The imperfect blessings is to say 'Lord, bless Mohammed,' and keep silent. You must say, 'Lord, bless Mohammed and the family of Mohammed.'" 381

The Love for the Ahl ul-Bayt .4

In His Book, God makes obligatory on everybody to love the Prophet's household as the wage for his conveying the divine mission, and makes it one of his rights:

"(Muhammad), say, "I do not ask you for any payment for my preaching to you except (your) love of (my near) relatives." Whoever achieves virtue will have its merit increased. Allah is All-forgiving and Appreciating. (42:23)" the Ahl ul-Bayt (a) are characterized by all qualities of

admiration and incentives of love and loyalty. They are the choice people, the arguments against the creatures, the ships of salvation, and -preceded by their father the Prophet (s)- the best of everyone who ever lived on this earth in lineage, value, merits, and glories.

It is impossible for the sound conscience to accept to love the Prophet (s) apart from his immaculate family who are worthy of the best concepts of love. To love the Prophet (s), but not his immaculate family, is falsity originated from hypocrisy and meanness. Abdullah ibn

Mas'oud narrated:

One day, we were accompanying the Prophet (s) in one of his journeys when a Beduin with an orotund voice shouted at us, "Mohammed!" "What do you want?" answered the Prophet (s).

"What is it if an individual loves a people but he does not imitate them in deeds?" asked the

Beduin. "One will be attached to the one he loves," replied the Prophet (s). "Mohammed," shouted the Beduin, "Call me to Islam." The Prophet (s) said: "You should declare that there is no god but Allah and that I am the Messenger of Allah, offer the prayer, defray the zakat, fast during the month of Ramadan, and perform the hajj to the Holy House."

"Mohammed," asked the Beduin, "Do you ask for wage for so?" "No," replied the Prophet (s), "I do not take any wage except that you must regard the relatives." "Whose relatives? Mine or yours?" asked the Beduin. "It is my relatives," answered the Prophet (s). The Beduin said: "Give me your hand so that I will declare allegiance to you. No good is expected from him who loves you, but not your relatives." 382

The Imamite 383 Shia have agreed unanimously on the fact that the Immaculate Imams of the Ahl ul-Bayt (a) are the intendeds in the Verse:

"(Muhammad), say, "I do not ask you for any payment for my preaching to you except (your) love of (my near) relatives." Whoever achieves virtue will have its merit increased. Allah is All-forgiving and Appreciating. (42:23)"

A good number of great exegesists and traditionists of the other sects of Islam, such as Ahmed ibn Hanbal, at-Tabarani, and al-Hakim 384 (as quoting the opinion of ibn Abbas³⁸⁵) agreed with the Shia on this fact.

Ibn Hagar, in Chapter One of Section Eleven of as-Sawaa'iq ul-Muhriqa, narrates the following: When the Verse (intended) was revealed, they asked: "God's Messenger, who are your relatives whom we must love and regard?" The Prophet (s) answered: "They are Ali, Fatima, and their two sons." 386

Consider how the Prophet (s) urged people to regard his family through the aforementioned narration. However, many texts concerning the Prophet's assertion on the obligatory love and regard for his relatives are related by the two majors schools of Islam -i.e. Shia and Sunna-.

Regarding the Shia, let us cite the following narrations:

On the authority of his fathers, Imam as-Sadiq narrated that the Prophet (s) said: "He who loves us-the Ahl ul-Bayt should thank Allah for the foremost grace. It is the legal birth. Only will the legal sons love us." 387

Imam al-Baqir narrated on the authority of his father and grandfather that the Prophet (s) said: "The love for my household and me will help in seven situations whose horrors are enormous: at death, in the grave, in the Resurrection, in the Recorded Account, in the Judgment, in the Balance, and on the Path." 388

"Any servant who worships Allah for one thousand years and then is slaughtered (wrongfully) like a sheep, but he attends before Allah bearing malice against us-the Ahl ul-Bayt, Allah will certainly reject all his acts of worship." 389

"On the Day of Resurrection, a servant's feet will not move before he is asked about four matters: He will be asked how he had spent the age of his youth, how he had finished his age, what earnings he had got and where from he had got them and how he had spent them, and he will be also asked about his affection to us-the Ahl ul-Bayt." 390

Al-Hakam ibn Utaiba related the following:

I was with Imam al-Baqir (a) in his house, which was suffocated by his people when an old man came leaning on a stick. As he stopped at the door of the house, he said: "Peace and Allah's mercy and blessings be upon you, son of God's Messenger." Abu Ja'far (a) replied: "Peace and Allah's mercy and blessings be upon you, too." The old man turned his face to the others and said: "Peace be upon you," and each one answered him. He then turned his face towards Imam al-Baqir (a) and said:

"Son of God's Messenger, let me approach you, God may make me your sacrifice. By God I swear, I do love you and love everyone who loves you. By God I swear, my love for you and my love for him who loves you is not purposed for a worldly desire. I also hate and disavow your enemy. By God I swear, my hatred and disavowal of your enemy is not for a previous personal enmity between him and me. By God I swear, I deem lawful all that which you decide as lawful, deem unlawful all that which you decide as unlawful, and expect your Affair. Do you -may God make me your sacrifice- accept me, then?"

Having heard these words, Imam al-Baqir (a) said to him: "Come to me, come to me."

When the man sat next to him, the Imam (a) said: "Old man, my father Ali ibn al-Hussein (a), once, was visited by a man who asked him the same question that you have just put. My father's answer was, 'If you die bearing these beliefs, you will be received by the Messenger of Allah, Ali, al-Hasan, al-Hussein, and Ali ibn al-Hussein (a), and you will be pleased, delighted,

and cheerful. And when your soul reaches your mouth -i.e. about to depart your body-, you will be greeted with rest and happiness by the Honorable Recording Angels. And if you live, Allah will show you delighted things, and you will be with us on the Highest Peak... etc. 391

Regarding narrations that are recorded in the reference books of our Sunni brothers, we cite the following as examples:

Ibn Hanbal and at-Tirmithi, as recorded in as-Sawaa'iq ul-Muhriqa; page 91, narrated the following:

The Prophet (s), once, took al-Hasan and al-Hussein from the hands and said: "He who loves me, these two, their father, and their mother will stand in a rank as same as mine on the Day of Resurrection." 392

Ibn Abbas narrated that the Prophet (s), once, looked in the face of Ali (a) and said: "You are sayyid in this world as well as the world to come. Your disciple is my disciple, and my disciple is Allah's disciple. And your enemy is my enemy, and my enemy is Allah's enemy. Woe unto him who will hate you after my departure." 393

In his book titled Kitab ul-Wilaya, At-Tabari records the following:

Ali (a) said: "Three persons will never love me: the bastards, the hypocrites, and those whom were composed during their mothers' periods of menstruation."

At-Tabarani, in his book titled al-Mu'jam ul-Awsat, as-Suyouti, in his book titled Ihya' ul-Meyt, and ibn Hagar, in his as-Sawaa'iq ul-Muhriqa; Chapter: Urging on the love for the Ahl ul-Bayt, recorded the following hadith:

The Prophet (s) said: "Cling to the love for us-the Ahl ul-Bayt, for anyone who meets Allah bearing love for us will be in Paradise due to our Right of Intercession. I swear by Him Who prevails on my soul, unless our right is recognized, none's deed will be useful (for him)." 394

The term of the Ahl ul-Bayt includes the twelve sinless Imams (a), because such lofty characteristics are deserved by no one at all except them, since they are the representatives of .(God and the auspicious successors of the Prophet (s

RIGHTS OF THE IMAMS

The Immaculate Imams of the Ahl ul-Bayt (a) preceded everyone else in the fields of virtue and perfection and won the loftiest honor of lineage and ranks. They were brought up in the houses of the Prophet's successor, grew up under the shadow of the divine mission, and received the facts and principles of Islam from their great grandfather, and, hence, became the heirs of his knowledge, keepers of his wisdom, protectors of his code, and his auspicious representatives.

For sake of supporting the religion and guarding Muslims, they presented unparalleled examples of jihad-they sacrificed themselves for sake of God until they won martyrdom in the

cause of the belief and principles. They had no fear of anyone's accusations and they were not deceived by the false vanities of this worldly life. Their rights against Muslims are too numerous to be counted. I, however, may refer to some of them in the following points

Recognition of the Imams .1

The two major sects of Islam relate uninterruptedly the following hadith:
"He who dies before he recognizes the Imam of his age is reckoned with those who died before Islam."

Since the Imam is the Prophet's representative who conveys the laws of Sharia, it is obligatory upon every Muslim to recognize him so that the belief and Sharia will be deliberately understood and the true guidance will be pursued. In case a Muslim neglects the recognition of the Imam, he will surely go astray from the course of Islam and, thus, will die as disbeliever and hypocrite.

Returning to the aforementioned hadith, it refers to the necessity of the existence, as well as recognition, of the Imam all over lifetime, because attaching the Imam to the age requires continuity of Imamate and its renewal all over times and ages. In the same manner, many hadiths that are related by both sects of Muslims confirm the necessity of recognizing the Immaculate Imams and taking them as guides. For instance, the Prophet (s) is related to have said:

"With every generation, there must be decent individuals from my household whose mission will be to save this religion from the distortion of the deviants, the alteration of the wrong, and the misrepresentation of the ignorant. Your Imams are your representatives before Allah. You therefore should select proper representatives." 395

"This religion will continue to exist up to the coming of the Hour of Resurrection, and there will exist twelve successors, as leaders—all will be from the tribe of Koreish." 396

This hadith is clear-cut evidence on the unquestionable existence of the twelve Imams of the Ahl ul-Bayt (a) exclusively. Because they were more than this fixed number, neither the Umayyad nor are the Abbasid caliphs included

Loyalty to the Imams .2

Recognition of the Imams is meaningless unless loyalty to them is added. In other words, if recognition of the Imams is bare of loyalty to them, it will be worthless. This is because the Imam, whose mission is to confirm the realities of Sharia, elucidate its rulings, guard it against trickeries and false interpolations of the atheists, and exert all efforts for protecting, supporting, and pleasing Muslims spiritually and materially in this world as well as the life to come, is the

Prophet's representative and the pioneer towards the Islamic idealities. Such being the case, any negligence of the loyalty to the Imam will lead to deviation. This fact was frequently confirmed by the Prophet (s) who, in more than one occasion, declared that the right guidance and triumph will completely accompany the loyalty to the Immaculate Imams, while deviation will be the share of him who leaves and dissents from them:

"The like of my the Ahl ul-Bayt is Noah's ark-he that embarks on it will be saved, while he that falls behind will be sunk." 397 "I will leave with you things that will save you from deviation so long as you adhere to: the Book of Allah, which is a cord extended from the heavens to the earth, and my family-the Ahl ul-Bayt. These two will never depart each other until they join me on the Divine Pool. Consider how you will regard me through them." 398

On the authority of his fathers, Imam as-Sadiq narrated that Amir ul-Mu'minin (a), once, was asked about the meaning of 'my family' in the Prophet's saying, 'I will leave with you the two weighty things: the Book of Allah and my family'?

He answered: "This refers to me, al-Hassan, al-Hussein, and the nine Imams from the descendants of al-Hussein. The ninth will be al-Mahdi al-Qa'im. They will not contradict the Book of Allah, and the Book of Allah will not contradict them until they will join the Prophet (s) on His Pool." 399

This hadith substantiates the fact that the Ahl ul-Bayt and the holy Quran are full twins that never depart each other. Like the Quran's being the constitution and the argument against Muslims, an imam from the Ahl ul-Bayt (a) must exist in every age to hold the position of Muslims' leadership and guide them to prosperity. The Prophet (s) said: "He who desires to live like me, die like me, and be taken to the paradise of eternity of which my Lord has promised me, must be loyal to Ali and his descendants, for they will never take you out of the door of right guidance and will never take you to a door of deviation." 400

Obedience to the Imams .3

God says:

"Believers, obey Allah, His Messenger, and your (qualified) leaders. If you have faith in Allah and the Day of Judgment, refer to Allah and His Messenger concerning matters in which you differ. This would be a more virtuous and a better way of settling differences. (4:59)"

In this holy Verse, God imposes as duty on Muslims to obey the Imams in their capacity as the Prophet's successors, Muslims' leaders, and pioneers of the Islamic ideology. Like imposing as duty the obedience to His Messenger and Him, God imposes the obedience to the Imams. This fact makes clear that they are the true successors of the Prophet (s) and are protected against sins, because no one deserves the absolute obligatory obedience except the sinless leader.

Thus, it is a big mistake to state that 'the qualified leaders' to whom the previous Verse refers includes the other individuals who led the Islamic states, because most of such ones contradicted the instructions of God and the practices of the Prophet (s) and, moreover, went astray from the line of Islam.

Zurara; one of the most celebrated traditionists, relates the following narration that indicates the merit and necessity of loyalty and obedience to the Imams of the Ahl ul-Bayt (a):

Imam al-Baqir (a) said: "The supports of Islam are five: the prayer, zakat, fasting, hajj, and Wilaya." 401 I asked: "Which one of these is the most favorable?" The Imam (a) answered: "It is the Wilaya, because it is the key to the other four supports. The Imam is the guide to these supports... After the recognition of the Imams, the obedience to him is the summit, climax, key, and door to the things. It achieves satisfaction of the All-beneficent Allah, Who says: 'One who obeys the Messenger has certainly obeyed Allah. You have not been sent to watch over those who turn away from you (4:80).'

Verily, if a man spends nights with rites of worship, observes fasting during days, gives his whole wealth as alms, and performs the hajj permanently, but he does not know what is the Wilaya and, hence, does not declare loyalty to Allah's Disciples so that all his deeds must be originated from that Wilaya, Allah will not reward him for anything and he will not be attached to people of faith." 402

Imam as-Sadiq (a) said: "Allah has attached the obedience to the Leaders to the obedience to His Messenger, and attached the obedience to His Messenger to the obedience to Him. Hence, he who neglects the obedience to the Leaders is neglecting the obedience to Allah and the obedience to His Messenger." 403

Fulfillment of the Khums .4

God says:

"Know that whatever property you may gain, one fifth belongs to Allah, the Messenger, the kindred, orphans, the needy and those who need money while on a journey. (8:41)"

The right of Khums is obligatory upon Muslims, because God has passed it as law for the Ahl ul-Bayt and everyone who has family relation with them. It is, moreover, a natural right accepted by reason, conscience, and Islamic Sharia. All governments used to award their officials by giving them pensions that they receive when they become old and their sons inherit, as an expression of appreciating their efforts in fields of serving their nations. Similarly, God imposes on Muslims to pay one-fifth of the profits of their properties -under definite rules- to the descendants of the Prophet (s) as an appreciation of his giant jihad and precious sacrifices for sake of his nation. Besides, the right of Khums is imposed so as to save the descendants

of the Prophet (s) from taking alms and money of the zakat.

Explaining the concept of 'the kindred', Amir ul-Mu'minin (a) said:

"By Allah I swear, it is we whom Allah intended in His saying 'the kindred,' and attached to His Messenger and Himself in his saying:

'Whatever Allah grants to His Messenger (out of the property) of the people of the towns, belongs to Allah, the Messenger, the kindred... (59:7)'"

This is exclusively for us, because Allah did not dedicate a share of alms to us, out of honoring His Messenger and saving us from being fed from dirt of people." 404

Abu Bassir narrated:

I, once, asked Imam al-Baqir (a) about the least thing due to which one may be in Hell. He answered: "It is to consume the properties of the orphan wrongfully. It is we whom are intended by 'the orphan'."

Many disputations, however, occurred between Imamites and the other Islamic sects regarding the question whether 'spoils' refers to the booty of wars particularly or includes the other profits in every respect. To discuss this matter will lead us to go far away from our main topic; namely, ethics. Anyhow, one may refer to the reference books of jurisprudence for more information in .this regard

Kind Treatment to the Prophet's Descendants .5

To attend to, treat kindly, and do good to the descendants of the Immaculate Imams prove one's love for and loyalty to the Imams (a). The Prophet (s), in many occasions, expressed his pleasure and love for anyone who would respect his descendants and, in the same manner, expressed his denial and malice against one who would injure and mistreat them.

The Prophet said: "On the Day of Resurrection, I will intercede for four persons: one who respects my descendants, one who settles their needs, one who helps them meet their needs in exigencies, and one who loves them heartily and verbally." 405 "When I stand on the Praiseworthy Standing (on the Day of Resurrection), I will intercede for the individuals of my umma who committed grand sins, and Allah will pass my intercession. By Allah I swear, I will not intercede for those who injure my descendants." 406

Praising and Publicizing the Imams' Merits .6

The high-minded people used to appreciate the great personalities, for their merits, by several means among which is to use words of praise that express their virtues. Since the Immaculate Imams were the most highborn, the most virtuous, and the foremost in fields of merits and glories, they have been worthy of expressions of love and loyalty and words of admiration.

Besides, the Imams were the relief and shelter of Muslims in ordeals, as they spared no efforts in saving them from despots and wrongdoers. Opposite to the Ahl ul-Bayt (a), people are of two groups: a group shows malice towards them, denies their merits, and pretends not to see their lofty idealities, despite their brightness and beauty.

This group can be described by saying:

He whose mouth is ill and bitter will find bitter even the fresh pure water.

The other group is spellbound by the love and loyalty to them, infatuated with their merits, longs for listening to their virtues, and mentions continually their worth even if this costs to encounter horrible disasters.

To this variance, Amir ul-Mu'minin (a) refers by saying: "If I strike the nasal of the believer with my sword so as to make him hate me, he will not do. And if I pour all the pleasures of this world on the hypocrite so as to make him love me, he will not do. This is because it is a finalized matter that is uttered by the Ummi 407 Prophet (s), who said: 'Ali, a believer will never hate you, and a hypocrite will never love you.'"

Thus, those who have full awareness of the Imams' virtues and have adhered to the loyalty to them competed with each other in praising and publicizing their traits as expressions of their true love, without anticipating the Imams' worldly awards. In return, the Imams (a) used to receive the eulogists so warmly, appreciating for them their profuse emotions and nice eulogies, and used to award them by means of charity and prayers.

Saa'id; the servant of al-Kumayt-the famous poet, narrated the following: Accompanying my master; al-Kumayt, we, once, visited Ali ibn al-Hussein (a). Before him, al-Kumayt said: "I have eulogized you hoping that it will be a means that takes me near to the Messenger of God (s)."

Al-Kumayt, then, recited his poem. When he finished, the Imam (a) said to him: "I cannot reward you properly, but God will surely reward you properly."

The Imam then supplicated to God to forgive al-Kumayt and could gather for him four hundred thousand dirhams.

Al-Kumayt said: "If you have given me a single daniq, 408 it will be great honor for me. I, however, wish you would give me pieces of your clothes through which I will seek blessings."

Thus, the Imam (a) gave him his clothes and supplicated: "O Allah my Lord, al-Kumayt has done well for the sake of Your Messenger's family when others have fallen behind, and declared the right that others have concealed. Hence, I implore to You to give him nice life, make him die as shahid, show him Your rewarding very soon, and grant him the great rewards thereupon. I am too short to reward him properly."

All his lifetime, al-Kumayt felting the blessings of the Imam's supplication. 409

Diibil al-Khuzaai; the famous poet, narrated the following:

One day, in Khurasan, I visited Ali ibn Musa ar-Ridha (a) who asked me to recite some of my new poem. Hence, I went on reciting my poem, which contained the following Verse: If they -the Ahl ul-Bayt- are oppressed, they extend towards their oppressors hands that are too lofty to oppress others. When he heard this verse, Imam ar-Ridha (a) wept so heavily that he fainted. A servant who was standing behind the Imam asked me to stop, and I did. After a while, the Imam (a) asked me to repeat the poem. When I recited the very verse, the Imam (a) wept so heavily that he fainted, and the servant asked me to stop, and I did. After a while, the Imam (a) asked me to repeat my poem. When I finished, he expressed his admiration by saying, three times, 'Well done.'

The Imam then ordered to give me ten thousand dirhams on which his name was pressed. I was the first one who would receive such dirhams. Besides, his family members gave me many jewels.

When I arrived in Iraq, I sold these dirhams, each with ten ordinary dirhams, to the Shia. Hence, I could gain one hundred thousand dirhams, which was the first sum I had ever gained. 410

Pilgrimage to the Imams' Shrine .7

To visit the holy shrines of the Imams and to greet them are within the rights against their adherents, as an expression of loyalty to them. The Imams are the same whether they are alive or dead. Referring to this aspect, Sheikh al-Mufid said: ((After their death, the Prophet and the Imams of the Ahl ul-Bayt have full acquaintance with their adherents' manners in this life that they acquire by God. Moreover, they can hear the words of him who speaks to them in their holy shrines. This is also an honor that God confers upon them so as to distinguish them from others. Many narratives have proven that they can also hear the words that are addressed to them wherever they come from. All the Imamite jurists believe in so. As a proof, yet general, on the authenticity of this belief, we cite God's saying: "Do not think of those slain for the cause of Allah as dead. They are alive with their Lord and receive sustenance from Him. They are pleased with the favor from their Lord and have received the glad news that those who follow them will have no fear nor will they be grieved that they will be rewarded with bounties and favors from their Lord and that Allah will not neglect the reward of the true believers. (3:169-71)"

Telling the story of the believer of the Pharaoh's family, God says: "(Having been murdered by the disbelievers) he was told to enter paradise (wherein he said), "Would that people knew how my Lord has granted me forgiveness and honor" (36:26-7)."

The Prophet (s), too, said:

"I will certainly hear him who greets me near my tomb, and I will surely respond the salaams of him who greets me from any place." Finally, many texts said by the Imams of the Ahl ul-Bayt (a) deal with this topic in details.))

Uninterruptedly, there are tens of narrations related to the Ahl ul-Bayt (a) with regard to the great rewarding and grand credit obtained due to the pilgrimage to the Imams' shrines.

Amir ul-Mu'minin (a) narrated: We served the Prophet (s), who was visiting us, some of the milk, butter, and dates that Ummu Ayman had given to us. After he had had some, he moved to a corner to offer a prayer. During the last prostration of that prayer, he wept very heavily. As we used to respect and honor him greatly, none of us could ask him. Al-Hussein then approached him and said: "Father, the greatest pleasure that we had ever felt was at these moments when you visit us. But we also felt great sorrow when we noticed you weeping. What for are you weeping?" "Son," answered the Prophet (s), "The angel Gabriel has just come to me to foretell that you all will be killed in different areas of this earth." "Father," asked al-Hussein, "What will be the reward of him who visits us in such different areas?" The Prophet (s) answered: "There will be groups of my umma visiting your tombs for seeking blessings. I engage myself with the pledge that I, on the Day of Resurrection, will come to save them from the horrors of the Hour of Resurrection that they will suffer because of their sins. Allah will surely make Paradise their abode." 411

Imam as-Sadiq (a) said: "He who visits one of us is as same as him who visits the Messenger of Allah (s)." 412

Imam al-Kadhim (a) said: "On the day of Resurrection, there will stand on the Divine Throne four individuals from the past generations and four from the later generations. Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus are the four individuals from the past generations. Mohammed, Ali, al-Hasan, and al-Hussein are the four individuals from the later generations. Then, food will be served. Those who visited the shrines of the Imams will be invited to that food. The visitors of my son's shrine will be the foremost and the most favorable." 413

Imam ar-Ridha (a) said: "The followers and Shia of each Imam are involved in a pledge that they should fulfill for him. The pilgrimage to the Imam's shrine is a sign of the perfection of fulfilling that pledge. Hence, the Imam, on the Day of Resurrection, will intercede to him who visits his shrine out of desire and credence to the Imam." 414