

# Islamic Mobility

## Ulama's Contact with the Living Imam atfs



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# Chapter 1

## **Ulama's Contact with the Living Imam atfs**

Many people have been graced with the opportunity to meet Imam Mahdi (A.S.) in person. However, in this article we present only those anecdotes where this special favor of Imam (A.S.) has been conferred on the religious scholars and jurists.

## Chapter 2

### **Muqaddas Ardebeli (a.r.)**

Muqaddas Ardebeli was an illustrious Shia scholar. It is well-known about him that whenever he used to encounter a difficult problem which he was unable to solve, he used to go to the tomb of Imam Ali (A.S.) and present his problem. Imam Ali (A.S.), invariably provided the solution.

One of the students of Allama Ardebeli who was following his teacher closely states: "It was near midnight when being tired of studying, I was strolling in the courtyard of the shrine of Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibne Abi Talib (A.S.). In the luminous night, when all the doors of the sanctum were locked, I saw a person coming towards the tomb of Ali (A.S.). For a moment, I thought that it was a thief who intended to commit a robbery. I followed him. But when he reached the main door, to my utter amazement, the door swung open and the padlock opened by itself in welcome. He continued to move towards the grave and whenever he neared a door, it opened by itself till he entered the sanctum of Ameerul Momineen (A.S.) in a grand manner. He stood there and saluted the Imam (A.S.). He received the reply to his salutations and commenced the conversation. When the dialogue ended, he emerged and headed towards the mosque of Kufa. I followed him in order to get to the bottom of the mystery. When he reached the mosque of Kufa, he entered the Mihrab (niche of prayers where the Imam stands) and began to converse with someone in a subdued voice. After the conversation was over, he came out of the mosque and walked back to Najaf al-Ashraf. It was almost dawn when he was near the gate of the twin city. Suddenly, I felt like sneezing and though I tried my best to suppress it, I could not. The person ahead of me turned around and came towards me. On a closer look, I recognized him to be my honorable teacher, the great scholar Ayatullah Muqaddas-e-Ardebeli.

After conveying my salaam to him, I said, "From the time, you entered

the Holy Mausoleum till now, I have been following you. I beg to know with whom were you talking at the mausoleum of Imam Ali (A.S.) and the mosque of Kufa?"

Muqaddas Ardebeli first put me under an oath not to disclose this secret till he was alive. Then proceeded to tell me that whenever he came across a difficult problem in Islamic laws which he could not solve, he used to present this query to Imam Ali Ibne Abi Talib (A.S.) and obtain the solution for the same. Last night, Ali (A.S.) directed me to contact Hazrat Sahibuz Zamaan (A.S.) and said, "My son Mahdi (A.S.) is at the Mosque of Kufa. He is the Imam of your time. Go to him and seek the solution of your problem."

Obeying the order of Ali (A.S.), I went to the Kufa mosque and found Hazrat Sahibul Amr standing in the Mihrab. I presented my problem to my Master and received the solution. (Al-Anwaar un-Nomaniya, Vol. 2, pg. 303)

# Chapter 3

## Sheikh Murtuza Ansari

After the demise of Ayatullah al-Uzma Haaj Sheikh Muhammad Hasan Najafi (r.a.) (the author of al-Jawaahir) the people considered Sheikh Murtuza Ansari as the Marja-e-Taqlaad (the most learned Mujtahid to be followed).

Consequently, they requested him to compile his Tauzeeh al-Masail (book of Islamic Law). Upon this he said: "I refuse to accept this great position because Sayyidul Ulama (the chief of the learned), Ayatullah Mazandarani is yet amongst us. He is more learned than me and resides at Babel . Thus I cannot compile my own Tauzeeh al-Masail."

Sheikh Murtuza Ansari (r.a.) wrote a letter to Sayyid ul Ulama requesting him to come to Najaf al-Ashraf so that he may assume control and supervision of the Shia institutes of learning.

Sayyidul Ulama replied to Sheikh Ansari: "It is true that when I was at Najaf al-Ashraf, I used to be more knowledgeable in jurisprudence when I held debates with you. But I have settled down in Babel for quite some time. I do not participate in classes nor do I teach any more. I have also stopped all kinds of debates and discussions. Hence, I consider you more learned and eligible for this position and request you to accept the same."

Despite this communication, Sheikh Murtuza Ansari refused to accept the position of Marja-e-Taqlaad and thought to himself, "If my Master, Hazrat Imam Wali-al-Asr gives me the permission and bestows favor upon me by appointing me to this post, I shall accept it."

One day Sheikh Ansari was delivering a lecture to his students. A stranger entered the gathering. He seemed to be of a noble and dignified

lineage. The Sheikh welcomed him with respect. The stranger posed a question to Sheikh Ansari in the presence of his students,

"What is the order for a woman whose husband has transformed into any other form (Maskh)?" (Maskh is the transformation of a human being into a stone, plant or an animal. This type of punishment was prevalent in the age of Prophets prior to Holy Prophet [s.a.w.a.]).

Since this type of punishment has not been decreed for the people of this age, we do not find this problem in any of the books of Islamic Law.

Sheikh Ansari answered, "As this question is not mentioned in the books of jurisprudence, I am unable to reply."

"But suppose such an eventuality does occur, then what would be the duty of the woman whose husband has undergone transformation?" the stranger persisted.

At this Sheikh Ansari replied, "My opinion (Fatwa) is that a woman whose husband has turned into an animal should observe iddah of divorce and after this period, she can remarry. It is because her husband is still alive and has a soul intact. As for the woman whose husband has turned into a dead object, must observe the iddah of death (of husband and). She can marry only after this iddah. This is due to the fact that her husband has turned into a dead thing and should be considered dead."

Upon hearing this gentleman said, "You are a Mujtahid! You are a Mujtahid! You are a Mujtahid!"

Then he got up and went out of the gathering. Sheikh Ansari realized that it was none but Hazrat Imam Wali-e-Asr (A.S.) and that he (A.S.) has given him his express permission to become Maraja-e-Taqleed. He told his students to search for this gentleman. The students rushed out, looked for him everywhere but without success. After this Sheikh Ansari agreed to compile his laws of Shariah so that people could follow him (i.e. do his Taqleed). (Ganjeena-e-Danishmandan, Vol. 8)

## Chapter 4

### Allamah Hilli

During the time of Allamah Hilli, a Sunni scholar had written a book against the Shia faith. This scholar used quotes from his book in all his gatherings and succeeded in creating a dislike for Shiaism amongst the people. He never gave this book to anybody lest it might fall into the hands of the Shia scholars who would write its refutation.

Allamah Hilli began to attend the lectures of this scholar so that he could somehow lay his hands on that book. Gradually he began to call himself the author's student and concealed his faith. After sometime, he developed a close affinity with his 'teacher'. Taking advantage of this proximity, Allamah Hilli asked him for the book and pleaded to such an extent that he could not refuse. So he said, "Okay, I shall lend you this book but not for more than a night."

With not much to choose, he considered it an opportunity better than nothing. He wanted to copy as much as he could while the refutation could be written later. But when it was midnight, Allamah Hilli felt sleepy. At that very moment, a dignified personality entered his room and conversed with him for some time. The gentleman offered to copy the book while Allamah Hilli took some rest. The Allamah accepted this without protest and went to sleep. When he woke up, he found the gentleman missing. On seeing the book, he saw that the whole book had been copied and signed at the bottom, "The Proof of Allah wrote this."

(Majaalisul Momineen, vol. 1, pg. 573, by Qazi Nurullah Shustari)

## Chapter 5

### **Imam Zaman (a.s.) and Shaikh-e-Mufeed (r.a.)**

If we turn the pages of history we will find numerous examples of personalities who have enlivened Islam through their sacrifices of life and wealth. One such personality is Abu Abdullah Muhammad Haaris Akbari famous as Shaikh Mufeed (r.a.). Mufeed implies the one who benefits others. He was born approximately seven years after the commencement of Ghaibat-e-Kubra in the month of Zilqad, 336 A.H. in the north of Baghdad.

Shaikh Mufeed (r.a.) with the help of his vast knowledge passed through various difficulties and welcomed all the obstacles that came his way with a smile. He sipped real recognition from the ocean of Wilayat and quenched the thirst of the followers of Wilayat. He was attached to the infallible Imam (a.s.) and the Shias benefited immensely from him. This man of medium height and wheatish complexion had a ready solution for problems of a religious, ethical and social nature. It is because of this that he had become a thorn in the eyes of his opponents. At the age of 40 years, he shouldered the great responsibility of defending the Shiite creed. It was an era when Greek and Hindu philosophies were rupturing the fabric of traditional Islam.

Twisted beliefs and concocted views were finding their way into the realm of Islam. The enemies of Allah had prepared the groundwork to extinguish the light of truth. In such a situation, how could the one who was given the title of 'Mufeed' by Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s.) and who was the fifth descendant of Janabe Saeed b. Jubair (a companion of Imam Baqir (a.s.)) sit quiet while ignorance and deviation were raising their heads and corrupt beliefs and views were gaining ascendancy as were the Sufis seated in their shelters (Khaneqaa)?

Expectedly, he lived up to his title 'Mufeed' and with the help of Allah and His Proof (Hujjat) he laid low the false, corrupt beliefs and non-sensical philosophies through his penetrative writings, teachings and

training of students for debates.

He rescued the people from deviation and invited them towards the religion of Allah which was manifested through the teachings of Ahlul Bait (a.s.). In this manner many deviated sects received guidance. May be this was the reason why Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) called him 'Mufeed' as he was a helper for Imam (a.t.f.s.) and a source of joy for people.

The above possibility is proved through various Tawqees (signed letters) from Imam (a.t.f.s.) to Shaikh Mufeed (r.a.).

But have we ever pondered why Imam (a.t.f.s.) referred to him by the title 'Mufeed'? Why he received so many letters from Imam (a.t.f.s.)?

Why Imam (a.t.f.s.) in his letter remembers Shaikh Mufeed (r.a.) respectfully and calls him as his 'sincere friend'?

The answers to these questions manifest for us the remarkable personality of Shaikh Mufeed (r.a.).

The respect of Imam (a.t.f.s.) for Shaikh Mufeed (r.a.) was the result of his memorable services for which he surrendered his entire existence. For the satisfaction of the Imam of his time, he willingly accepted all the difficulties so as to be enumerated among his (a.t.f.s.) servants. He was engulfed in his love for Imam (a.t.f.s.) in such a way that the flames of this attachment killed his desire for the world and its allurements.

In the eyes of Shaikh Mufeed (r.a.), everything paled in significance to Allah and His Proof (a.t.f.s.). His heart was a dwelling of the love and remembrance of Imam (a.t.f.s.); it did not have any place for worldly desires. He considered all his small and big works, his behavior (ethics) and speech as the scale of love and satisfaction of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s.). He never desired anything other than this. All his efforts and services were for the satisfaction of Imam of the time and for propagating the beliefs of religion to the Shias with weak faith. His life was based on the saying of Imam Sadiq (a.s.):

"Our scholars are an obstacle for Shaitan to reach the weak and helpless Shias. Know that whoever rises from our Shias for this is better than a Mujahid who fights in difficult conditions against the enemies. A Mujahid (only) protects the physical boundaries of people but they (scholars) protect the religion."

With his untiring efforts in the path of Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s.), Shaikh

Mufeed (r.a.) merits inclusion among Allah's best creatures. We find in traditions:

"The best and most superior of all people after us are those who enliven our affairs and invite people towards our remembrance."

This is the reason that Imam (a.t.f.s.) holds him in such high esteem and lauds his efforts.

Imam (a.t.f.s.) in his first letter to Shaikh Mufeed (r.a.) addresses him:

'This letter is for my brother and friend Abu Abdullah Mohammed b.Noman (Shaikh Mufeed) - May Allah keep him respected - May Allah's Peace be on you, you have adorned yourself with our friendship through sincerity and love and have preceded the rest in faith and belief... We are thankful to Allah for the bounties of your existence. And pray to Allah that He sends his mercy on our Master Hazrat Muhammad b.Abdillah (s.a.w.a.) and his Ahlul Bait (a.s.). For helping the truth and striving to help our friends, Allah has rewarded you and has given us permission to correspond with you.'

'It is your responsibility that you convey our message and commands to our Shias - May Allah give them taufeeq of His Obedience and safeguard them in His Religion... '

In the last Tawqi, Imam (a.t.f.s.) wrote:'Know that your actions should be such which bring you closer to us and refrain from sins that are a cause of our dissatisfaction. O Shaikh Mufeed! May Allah inspire you with success and guidance through the unseen.'(Ehtejaaj, vol. 2, pg. 597, Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 53, pg. 175)

The Tawqis which have been addressed to Shaikh Mufeed (r.a.) by Imam(a.s.) have been compiled by scholars in their books viz. Shaikh Tabarsi (r.a.) in Ehtejaaj, Qazi Nurullah Shustari (r.a.) in Majaalisul Momin-een, Allamah Sayyed Bahrul Uloom (r.a.) in Rejaal, Sayyed Muhammed Baqir Khunsari (r.a.) in Rauzaatul Jannaat, Allamah Majlisi (r.a.) in Behaarul Anwaar, Allamah Muhaddisse Noori (r.a.) in Mustadrakil Wasaail and Shaikh Abdullah Maamqaani (r.a.) in Tanqeehul Maqaal and Mirza Muhammed Tankaabuni (r.a.) in Qasasul Ulamaa.

Mirza Muhammed Tankaabuni (r.a.) has recorded a Tawqi which is based on a strange incident. Over here we have extracted only the

relevant portion from the incident. Marhum Tankaabuni narrates, "A person from the suburbs of Baghdad approached Shaikh Mufeed (r.a.) to seek the solution of a vexing problem. He asked, "A pregnant woman has expired but her child is alive in the womb, what do you say? Should the foetus be removed through surgery or be buried along with the woman?"

Shaikh Mufeed (r.a.) replied, "Bury the mother along with the foetus." On getting the reply, the man left for his village. On the way, a horse rider crossed his path. He asked the man to halt and said, 'Shaikh Mufeed (r.a.) has said that the foetus should be removed from the womb through surgery and then the woman be buried alone.' The person accepted it and acted on it.

After some time, the man came to Baghdad and narrated the incident to Shaikh Mufeed (r.a.). Shaikh Mufeed (r.a.) said, 'I did not send anybody with this edict. It seems that the person was Imam-e-Asr(a.t.f.s.) (who gave the edict)'. Shaikh Mufeed (r.a.) says, "After this (wrong edict) I am not capable of giving edicts and undertaking the responsibility of Marja'yyat. After that day I closed the doors of my house and told the people to no longer seek solutions of their problems from me. It was not long before I received a letter from Imam (a.t.f.s.) in which he (a.t.f.s.) wrote: "You give edicts, we will save you from mistakes and errors. We will not desert you to commit mistakes."

In this manner, Shaikh Mufeed (r.a.) by the order of Imam (a.t.f.s.) shouldered the responsibility of Marja'yyat and recommenced solving the problems of the people.

At the end we can only beseech our beloved Imam - O son of Prophet! O son of Zahra! We lack the spirituality of Shaikh Mufeed (r.a.). We do not love you with the same intensity. On the contrary, we are immersed in sins from head to toe. Help us to love you. O our Master! Help us, look at us, to enable us to walk on the Straight Path.

# Chapter 6

## Allama Majlisi & Sahifa Sajjadia

The Arabic text of the Sahifat al-kamila which forms the basis for the translation was established by al-Shahid al-Awwal. The modern Iranian editions are based mainly on the version of this text transmitted by the father of the above-mentioned Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, Mulla Muhammad Taqi Majlisi (d. 1070/1659-60), also an important scholar of the Safavid period. and another son, Mulla `Abd Allah (d. c. 1084/1673); but at least one of these editions goes back to the famous Safavid jurist, philosopher, architect, poet, and mathematician Shaykh-i Baha'i (d. 1031/1621-2). The elder Majlisi had at his disposal numerous manuscripts of the text, which he had received from the foremost Shi'ite authorities of his day. In one of his works he refers to all the chains of transmission by which he had received the Sahifa, and, we are told, these number more than a million.

The question naturally arises as to why Majlisi chose the particular chain of transmission mentioned in the preface out of the many he had at his disposal, especially since the chain itself is exceedingly weak (as indicated by the commentators and recorded in the notes to the translation). The reason for this seems to be the accuracy of this particular version going back to al-Shahid al-Awwal, as confirmed by another 'special' route through which Majlisi received the Sahifa. This special route is worth mentioning in detail, since it provides a good example of the aura which has surrounded the text in Shi'ite circles.

One day, lying in bed half asleep, Majlisi saw himself in the courtyard of the 'Atiq mosque in Isfahan, and before him stood the Mahdi, the Twelfth Imam. Majlisi asked him about a number of scholarly problems which he had not been able to solve, and the Mahdi explained their solutions. Then Majlisi asked him for a book which he could put into practice, and the Mahdi directed him to seek out Mawlana Muhammad al-

Taj. In his vision Majlisi found the book, and it appeared to be a book of supplications. Waking up, he saw that his hand was empty, and he wept until morning at his loss. At daybreak it occurred to him that perhaps the Mahdi had meant Shaykh Muhammad Mudarris, calling him by the title `Taj' (the `crown') because he was so famous among the scholars.

Hence he went to see Shaykh Muhammad, and, entering his circle, saw that he held a copy of the Sahifa in his hand. He went forward and recounted his vision to Shaykh Muhammad, who interpreted it to mean that he would reach high levels of gnostic and visionary knowledge. But Majlisi was not satisfied with this explanation, and he wandered around the bazaar in perplexity and sorrow. Upon reaching the melon market, he met a pious old man known as Aqa Hasan, whom the people called, Taja (`Crown'). Majlisi greeted him, and Aqa Hasan called to him and said that he had a number of books which were consecrated for religious purpose (waqfi) but that he did not trust most of the students to put them to proper use. `Come', he said, `and take whichever of these books which you think you can put into practice.'

Entering Aqa Hasan's library, Majlisi immediately saw the book he had seen in his dream, so he said: `This is enough for me.' It was a copy of the Sahifa. He then went back to Shaykh Muhammad and began collating his newly acquired copy with that of Shaykh Muhammad; both of them had been made from the manuscript of al-Shahid al-Awwal. In short, Majlisi tells us that the authenticity of his copy of the Sahifa was confirmed by the Mahdi himself.