The Deputies of the Imam of the Age Hazrat Hujjat ibnil Hasan (.al-Askari (a.t.f.s

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Allah's mercy is infinite. None else is more gracious than the Almighty to His creatures. Even the vast love of a mother for her child is just a minor ray of endless love which the Creator has for His creatures. When a mother can never see her offspring in any trouble, then how can the ?immense mercy of Allah see His creatures punished in Hell

The Best Creation

Allah created man as his best creation. He made man the most balanced and granted him superiority over every other creation. He provided for all his requirements. He granted the power of "Freewill" to man, and also gifted him "Intelligence" so that he may use the bounty of "Freewill" most appropriately.

He gave man "Physical instincts" and also decorated him with comprehensive inclinations towards "True guidance". As the Satan undertook the task of igniting the physical instincts, Allah set up the system of guidance through the Divine Messengers, Leaders and Imams (a.s.). As Allah is thoroughly acquainted with man He has made a comprehensive arrangement for his guidance right from the very first person who was sent on this earth as His Prophet and Guide. The people can thus never have an excuse for their deviation. One who treads the path .of error does so of his very willingness

Man is Free

Allah has created man free. Freedom is meaningful only if one has options to choose. That is, select between the good and the evil. In absence of choice when one is forced to tread a particular path, freedom becomes totally meaningless. The Holy Quran mentions about this :reality thus

وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ

[*And We guided him to the two ways*"[1 "

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا

[*Surely We have guided him to the way either: he may be thankful or ungrateful.*"[2]

فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا. قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّاهَا. وَقَدْ خَابَ مَن دَسَّاهَا

Then He inspired it to understand what is right and wrong for it; He will indeed be successful" *who purifies it, And he will indeed fail who corrupts it.*"[3]

Allah has granted man great bounties that He has not given anyone else. These are intelligence, wisdom and capacity to think. Among men are some who have been endowed with caliphate, messengership, prophethood and divine leadership. Consequently man will also be tested in the same proportion. One who succeeds in this test will then be granted unimaginable .rewards

An Examination

Bestowals are accompanied by free-will and a test. The test is followed by either a great elevation or an infinite lowliness caused by the incorrect application of one's free-will.

Allah had granted innumerable bounties to Satan. He accorded him a high status among the angels due to his excessive worship. A creature made from the fire thus moved around with creatures made from light. This enhancement of the status was followed by a test. Allah commanded him to prostrate before a creature made from soil. The angels were the perfect servants of the Lord.

They carried out His every command. Without paying attention to the earthly creature they focused on the divine command and immediately prostrated. They succeeded and were declared His nearest attendants. The Satan on the other hand focused on the apparent and ignoring the divine command refused to prostrate. Allah then expelled him from His attendance and the company of the angels. From the lofty heights he was disgraced to the lowest of depths.

At that moment the Satan exceeded all limits of decency and his misbehavior in divine :presence is recorded thus in the Holy Quran

قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا لَكَ أَلاَّ تَكُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِينَ. قَالَ لَمْ أَكُن لِّأَسْجُدَ لِبَشَرٍ خَلَقْتَهُ مِن صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُونٍ. قَالَ فَاخْرُجْ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّكَ رَجِيمٌ. وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ اللَّعْنَةَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ. قَالَ رَبِّ فَأَنظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ. قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنظَرِينَ. إِلَى يَومِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ. قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَآ أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأُزَيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ وَلأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ. إِلاَّ عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ. قَالَ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ عَلَيَّ مُسْتَقِيمٌ. إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ إِلاَّ مَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ

He said: O Iblis! What excuses have you that you are not with those who make obeisance? He" said: I am not such that I should make obeisance to a mortal whom Thou hast created of the essence of black mud fashioned in shape.

He said: Then get out of it, for surely you are driven away: And surely on you is curse until the Day of Judgment. He said: My Lord! Then respite me till the time when they are raised. He said: So surely you are of the respited ones Till the period of the time made known. He said: My Lord! Because Thou hast made life evil to me, I will certainly make (evil) fair-seeming to them on earth, and I will certainly cause them all to deviate Except Thy servants from among them, the devoted ones. He said: This is a right way with Me: Surely as regards My servants, you have no authority, over them except those who follow you of the deviators."[4]

:In Surah Sad after recording this incident in some other words, it is mentioned that

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

[*He said: Then by Thy Might I will surely make them live an evil life, all"*[5]

The Satanic Conspiracy

These verses amply clarify that the Satan desires to deviate everyone and make them his companions in hell.

Deviating someone means to take him away from his Lord, his divine religion and his divine leaders. It implies non adherence to divine laws and considering the permitted as prohibited and vice-versa.

It leads to man's deprivation from divine guidance. Deviation entails the non-establishment of divine government in this world, preoccupation of Allah's creatures in oppression - instead of righteousness - and opposing divine commands. It is the involvement in polytheism instead of Divine Unity, denial instead of submission and hypocrisy in place of sincere belief.

Swearing on divinity itself the accursed Satan has firmly decided to misguide all men. He aims to spread deviation in every corner of the earth. Such is the scheme of Satan

The Arrangement of Allah

Consequently, Allah made a comprehensive arrangement for man's guidance. Regarding the :Holy Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.a.), the Holy Quran declares

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا

[*Say: O people! Surely I am the Apostle of Allah to you all*"][6]

وَأُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ لِأُنذِرَكُم بِهِ وَمَن بَلَغَ

This Quran has been revealed to me that with it I may warn you and whomsoever it" [*reaches*"][7]

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلاَ رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

[*And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds*"][8]

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَى وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ

He it is Who sent His Apostle with guidance and the religion of truth, that He might cause it to" *prevail over all religions, though the polytheists may be averse.*"[9]

Likewise, there are many more verses. Hence, it is clear that while the Satan desires deviation for all, Allah plans for the preeminence of the religion of Islam throughout the world. The Satan considers all means permissible for achieving his nefarious aims. Homicides, plundering, falsehood, accusations, and slander -he is capable of anything.

The Divine representative on the other hand does not budge even slightly from the boundaries of the holy law for achieving his divine goals. He is steadfastly attached to the divine commandments in attaining his objectives. He always maintains the highest standards of morals and ethics in all his dealings.

Thus, on one hand there are all possible modes of achieving the reprehensible intentions and on the other along with a holy aim there is also self-discipline in limiting the means to only .what has been divinely permitted

The Final Victory is for the Virtuous

In addition there is another glaring difference due to which the Divine Representative is always content even in the worst of the circumstances and the Satan and his allies are always agitated despite accessing all means to achieve their evil intentions. This difference is in the following :Quranic declaration

وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

And the final end is for the pious"[10]"

Thus, finally success will be for those who are pious and virtuous. The outcome of the age old

battle of guidance and deviation will result in the evident victory of guidance. Apparently the Satan has got an upper hand until now. This is so because; the Divine Representatives have always invited the people towards the religion with a freedom of choice. They desire that the true religion should be accepted by all exercising their own free-will and preference without the involvement of any force or duress.

For the people to consciously choose guidance and totally hand over their emotions to the will of Allah is undoubtedly a difficult but an extremely rewarding task. If man could only fathom .the greatness of this, he would certainly consider these difficulties a great bounty

The Absence of Compulsion

The world is a collection of causes and effects. Everything runs its own course like a seed which gradually matures into a tree. The world is not governed by miracles. If it was so none would ever be deviated. Allah has destined that man should traverse the path of guidance as well as deviation by his own intent.

Satan adopted the path of rebellion right from the beginning. If he would have felt any remorse for his action and sought forgiveness, it was possible that the merciful Lord may have excused him. Jettisoning the approach of seeking forgiveness he adopted the path of opposition and conflict. He started creating problems for the divine representatives right from the start.

He ignited the fire of jealousy in the heart of Qaabeel provoking him to kill Haabeel. He continued his rebellious approach inciting Firaun, Hamaan, Namrud, Qarun, Abu Lahab, Abu Jahl, Akramah, Abu Sufiyan, Bani Ummayah, Bani Abbas ….and so on. All of them had a common agenda: “Extinguish the light of Allah”. If the sun of guidance were to set, the darkness of misguidance would spread. The enemies of Guidance would then get a free hand to popularize deviations.

The divine representatives were one after the other killed by them. Finally the chain of divine prophets concluded in the most beloved and illustrious persona of the Holy Prophet of Islam, Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.w.a.).

Satan tried his level best to extinguish this illustrious light of guidance in Mecca itself. All the tribes jointly schemed to assassinate the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). However Allah foiled all their plans. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) escaped from the devious disbelievers who had besieged him just as the moon emerges from behind the clouds. He (s.a.w.a.) had hardly settled down in Medina, that he was confronted with a series of battles. This sequence continued till the very end of his earthly life.

Bravely despite all odds the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) continued his efforts which culminated in

his (s.a.w.a.) declaring the mastership and absolute leadership of Hazrat Ali (a.s.) after him (a.s.) at Ghadeer al-Khumm. This declaration marked the completion of his efforts in the propagation of guidance.

The verse of "completion of religion" in the Holy Quran is a living testimony to the fact that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) completed his job of conveying Allah's message to the people. Divine messenger-ship was now concluded. The announcement of the mastership of Hazrat Ali (a.s.), in addition to completing the religion also became a guarantee for its protection till the day of Judgment.

This announcement crushed the hopes of Satan and all the enemies of Allah and His religion. This was more severe than the announcement of prophethood as then they had hoped that with the conclusion of Holy Prophet's (s.a.w.a.) life even his message will be gradually forgotten. The proclamation of Hazrat Ali's (a.s.) leadership dashed all their schemes.

They now restlessly started awaiting the demise of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Purposefully they ignored the clear and forceful instructions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) for joining the army of Usama. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had informed Hazrat Ali (a.s.) about the conspiracies which will occur after his death. Hazrat Ali (a.s.) was well aware of the series of suppression that will follow the demise of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

The hidden hatred will manifest itself. It was however crucial to make the people submit to guidance with their own free-will. Hence forcing himself upon them was totally ruled out. The people ignoring the clear instructions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) embraced the decorated worldly pleasures offered to them by the accursed Satan. Then for the sake of these material benefits they martyred Allah's divine proofs one after another.

The Neglect of Divine Guides

For the purpose of continuing divine guidance after the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) Allah had destined only 12 guides till the Day of Judgment. The first of whom is Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and the last is Hazrat Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). The enemies of Allah and his religion never allowed anyone of these to live freely. Allah had appointed 12 Imams (a.s.); however these worldly worshippers and enemies of divine light martyred eleven of them. The moment destined for the Day of Judgment was still to arrive. Hence, Allah protected the last guiding sun from His enemies by placing him in occultation.

Allah does not desire compelling in matters of religion. Also it is not His practice to use miracles every time. Hence it was necessary to protect the divine guide to exhaust the enemies and gradually prepare the people to support the Universal Government.

This idea can also be elaborated as follows:

1. Allah revealed the religion of Islam for the guidance and success of mankind.
2. He declared the Universal and Final Messenger-ship of the Holy Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.a.).
3. The deputation of Prophets (a.s.) and the promulgation of divine laws were with the aim of establishing justice throughout the world so that no one is oppressed. A person does not oppress his own self by adhering to satanic ideologies or others by oppressing them.
4. In light of His divine wisdom Allah has made Hazrat Hujjat ibnil Hasan al-Askari (a.t.f.s.) responsible for the establishment of a system of justice by fully eradicating all forms of oppression. Hence we find traditions mentioning about him (a.t.f.s.) thus:

يَمْلَأُ الْاَرْضَ قِسْطًا وَ عَدْلاً بَعْدَ مَا مُلِئَتْ ظُلْمًا وَ جَوْرًا

He will fill the earth with equity and justice as it would be fraught with oppression and tyranny."

5. It is the divine will that the people are not forced to accept true guidance but they accept it voluntarily.
6. In the last 1400 years Allah sent 12 Muhammads or 12 Alis or 12 Hasans or 12 Husains…..for the guidance and prosperity of mankind. All of them were alike in their superiority, knowledge and understanding. They were the evident chiefs of the entire creation. However none was given his due by the people!

Had they been cared for, then during the battle of Siffeen when victory was just round the corner, Hazrat Ali (a.s.) would not have been forced to ask his commander Janab Malik al-Ashtar (r.a.) to return. Had they been cared for, Hazart Ali (a.s.) would not have been forced to been isolated. Had they been cared for Hazrat Imam Hasan (a.s.) would not have signed a treaty with Mu'awiyah.

Had they been cared for, an incongruous person like Yazid would never become the Caliph leading to the merciless martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Husain (a.s.). Had they been cared for, the tyrant Haroon Rashid would never be able to arrest Hazrat Imam Musa Kazim (a.s.). Had they been cared for, Hazrat Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) and Hazrat Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) would not be exiled from Medina and lived under governmental scrutiny in Samarra.

Had these arks of salvation, true guides, protectors of true religion, pointers to the straight path and the equivalent of the Holy Quran been cared for, and had they been accorded the status and respect due to them by the people, the oppressors would never have dared to execute them. But alas!

7. Allah in the light of His divine wisdom decreed the number of guides after the Holy Prophet

(s.a.w.a.) to be only twelve. Eleven of these were martyred due to the carelessness of the people.

8. The promise which Allah had made to His beloved Prophet (s.a.w.a.) that He would make his religion supreme over all others in the world was still not fulfilled.

9. Hence, the available options now were:

a. Either this last Imam (a.s.) should also be made apparent for the people to oppress him and get him martyred as they had done with the previous eleven Imams (a.s.).

b. Or the system of this world should be changed for the sake of this last Proof. Then if the people attack him with the sword it would cause him no harm. If he is poisoned it would be futile. If arrows are thrown towards him they will be in vain. Such a change in the universal system would render the free-will of the people ineffective is against the practice of Allah.

c. Or this last proof should be taken out of this world. Then the entire system of the world would become inside out, as the presence of a Divine Proof on the face of the earth is a must for its continued existence.

d. Or this Proof continues his abode on the earth. The Divine system will therefore be protected. The Proof lives in Occultation without being recognized by the people. He would continue to stay among the people and meet them but his identity would remain unknown to them. This arrangement should continue till the people out of their own free-will are not ready to accept his commands. This arrangement is called "occultation" (غیبت).

Janab Khawaja Nasir at-at-Tusi (r.a.) in his book 'Tajrid ul-Itiqad' mentions this reality very subtly as follows:

وُجُوْدُهُ لُطْفٌ، و تَصرُّفُهُ لُطْفٌ آخِرُ وَ غَيْبَتُهُ مِنَّا

His existence is Allah's grace, his sovereignty is another grace and his occultation is due to us"

Hence, Occultation of Hazrat Wali Asr (a.t.f.s.) was a need of the situation. Since, Allah's knowledge is all encompassing, He knew that a sudden occultation would put the people in doubt. Hence on account His vast mercy, He decreed the mention of Occultation along with the Imamat of the last Proof. This would ensure the acceptance of occultation by the believers. Therefore, traditions mention abundantly about his (a.s.) Imamat as well as Occultation and even the conditions during Occultation.

These traditions also clarify the two types of Occultation:

1. The minor Occultation and

2. The major Occultation.

The minor occultation is remembered as ‘Gaibat al-Sughra’ and the major occultation is called ‘Gaibat al-Kubra’.

The specialty of the minor occultation is that though the common people could not have direct access to the Imam (a.s.), some special deputies were appointed by Imam (a.s.) who were mediators between Imam (a.s.) and the people. A more detailed discussion about them follows in the forthcoming pages. The period of the minor Occultation was for 69 years, from 260 A.H. till 329 A.H.

The Major Occultation started in 329 A.H. when the last special deputy Ali ibn Muhammad Samari (r.a.) expired, which continues till today.

We sincerely pray that our good deeds contribute to the reduction in the length of Major Occultation and Hazrat (a.t.f.s.) reappears.

In this Major Occultation though Hazrat (a.t.f.s.) is hidden from our eyes but he does neglect us. He protects us despite our deficiencies in fulfilling his rights.

Hazrat (a.t.f.s.) has not left us unattended in this major Occultation. He (a.t.f.s.) has entrusted us to the religious scholars of the religion of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). This is discussed more in detail under the heading “The Protectors of Wilayat”.

Ultimately a day will definitely come when the Major Occultation concludes. The descendent of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), Hazrat Hujjat (a.t.f.s.) will reappear. Brave and sincere companions will assist him in establishing the government of Allah on this earth. “Polytheism” will be demolished.

Tyranny will finally end. Truth and Justice will be widespread. No one will have to bear even an iota of oppression. The true religion will triumph over all other religions and school of thoughts. Centuries of efforts of Satan and his companions will become worthless. All the schemes of Satan will fail. The truth will be victorious. The Islam of Ghadeer will prevail. The Satan will finally be executed. People will then realize the true Divine promise.

“In the hope of that enlightened day whose dawn is near, tell the heart- don’t fear”

This book is a collection of articles from the previous Sha’ban issues of “Al-Qa’im: Al-Muntazar”. Though there were a number of representatives of Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) in the minor Occultation, only four of them were privileged with a special status. These were the most reliable in front of Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.).

They are referred to as the “Nuwwab al-Arbaa’”- The Four Special Representatives. Their brief biography are presented in this book. These highlight their pure service in the way of their master Hazrat Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) and also the benevolence and respect granted to them by Hazrat Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.).

The Major Occultation began after the demise of the fourth representative Janab Ali ibn Muhammad as-Samari (r.a.). In the Major Occultation Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) does not have any special representative. In this period Hazrat Imam az-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) has delegated this responsibility to the respected and learned “Fuqaha” and “Mujtahids”. Thus, today it is our imperative responsibility to respect and honor these “Fuqaha” and “Mujtahids”. The last article titled “Protectors of Wilayat” expounds this responsibility in detail.

May Allah send His vast and innumerable blessings upon the Holy Ahlul Bayt (a.s.), as only He can send. May He enumerate us among the slaves of the slaves of the Holy Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). May He grant us the great opportunity of contributing towards the preparation of the reappearance of Hazrat Qa’im Ali Muhammad (a.t.f.s).

Notes:

[1] Surah Balad (90): Verse 10

[2] Surah Dahr (76): Verse 3

[3] Surah Shams (91): Verses 8-10

[4] Surah Hijr (15): Verses 32-42

[5] Surah Sad (38): Verse 82

[6] Surah A’raaf (7): Verse 158

[7] Surah An’aam (6): Verse 19

[8] Surah Anbiya (21): Verse 107

[9] Surah Tauba (9): Verse 33

[10] Surah A’raaf (7): Verse 128