

Arba-een lecture: 10 Dec 2014.

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Arba-een represents the 40th day after the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (a.s) and the Shuhadaa of Karbala on the day of Ashura. The world witnesses at this point in time an influx of millions of lovers of Imam Hussain (a.s) from around the world (including Cape Town and other parts of South Africa) into Karbala to send salutations on Imam Hussain (a.s) and to re-pledge their allegiance to his mission through pledging allegiance to the Imam of Our Time, Imam Mehdi (a.s).

In the recent past, so much un-truth has been expressed about Imam Mehdi (a.s) which makes it necessary to dedicate some time to re-educate ourselves regarding the Imam of Our Time.

MAHDAVIAT IN QURAN

The Concept of Mahdaviat wherein the world is awaiting the arrival of a Saviour is a Quranic concept that cannot be denied. The following is a brief list of verses highlighting this concept from which crucial lessons can be derived:

1. Surah as-Saf Verse 9: "It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion, although those who associate others with Allah dislike it."

2. Surah at-Tauba Verse 33: “It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion, although they who associate others with Allah dislike it.”

3. Surah al-Fath Verse 28: “It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion. And sufficient is Allah as Witness .”

4. Surah an-Nur Verse 55: “Allah has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession [to authority] upon the earth just as He granted it to those before them and that He will surely establish for them [therein] their religion which He has preferred for them and that He will surely substitute for them, after their fear, security, they worship Me, not associating anything with Me”

5. Surah al-Qasas Verse 5: “And We desired to bestow a favor upon those who were oppressed in the land and make them Imams and make them the inheritors .”

6. Surah al-Anbiyaa Verse 105: “And We certainly have already written in the book [of Psalms] after the Reminder that the Earth shall be inherited by My righteous servants .”

7. Surah as-Saf Verse 8: “They want to extinguish the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah will perfect His light, although the disbelievers dislike it.”

Though there are many more verses on the topic, we will restrict ourselves to the following lessons derived from the verses quoted above:

1. Islam is destined to be victorious as it will be “Manifested over all religion.”
2. This will manifest in a manner where only the religion of Islam will be practised in the world, hence Islam being “manifest over ALL religion.” There will be no other religion remaining like Christianity, Judaism, etc.
3. The future belongs to the oppressed, hence they will be the ones who are the “Imams” on the earth and inherit the earth.

This victory will be more than an ideological victory, which was already achieved by the Prophet (sawa) during his time with the revelation of the Quran. The ideological victory will be perfected through the establishment of “people of Imaan and good action” as rulers of the whole earth. This establishment will result in no more fear existing as security will be established in the earth. This security will result in true freedom whereby nobody will be enslaved to worshipping “other than Allah” and thus the worship of “only Allah” will be established throughout this earth.

5. The promise of this victory wherein the earth will be inherited by the “Pious Servants of Allah” in this all-encompassing fashion is something unavoidable as it was prescribed in the Holy Scriptures of previous Prophets of Allah.

The above lessons clearly indicate to us that the future of Islam is an optimistic one. Islam is gradually moving in the direction of the achievement of this victory. This view of Mahdaviat is contrary to the view that “the best of Nations were the first 3 generations of Muslims” and thereafter the Muslim World will experience a downward spiral into an absolute abyss. Whereas at times it may seem that we are moving backward, with the passage of time, Islam is actually continually on the rise.

COMPLETE VICTORY OF ISLAM HAS NOT YET BEEN ACHIEVED

The most critical question to ponder over is that though the Quran promises the above mentioned victory, we do not see it having been materialised in the history of Islam to date.

At present, with the Muslim population reaching around 1.7 billion people, we cannot even stop a small country like Israel from bullying us and the World which is a clear indication of our hopeless state of affairs as an ummah.

Some may say that Muslims were in power in the past, but the various criteria of the verses quoted were certainly not all materialised. In short it can conclusively be concluded that the power was short lived, yet the Quranic promise is that Islam will be “manifest over ALL religion”.

Some may say it’s the message of Islam that is “manifest over ALL religion”. A simple reality check will indicate to you that at present Islam is the MOST MISUNDERSTOOD religion in the world.

It is interesting to know that most of the classical Sunni Mufasssireen (commentators of Quran) indicated that the verses mentioned above actually do refer to the final victory of Islam. However, most of these scholars DO NOT indicate HOW that victory will be achieved.

SHIA VIEW OF HOW VICTORY OF ISLAM WILL BE ACHIEVED

The School of Ahlul Bait (a.s) from the very beginning has been clear that this ultimate victory of Islam will be achieved by Imam Mehdi (a.s). This School thus takes an unavoidable and undeniable Promise of Allah and gives the details of the actualisation of this Promise which is available in the books of hadith of both major Schools of Thought – Sunni and Shia. It should be further stated that these ahadith which provide the details of the Mission of Imam Mehdi (a.s) are so numerous that they reach a status of being “mutawaatir” (overwhelmingly reported and thus undeniable).

Below we quote a small selection of these ahadith:

1. "Whoever dies without having "marifat"/knowledge of the Imam of his Time dies the death of Jahiliyyah (Kufr/Disbelief)."

This is a famous hadith which necessitates that in every Time there should be an Imam so that people can have knowledge of that Imam. It's not possible to be required to have knowledge of someone who does not exist! It is often said that Shia believe in a non-existent 12th Imam called Mehdi (a.s). The issue is that if an Imam during our Time is non-existent, then this authentic hadith makes no sense.

Some may say that this Imam is the ruler of your time, like King Abdullah in Saudi Arabia, or the King of Qatar or Emirates, etc. This argument makes no sense when considering how knowledge of any of these rulers is the criterion for dying with belief, whereas many of them are not even proper practising Muslims.

2. "Mehdi is from us Ahlul Bait (a.s)".

This is a most widely reported hadith that gives the exact lineage of where the Mehdi will come from.

3. "Mehdi is from the progeny of Fatima (a.s)"

This is another widely reported hadith which specifies the direct lineage to the Prophet (sawa) through Lady Fatima (a.s)

4. "How will you feel when the son of Maryam (a.s) will be with you i.e. Jesus (a.s) and the Imam of Prayers will be from your side".

This widely reported hadith clears some of the key misconceptions about Imamate, the most notable being that Shia believe that their Imams have a higher status than Prophets. Imam Mehdi (a.s) is the one accepted by both major Schools of Thought to be the one that will lead a

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great Prophet like Jesus (a.s) (ulul atham) in Prayer as well as Prophet Kithr (a.s). How does one understand this reality other than to conclude that Imamate as a station is HIGHER than Prophethood??

And there are various other ahadith which say that the name of Mehdi (a.s) is also Muhammad and many many other details about his mission and the accomplishment thereof.

MISSING LINK IN MUSLIM UNDERSTANDING OF IMAM MEHDI (a.s)

The above analysis very clearly illustrates two things:

1. The Philosophy of the belief in Imam Mehdi (a.s) is a Quranic one wherein all Muslims believe in the final victory of Islam.

2. The identity of the one who will bring this victory is Imam Mehdi (a.s) whose identity is clearly described in the ahadith of the Prophet (sawa)

The question then is this: "Why are most people still confused about who is Imam Mehdi (a.s) and what is his mission?" The answer to this question is that though the classical Sunni scholars independently attest to the above mentioned analysis, they do not link the personality of Imam Mehdi (a.s) to the verses which promise the victory of Islam in the future. This missing link

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causes a completely different outlook to the 2 Schools view of the future of Islam, where Shia have an optimistic view of the future of Islam and the overall Sunni School has a pessimistic view of the future of Islam.