

Imāmah results in disbelief of *Khatm al-Nubuwwah*

A Logical outcome of the Shi'ī concept of Imāmah is the end of the belief in *Khatm al-Nubuwwah* (the Finality of Prophethood), which is rendered meaningless after it. Prophethood and its Finality are not empty words but carry a precise meaning and significance about which no one can be in doubt. When the Prophet of Islam is described as the *Seal of the Prophets* or *Final Messenger* it denotes that Prophethood or Apostleship and all associated traits ended with him.

Every divine Prophet and Messenger is appointed by Allah and he serves as his ultimate proof or final argument for His bondsmen. To believe in him and in his higher knowledge (ma'arifat) is an essential condition to salvation. He receives the commands of Allah through *wahī* (divine revelation). He is faultless, sinless, and unerring, and obedience to him is obligatory. He and his teachings are the fountainhead of guidance. This is the significance and place of Prophethood. The termination of Prophethood meant and still means that no one after the Last Prophet of Allah ﷺ will attain any of these traits.

The Prophet ﷺ is the ultimate proof of Allah for man and **only one** appointed by the Almighty for that purpose. To believe in *him* and to obey *him* is a pre-requisite of salvation. The coming down of commands and guidance from Allah through revelation ended with *him*. From the day of his demise till the Day of Resurrection only the Book of Allah revealed to him and **his sayings and actions**, which constitute what is known as the Sunnah; are the fountainhead, well-spring, and source of guidance.

After him, there will be no one who, like the Prophets and Messengers, will be the ultimate proof of Allah for his servants and who will be compulsory to obey. This was and still is the meaning of the termination of Prophethood and its reality.

But according to the Shi'i belief of Imāmah:

- Twelve other persons were appointed by Allah, like the prophets, who are the ultimate Proof of Allah for his servants.
- These twelve individuals are infallible, just like the Prophets.
- Obedience to them is obligatory, just like the Prophets.
- Recognition as such and acceptance of them is essential for salvation, as with the Prophets.
- They receive instructions and guidance from Allah through *wahī* (revelation).
- They are bestowed with all the qualities and virtues which Allah had bestowed upon Prophets.
- They were equal in rank to the last Prophet but excelled all other Prophets and Messengers.
- They further possess Divine attributes and Authority, they know everything of the past, and everything of the future, and nothing is hidden from them.
- They have right to declare forbidden things lawful and vice versa and enjoy the authority of the creator over every particle of the universe.
- They are the Lords of this world and to the World beyond, they can grant salvation or any other thing to anyone and their own deaths are discretionary and in their control.

The obvious and inescapable conclusion from the above will thus be that belief in the Finality of Prophethood no longer holds good, and is redundant. The Shi'i concept of Imāmah cast the impression that the chain of an inferior type of Prophethood terminated and was replaced, in the name of Imāmah, by a superior and more advanced type of Prophethood which will endure till the end of time. The Seal of *this* chain is now Imām Mahdī who will show such miracles and do such strange things as had not been shown or done by even by the Last of the Prophets صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

The statements of some of the most senior Shī'ī scholars echo this sentiment quite clearly. Shaykh Muḥammad al-Mufīd, one of the most senior scholars of the fourth century, writes in his *Awa'il al-Maqālāt* (pg. 45):

It is only the Religious law that has prohibited us from claiming Prophethood for our A'imma, although the intellect does not prohibit this because the A'imma have acquired the qualities that we have mentioned for the prophets.

Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisi, chief Shī'ī scholar of Safawid Iran, writes in his *Biḥār al-Anwār* (v. 26 p. 82), one of the eight canonical works of the Shī'ah:

To our knowledge there is no reason not to describe the Imams as Prophets, except consideration to the Final Prophet. Our intellect too cannot perceive a distinction between Nubuwwah and Imāmah.

He did however make one distinction, which he writes in his book *Ḥayāt al-Qulūb* (Vol. 3 p. 10):

Imamah is superior to Prophethood.

Acceptance of the belief of Imāmah, thus, simply means that Prophethood has not ended but is continuing with added strength and splendour in the name of Imāmah. A belief in total contradiction with the pristine teachings of Islam.

Adapted from *Khomeini, Iranian Revolution and the Shi'ite faith* by Mawlānā Muḥammad Manzūr Nu'mānī.