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This paper is the third part of a series of three papers on the subject, initially conceived as part of a series of lectures delivered by the author in London, at the Islamic Centre of England in Muharram 1433/November and December 2011, entitled, "Spiritual Struggle of Karbala."

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The Connection between Imam Mahdi and imam Husayn, Part 3

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Abstract

The previous parts offered an explanation on the close connection between Imam Husayn and Imam Mahdi in hadiths and why Imam Mahdi refers much to Imam Husayn in his universal mission for establishment of justice while putting the demand for the blood of Imam Husayn at top of his agenda. This part offers guidelines as to how a person can help Imam Mahdi by being a good follower of Imam Husayn.

It will be argued that by showing the people the value of being a good follower of Imam Husayn, and in particular by showing complete commitment to observing and to establishing justice and other virtues, one can prove his love for Imam Husayn while simultaneously helping Imam Mahdi.

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In an address to his companions in the night of Ashura, Imam Husayn said:

My grandfather, the Messenger of God, said: 'My son, Husayn, will be killed in Karbala while he will be alone, single, thirsty, and without any helper. Whoever helps him has helped me and has helped his son, al-Hujjah (Imam Mahdi).'[1]

The following offers an explanation on how helping Imam Husayn is a) helping the Prophet in preserving Islam and b) helping Imam Mahdi in establishing universal justice. Thus, the crux of the paper focuses on how helping Imam Husayn can prepare us for helping Imam Mahdi.

How to help Imam Husayn and hence Imam Mahdi

In one of the Ziyarats of Imam Husayn we recite:

Peace be to you, Oh son of the prophet. If I was not able to help you with my hands, if time has not let me be with you, then I am now coming to you with my help. Answering your call is my hearing, my heart, my sight, my body, my thoughts and my desires, all submissive to you, and to all Imams after you, those from your progeny who guide to Allah. So my help for you is ready.[2]

We are centuries away from Imam Husayn yet still we can join him and answer his call when he called out: **"Is there any helper to help us?"**

Reflecting on How we answer a Call

What needs reflection is to see how your heart, your ear, your eye answers to a call. It seems clear that e.g. if I listen to that which prepares me to serve the cause of Husayn and act upon it, this would be my ear answering his call.

In the age that we live in, many problems come through ears and eyes, more than any other time. This is due to the fact that if in the past they had to be careful about the voice coming from few meters around, today we can hear voices and sounds that come from thousands of miles away. If you look at the past, what do you think the challenge of a young person was when it comes to the listening and hearing?

The only challenge was that if he was in a meeting or gathering or place a sinful voice might be heard. However, in our age, we can be in a holy place and yet exposed to a haram voice through various devices. Furthermore, in the past, one could only listen to what was being said at that moment, though now voices are recorded and saved.

The amount of exposure to haram today is not comparable to the past. The same fact is true about our sight, thoughts, and desires.

A lover of Imam Husayn cannot have plans that disregard the beloved. 0ur desires and thoughts must be in line with helping Imam Husayn. We shall not think about useless matters let alone sinful ones. 0ur thoughts should be at Imam's service, thinking how we can help him, how we can bring more light to this

world. Our concern must be how to promote values.

A lover is the one who wakes up in the morning and the first thing he remembers is his beloved. It may even happen that he is in the middle of a conversation yet his heart and mind is somewhere else with the beloved. When he goes to bed, he ends his day thinking about and remembering his beloved. Is Husayn's attraction and beauty less than a normal beloved? If we do not feel that irresistible attraction in Imam Husayn, the problem lies in the fact that we do not have proper knowledge (haqqa ma'rifatih) of him.

A point that should not be neglected is that our Imams do not draw our attention to themselves. They act as mirrors and draw our attention to Allah. They are so transparent that when you think of them you remember Allah. They orient us towards Him. In Ziyarat al-Jami'ah we recite: "He who seeks Allah, starts with you."

If someone wants to reach Allah in a very easy, fast, and convenient way it should be done through knowing and loving Prophet Muhammad and Ahlul-Bayt[3].

Verbalizzzzing our readiness to the Imam
We need to be able to honestly tell our Imam that we are ready for him, that he can count us, on all that we have, whether it is our talents, skills, and energy; and on our children and wealth.[4]

In Dua of 'Ahd we read:

O Allah, appoint me amongst his helpers, aides, and his protectors, those who hasten to fulfill his commands and obey his orders. Those who defend him and compete with each other to (fulfill) his will.

We ask Allah to include us among those who respond to Imam Mahdi, implement his commands, and do what he wills without hesitating or waiting for his request for it to be done.[5]

If we know that our Imam wants something, we should want to hasten and rush to fulfil what he wants from us, without waiting for him to ask us. It is sufficient to know what is to be done without waiting for the Imam's order. If you know your father is thirsty you will not wait for him to ask you for water; you would immediately quench his thirst. Furthermore, we would want to compete with others to fulfil not only the Imam's commands, but also his will, before even expressing it.

What does our Imam want from us today?

A very important question arises here: How can we understand what our Imam wants from us today? This is something that we struggle with. I think we have many people in the world who are devoted to and work hard to spend everything they have for the sake of Allah and at the service of Ahlul Bayt and their cause, but sometimes you do not feel that they are always making proper decisions or are making

rapid progress year by year towards ideals.

Many people have already done so many things to please Imam Mahdi but the problem is that they do not know exactly what to do and what he wants from us to do. They do not know what to prioritize to help our Imam.

There are the obvious duties that apply at all times: praying, fasting, hajj, taqleed, wearing hijab, eating halal food, and so forth. These are the responsibilities that from the time of the Prophet every Muslim must have done as we have in the hadith from Imam Sadiq:

What Muhammad announced permissible is permissible up to the Day of Judgment and what he said is prohibited will be so till the Day of Judgment.[6]

These are the things basic laws. What we need to understand is our time-specific social responsibilities, how to prepare our society and community for the coming of Imam Mahdi.

The following offers a few reflections on how to understand what the Imam expects from us.

To reflect on what he is going to do and prepare by moving in the same direction. In other words, we must consider what Imam Mahdi is going to establish, and then we should work towards it.[7]

When the Imam sees that we have made good progress and preparation, then he can join us in the same path. But we have to make the first few steps.

As we saw in previous parts, one of the aims of Imam Mahdi, which is the aim of all prophets and is the standing at the top of his agenda is **justice.** Right under **justice** come **dignity** and **honour** because these are the most important rights that every human being deserves. If you have minimum amount of justice you have to respect dignity of people.

Now, let us reflect on the following phrase from Dua al-Iftitah:

Oh Allah, we bring to you our yearning for an honourable government by which you give dignity to Islam and its people, and humiliate hypocrisy and the hypocrites, and include us among those who invite people unto Your obedience, and lead people towards Your path. Through such a government, give us honour in this life and the hereafter.

If a government is not honourable, it cannot give dignity and honour to its citizens. You can never expect honour to come to you from the people who do not have honour for themselves. There is a very beautiful hadith that suggests this idea: "If someone doesn't have any honour for himself, do not feel safe with respect to him."[8]

A noble person never uses foul language even towards animals. A person who has honour for himself never walks out nude.[9]

Covering up even a little is recommended in Islam which indicates that a person should always honour himself. And a person who honours himself will honour others. Similarly, an honourable government will honour its citizens. For this reason, we ask Allah in our duas for an honourable government that treats people with dignity.

One of the features of the government we ask Allah for is that it exposes the hypocrites. It is them with whom we have problem with, not honest disbelievers. It seems that the main problem is with nifaq and not with kufr.[10]

We ask that the hypocrites are exposed so that they lose their respect and influence. The best way to face a person who is hypocrite is to show his true face to people.

Having asked for that, we then ask Allah to include us among those who invite others toward His obedience. The idea here is that we should not be satisfied by just being pious; rather we should also be calling others towards His obedience and leading towards His path. If we merely aim to be pious is not enough and may actually result in being in a lower level and failing to be pious. In the following dua in the Qur'an we read:

Our Lord, Grant us comfort in our spouses and descendants, and make us leaders of the pious. (***25:74***)

We do not merely ask for piety. We ask to be the leader of the pious. This aim is for the purpose of being closer to Allah rather than for selfish reasons such as position or power.
Continuing with Dua al-Iftitah, we ask Allah to help us not only to obey Him, but to guide others to his obedience, by being equipped with piety and knowledge. We also ask Allah for honour in this life and the hereafter. We want to be proud to be Muslims.

We want people of the world to have so much understanding of Islam, and pleased with the performance of Muslims, that they have respect for Muslims. This will not happen by itself. We can only achieve this by working towards establishing this honour for ourselves and our community. Imam Mahdi wants us to be honourable.

Whether it be education, family ties, punctuality, organization, trustworthiness, and helping others, we need to be the best at it. If on the other hand, we are disorganised, dishonest, unkind, and unprincipled we cannot bring honour to ourselves. Hence we cannot expect Imam Mahdi to suddenly come and give us honour in this life and the hereafter.

Every step towards bringing honour to this community prepares for Imam Mahdi.

We should not see anything happening that would bring disrespect to our community.

In addition to establishing justice by not violating others' rights, not even doing injustice to animals, we need to bring honour to ourselves and treat others the same. We need to be a polite and respectful

community, whether it be in the home, classroom, or workplace so that anyone who looks at us says that this person must be a follower of Husayn. We need people to see the conduct of Imam Husayn in us.

Another important point for us is to act as a community. We cannot afford to be separated as we cannot help Imam Mahdi individually. We need to come together and form a solid group at his service. The Imam wants a strong community, not people who dislike or boycott each other:

O you who have faith! Be pious and be with the truthful people. (***9:119***)

In addition to believing and having piety, we should also be in the company of truthful people. This shows not only the importance of being truthful, but also the importance of being a community:

By Time! Indeed man is in loss, except those who have faith and do righteous deeds, and enjoin one another to [***follow***] ***the truth, and enjoin one another to patience.*** (***103:1-3***)

In addition to the importance Allah gives to time, we also realize that it is not enough for us to be believers and do righteous deeds. We need to come together and enjoin truthfulness and patience. If one was about to get angry or to give up, others should invite him to patience.

With this mutual help we can be saved. It is only when we are together that we can gain Allah's support.[11] Similar to the above verses, Allah says:

While being one of those who have faith and who enjoin one another to patience, and enjoin one another to compassion. (***90:17***)

We should invite each other to patience, mercifulness, and truthfulness; establish it among ourselves and then extend it to others to benefit from it. If we form such a community, Allah will bless this community with much support and will guide it so as to quickly achieve its aim.

Allah says in the Qur'an that if you are pious and careful of your duties towards Him, He will teach you (2:282) and give you a criterion by which you can distinguish between right and wrong (8:29). Therefore, we should attain communal piety for Allah to guide our community and direct it towards our goals.

Conclusion

In this part, we studied how we can help Imam Mahdi by learning from the example of Imam Husayn and being a good follower of his. In particular, we studied why and how we should start establishing justice among us so that we can be used as instruments of establishing justice by Imam Mahdi.

An unjust person cannot be a helper of the Imam whose goal is establishing justice all over the world. We should establish justice among ourselves and then for others.

Justice is both for enemies and friends.

We are expected to be fair with respect to everyone. Then we studied that the right of people to be treated with honour and dignity as one of the important things you should observe as a just person. Again we need to achieve this honour for ourselves and then treat others with honour and respect.

We need also to form a united community in order to help Imam Mahdi.

1. Ma'ail al-sibtayn, volume 1, page 208
2. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 98, page 209, chapter 18.
3. Of course, there are other prophets and holy people that we have respect and love for and they also can help us, but no one is as close to Allah as these people.
4. Sometimes some people cheat. They say all their belongings are for Imam Mahdi but still they resist to pay khums to Maraaji' saying that I will pay it only to Imam himself after he comes and asks for it. This is not honesty.

If you are honest and free from greed you would realize that giving khums to the Marraji's in this time and age is like paying to Imam himself and for sure Imam Mahdi would not be pleased if people do not make their khums available for good causes under the supervision of the people who have piety and at the same time the greatest knowledge of the teachings of Imams and the needs of the community.

5. Note that this dua was taught by Imam Sadiq long before the occultation started. In Islam we are not restricted to time as discussed before. In Islam, you can go beyond time and space. Imam Sadiq says you should pray in this way for 40 days in order to be able to join Imam in his mission and even if you die before he comes you will be brought back by Allah and will be able to join him.
6. Al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 58.
7. If you are waiting for a great teacher to come and educate you should prepare for his mission by bringing students together, making a classroom and other facilities ready for him and educating people as much as you could so that when he comes everything would be ready for him and he would focus on the things that no one else could do it and not just doing what you yourselves were supposed to do.

Or if there is an epidemic disease and you are waiting for the greatest doctor to come you should prepare for his activities by cleaning and equipping the hospital, bringing together nurses and others who could help him together and register the patients and do examinations and initial treatments so that when he comes his time would not be wasted for you to get ready.

8. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 72, page 300, chapter 74, no. 11.
9. It is said that one of the scholars used to be fully dressed in his house all the time. Someone asked him why he did that while no one was there. He replied saying 'I am here.' He had such a respect for himself that he did not want to be without his dress of honour at any second.
10. The Qur'an tells us that the hypocrites are in the lowest level of the hell (4:145).
11. Imam Ali said: "Allah's hand (of protection) is with the community (jamaa'ah; a united group of people). You should beware of division because the one isolated from the group is (a prey) to Satan just as the one isolated from the flock of sheep is (a prey) to the wolf. (Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon number 127)

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