

SEEKING MEDIATION OF IMAM MAHDI.

To seek a mediator implies to gain proximity to an individual in order to achieve one's objective through the mediator's recommendation and arbitration. Arabic litterateurs define mediation (tawassul) as Translation, **'When he sought proximity with him through his actions, he aspired to gain his mediation.'** (Lisanul Arab vol. 11, page 724).

Mediation in the light of Quran and traditions: Allah declares in the Quran ' O you who believe! Be (careful of your duty to) Allah and seek nearness to Him and strive hard in His way that you may succeed.' (Maidah : 35)

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) in exposition of this ayat narrates **'Acquire proximity with Allah through the Imam.'** (Tafsire Qummi, vol. 1 page 168).

Janabe Fatima Zahra (s.a.) proclaims in her sermon, **'Glorify Allah, whose majesty and supremacy command glorification and veneration. And it has been made mandatory upon the residents of the heavens and the earth to seek a mediator towards Allah, and we Ahle Bayt (a.s.) are the mediators appointed by Allah upon His creatures.'** (Sharhe Nahjul Balagha, vol. 2, page 211, by Ibne Abil Hadid).

Thus Quran and traditions alike, exhort the Muslims to secure some arbitrator in order to gain proximity with Allah, and achieve eternal deliverance. Why seek mediation of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)? Any Shia is bound to think, 'What is the rationale for us to seek mediation of our Imam?' There are several facets to this question.

1. The mandate of Quran and traditions Quran proclaims Translation, **'O you who believe! Be patient and excel in patience and maintain contact, and be careful oi your duty towards Allah, that you may be successful.'** (Ale Imran : 199

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) by way of elucidation of the above ayat narrates, Translation, **'Maintain a special affinity with your Imam.'** (Noorus Saqalain, vol. 1 page 426}

Every Shia must maintain close ties with the Imam of his era. When weighed from the aspect of Arabic grammar, the word,) is based on "Rabatoo" which implies co-operation and mutual consent, i.e. if a Shia maintains proximity with the Imam of his time, then Inshallah the Imam will also reciprocate that feeling of affinity and consanguinity. Inshallah Imam's grace and clemency on us will multiply. To observe this bidding of Imam Sadiq (a.s.) is crucial, and we must spar no effort to secure that feeling of affiliation and proximity with our Imam (a.s.) in order: to gain Our Imam's (a.s.) special attention.

2. The status of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) Traditions accredit Imam (a.s.) with an august and majestic standing. In Dua Nudbah we recite, 'Imam (a.s.) is that door of Allah's mercy that we have to access so as to reach Allah.' He is a path towards Allah's satisfaction and grace. He possesses powers of intercession vis-à-vis the Almighty.

He is among the Names of Allah, through which we have been commanded to seek mediation and arbitration.

As the Quran declares, (Translation, **'And Allah's are the best names, therefore call on Him thereby.'** (Araaf : 180) An exegesis of this ayat reveals a tradition from the Aimmah (a.s.), viz., **'By Allah! We are the best names (asmaae husnaa) through which Allah has commanded the Muslims to invoke Him.'** (Mikyalul Makarim, vol. 1 page 271)

Imam always responds to pleas of help and succour, as has been elucidated in his Ziarat. He never rebuffs the distressed and frightened. Indeed he is the means for the redemption of sins. He alone is the defender of the weak and oppressed. And this is the purport of the following statement of Ziarate Jameaa, 'One who has associated himself with you has triumphed, and the one who has sought asylum with you is protected.'

3. Observe this practice of turning to their chief in moments of anguish or when there is a fear of strike from the enemies. In fact this has also been the custom of the believers, who in times of distress and difficulties have left their affairs completely in the hands of their Imam (a.s.), and have sought redressal from him alone. As a matter of fact, among the responsibilities of Imam (a.s.), is that he provides refuge to the hapless and a retreat to the outcast. And in this regard it is observed that if a subject of any King is in distress and is confronted with a calamity or affliction then rationale suggests he should approach his leader, ruler, provided of course, the latter is virtuous and capable. Otherwise, then he will be the subject of intense criticism and censure. And likewise, if in our moments of indigence and grief, we turn to someone other than our Imam for assistance, then we have forsaken one of the crucial obligations enjoined by Allah upon the Muslims and run the risk of incurring His wrath. That crucial obligation has been expounded in **'Then disperse abroad and in the land and seek of Allah's grace.'** (Jumaa : 10) By way of elucidation of the above verse Jabir b. Abdullah (r.a.) narrates from Masoomeen (a. s.), 'The grace of Allah mentioned in the ayat alludes to the Imams (a.s.). (Mikyaalul Makaarim vol. 2, pg. 273)

Besides, in the Quran, Allah commands us to enter a house only through its door. Likewise, Allah has designated an Imam in every era, through which the Muslims are commanded to 'enter' into Allah's grace and mercy. And the fact that the Imam (a. s.) of this era is in occultation does not in any way diminish his mediation and arbitration prowess vis-à-vis Allah; for an Imam is Allah's emissary on this earth, and to that extent there is no difference between an apparent Imam and a hidden one. Imam (a.s.) is aware of everything that goes around as he himself proclaims, **'Certainly, we with our knowledge are cognizant of all your affairs and your dealings are never concealed from us.'** (Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 53, page 175). In another tradition Imam (a.s.) asserts, Translation, **'We are never neglectful of your guardianship nor are we ever unmindful of your remembrance'** (Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 53, page 176) And no mountain, bulwark or curtain can ever act as an impediment for Imam (a.s.). In this regard, Syed Ibne Taos has recorded a tradition in his book, 'Kashful Muhajjah'. **'A companion of Imam Ali. Raza (a.s.) narrates, 1 wrote a letter to Imam (a.s.). In the letter I mentioned about a person who wanted to offer his demands to Imam (a.s.); those demands that he sought from his God. Imam Raza (a.s.) replied that if he has any requirement, tell him to simply move his lips, and the response (from my side) shall reach him.'** (Mikyal Makaarim, vol. 2, page 273)

In 'Al-Kafi', there is a lengthy tradition narrated by Imam Raza (a.s.), about the elevated station of an Imam. An excerpt of this important narration has been brought below so as to appreciate, although to a very limited extent, the compassionate nature of Imam. Imam Raza (a.s.) pronounces, Translation, **'Imam is a confidant, an aide, a sympathetic father, an affectionate brother, and a caring mother who nurtures her infant.'** (Al-Kafi vol. 1, page 200)

The above tradition provides us with a glimpse, albeit a fleeting one, of the immense love and affection Imam (a.s.) has for his Shias. Our affliction and grief disturbs him even more than it disturbs us. He treasures us more than our own parents. His love and regard for us exceeds that of the father. For any father is confronted with certain limitations which he just can not breach. For instance, a man's love for his son maybe boundless. In his intense endearment and attachment he maybe willing to dispense all his wealth, even if it is a few million rupees. However, there is a limit to his wealth and riches. And this limitation does not permit that father to expend any more wealth, even though he wants to. This is also the case for other comforts that the father maybe prepared to furnish, but can not due to his obvious limitations. However, these limitations do not impede Imam (a.s.). Imam (a.s.) is Allah's emissary on the earth. He is the Caliph designated by Allah over His creation, he is the Master of the age and exercises complete control over the universe, with Allah's permission. Man's intellect fails to comprehend the powers of the Imam (a.s.). As a matter of fact there is a separate chapter in Usule Kafi titled, I meaning 'The earth is only for Imam'. There is one tradition in this chapter, wherein Imam Sadiq (a.s.) recounts to one of his companions, (Usule Kafi, Kitabul Hujjat, vol. 1, page 48). Now that we are enlightened with the supreme authority of our Imam, it only follows that we advance our demands and needs in front .of him, knowing that he will fulfill our needs. He is a sympathetic father for his Shias, and the father always experiences a great deal of gratification in resolving his son's difficulties. Ways of seeking mediation with Imam (a.s.)

1. Dua (Supplication): Indeed, there is no paucity of means to invoke and beseech Imam (a.s.). In this . regard, the role of supplications cannot be over stressed. One supplication in particular has been reported in Mikyal Makarim, vol. 2, page 271; **O Allah! I ask You for the sake of Your representative and Your Proof, Master of Time, that You help me through him in all my affairs. And Protect me through him from the difficulties of every torturer, dissident and rebel. (Please) help me through him for my efforts are exhausted. And Protect me from every enemy, grief, sorrow, debt, my children and all my family members, my brothers and my close ones, whose deeds do harm unto me. Amin, Lord of the Worlds.** (Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 94, p. 34.

2. Repeated invocation for assistance: An important invocation has been recorded in 'Mafatihul Jinnan', page 108 (Urdu edition). The invocation begins thus; An invocation is crucial, since it is through entreaties alone, that the afflicted beseeches his master. This invocation in particular, has some exceptional benefits for the Shias. Muhaddithe Noori in his celebrated work, 'Najmus Saqib', chapter 10 (concluding part), comments that within hours of reciting this invocation, his demands were miraculously fulfilled. Besides, there are numerous other instances wherein Shias have experienced immediate and untold results from its recitation.

3. Making a written presentation of one's needs to Imam (a.s.) This is a very simple and forthright medium of submitting one's demands to Imam (a.s.). Here, a Shia notes down his demands and aspirations and sends it to Imam (a.s.). In India, this practice is especially conspicuous on 15th Shabaan. On this day, the day of birth of our Imam (a.s.), Shias very enthusiastically list their demands on a piece of paper and cast the letters in the sea. However, should this practice be observed only on 15th Shabaan? Do we need our Imam's assistance only on the occasion of his birth? Or is it that a single occasion in a year is sufficient for advancing all our requirements, so that for the rest of the year we discern no need for Imam? God forbid, that is not the case! We must regularly write down our needs that we seek from Imam (a.s.). Surely we can devote some time at least once a week or fortnight to jot down our problems and our state of condition for Imam (a.s.) and then cast the letter in the sea or embed it in the earth. This is indeed very easy and requires minimal effort. However, neglect and preoccupation with the world has made us neglect this very important medium of mediation and arbitration with Imam (a.s.).

And is it necessary that we write to Imam (a.s.) only in moments of distress, and never otherwise? Are we so self-centered that we can not even send a salutation (salaam) upon our Imam, without being confronted by some difficulty or problem??

4. Conversation with Imam (a.s.) This is another very facile mode of communicating with Imam (a.s.). Whenever a Shia finds himself alone, regardless of the time, he can converse with Imam (a.s.), first by sending his salutations upon Imam and then by narrating his plight and condition. Nothing can be simpler than this. Inshallah, even Imam (a.s.) will heed that Shia's narration and will pray for him. And every Shia must converse with his Imam at least once a day. For although Imam (a.s.) is aware of our state and condition, recounting to Imam (a.s.) our problems and dilemmas has its own appeal. Sayyed's Ibne Taoos' testament to his son exhorting him to seek mediation from Imam Mahdi (a.s.) Sayyed exhorted his son in his will thus, 'O my son Muhammad! Allah, the Almighty conferred His favor and benefit upon me through your birth. I found myself completely incapable and powerless in front of Allah and could never glorify Him fittingly for this favor. And out of gratitude for this bounty, and on Allah's commands, I beseeched Imam (a.s.) on your behalf and sought your servitude in Imam's service. And after that, the misfortunes that afflicted you were also resolved through his mediation and grace. I was graced by Imam (a.s.) in my dreams on several occasions, and he has alleviated my impoverishment with his bounties and favors. His benefaction upon you is too excessive for me to ever adequately express. That is why your love, affection, spirit of sacrifice and devotion for Imam (a.s.) should also be abundant. The extent of your attachment and disposition towards him (a.s.) should please Allah, and gladden the hearts of the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and his progeny (a.s.). O my son! Always give preference to Imam's wishes over your own. Pray for (the well-being of) Imam (a.s.) before you commence praying for yourself. Inculcate in yourself the practice of initiating all your works with 'sadaqah' for (the security of) Imam (a.s.), before you remove 'sadaqah' for yourself or for your loved ones. If you wish, to faithfully observe his rights, and draw his (a.s.) concern and regard towards yourself, always favor his self over your own. Beseech Imam (a.s.) with unwavering intensity and humility every Tuesday and Thursday, and seek your demands from him. And while seeking your needs from Imam (a.s.), send your salutations upon him and recite the following Ziarat (This Ziarat has been mentioned earlier.) Then recite the below mentioned verse **'O chief? Distress has afflicted us and our family and we have brought scanty money, so give us full measure and be charitable to us; surely Allah rewards the charitable.'** (Yusuf: 88) This was a confession of intense regret and remorse expressed by the brothers of Hazrat Yusuf (a.s.) to their father (Hazrat Yaqoob) and their brother. Hazrat Yusuf and Hazrat Yaqoob (peace be on both) displayed ample clemency and compassion, and forgave their sins. O our Master! Even if we have disobeyed Allah and distressed your ancestors (a.s.), please forgive us because O our Chief and Guardian, certainly you exceed Yusuf (a.s.) in his clemency, forbearance and compassion. Therefore please deal with us in a manner akin to Hazrat Yusuf's treatment vis-à-vis his brothers, while surely we are most undeserving of such leniency. (Barnoameh Sa'adat, by Sayyed Ibne Taoos)

Innumerable instances of Imam's aid and succour Books abound with incidents wherein aid and relief provided by Imam (a.s.) bears ample testimony to Imam's concern and anxiety for his Shias. There are several books wherein such heartening incidents are reported viz., Behaarul Anwaar, Najmus Saqib, Trysts with Imam (a. s.), Jannatui Mawa, Riyazul Ulama, Minhajus Salah, Al Kalamut Tayyeb, Isbatui Huda, etc. Among those favoured with Imam's grace and presence and blessed with the opportunity to delight with a glance at his countenance were Bahrul Uloom, Aga Zainul Abedeen Salmee, Maulana Muhammad Hussain Qazveeni, AUama Muhammad Taqi Majlisi, Alama Hilli, Shaykh Hurre Ameli, Shaykh Mufeed, Shaykh Hasan Iraqi, Muqaddase Ardabali, Alt b. Mahziyar, Ismail Harqali, among others. As matter of fact every Shia is included in this list, because there exists not a single believer but Imam (a.s.) graces him with a benevolent glance, although most of us are neglectful of this

fact. This is all the more perceptible in instances wherein we find ourselves engulfed in calamities with a vice like hold over us, leaving us disturbed, robbing us of our sleep. Then after a just few token entreaties and supplications we find ourselves alleviated in a flash. It seems almost unbelievable. The reason behind this sudden relief is Imam's benevolence and grace. Imam (a.s.) is never one to seek accolades and adulation, which is why he (a.s.) accomplishes his task and leaves in a hurry, knowing he (a.s.), he has a million other Shias to help. There is an incident involving a person who had lost his way. Imam (a.s.) came to his aid and directed him towards the right path. That person requested Imam (a.s.) to come with him to his house. Imam (a.s.) declined and replied that there were thousands of Shias who were entreating him at that very moment. He had to rush to their rescue just as he had rushed to his. (Mulakate Imam (a.s.) page 289) At least one point becomes crystal clear from the above-mentioned incident - Imam (a.s.) is perpetually engaged in providing relief.

" O master " we ask the intercession through you to God"