

## CHAPTER 3

### PILLARS OF IMAN

#### Meaning of the term Imam

The following are different interpretations of the term Imam:

- a) The term 'Imamah' is derived from the Arabic word *Imam* which means 'a leader'.
- b) A person leading other Muslims in Swalat (Prayers)
- c) A person with Islamic knowledge and excellent moral standards that can act as a role model.
- d) It is a title given to Nabii Ibrahim (AS) when Allah promised him leadership for the entire Nations.
- e) Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) was also referred to as Imam of all other prophets and messengers during the journey of Isra wal-Miraj
- f) The person leading other Muslims during Islamic functions and acts of worship. For example, the one who leads others in the burial rituals, during Da'awa activities among others.
- g) The scholars of Fiqh, who came up with the four schools of thought (Madhahib) namely Imam Malik, Imam Shafi, Imam Hambal and Imam Abu Hanifa.
- h) Major compilers of Hadith among the Sunni like Imam Bukhari, Imam Muslim, Tirmidhi, Imam Abu Daud, Imam Ibn Majah and Imam Nasai.
- i) The Khalifa of the Muslims such as Khalifa Abubakar, Umar, Uthman and Ali.
- j) Muslim philosophers like Imam Ghazal, Ibn Rushd, and Ibn Sina among others.
- k) The spiritual leaders of the Shia such as Imams Zainul Abidin, Jafar As-Sadiq, Musa Al-Kadhim among others

#### The Doctrines of Shia

The following are the beliefs of the Shia community:

- 1. Imamah:** The shia community believe that the Muslim ummah should be led by infallible Imams who are appointed by their preceding Imams through inspiration of Allah. They are the source of authority to establish Islamic sharia.
- 2. Ghaybah** (the absence/ concealment): It refers to a belief that the messianic figure Al-Mahdi who the shia thought is an infallible male descendant of the prophet Muhammed

was born but disappeared and will one day return and fill the world with justice and peace.

3. **Taqiyah** (dissimulation): It state that it is permissible to hide one's true religious convictions if under the threat of death or injury but only to resume the true identity if he or she is at peace among with the shia community members.
4. **Muta'h** (Temporary Marriage): It refers a temporary marriage for a fixed time with fixed conditions explained through mutual agreement between the male and female participants. Shia practice this type of marriage.
5. **The institution of al-Rajah** (The return): This is the returning to the present state of existence of a given past historical figure after that person's physical death. Shia believe in *Zuhur* (appearance) of Muhammed Al-Mahdi with his group of chosen companions such Imam Hussein.
6. **Visiting Karbala:** The shia members give more importance to visiting of Karbala in Iraq where the tomb of their third Imam Al-Hussein ibn Ali is located than visiting Makkah for performing Hajj.
7. **The three daily prayers:** The aspect of Swalah of Shia is a misconception that the Shia perform the five daily prayers of the sunni Muslims on three occasions as opposed to five different times. The shia believe that Islam allows them to combine Dhuhri and Asr as well as Maghreb and Isha.
8. **Tawassul** (intercession): The shia believe the visiting of Holy Shrines so as to ask the dead to intercede for them to Allah as they are believed to be Holy and are near to Allah.
9. **The concept of Khums in Zakat:** Zakat is required of Shia Muslims only. They share zakat among themselves. And at least a tenth part of zakat and Khums every year after its collection by Imam and his deputies under its doctrine of Niyaba, goes as income for its hierarchical system pf shia clergy.

### **Declaration of Ali bin Abi Talib at Ghadir Khum (the pond of Khum)**

Ali bin Abi Talib was one of the closest companions of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.uh). According to the Shia, the Prophet openly declared who would succeed him as a Khalifa before his demise. This happened after Hijjatul Wida' (the farewell pilgrimage). The Holy Prophet (p.b.u.h) left Makkah on 14th Dhul Hijja 10 A.H. and his caravan reached Ghadir

Khum (about 3 miles north-west of Makkah) on 18th Dhul Hijja. This was the place where people from various provinces would bid Good bye to each other and take different routes for their home. It is at this place where the prophet proclaimed Ali Ibn Abi Twalib as the Master of this Ummah as a successor after the Prophet Muhammed.

### Shia concept of an Imam

The following are several beliefs about Imamah as held by the Shia community:

1. An Imam is appointed by Allah through divine inspiration to the previous Imam.
2. The leadership of the Muslims was passed over to the Imams after the death of the Prophet. That is, only the Imams have the right to be the Khalifas.
3. All Imams were from the *Ahlul-bait* (close family members) of the Prophet.
4. The first Imam according to the Shia was Ali bin Abu Twalib (R.A) who was appointed by the prophet Muhammed at a place called Ghadir-khum.
5. Imams receive spiritual guidance from Allah (SWT). Therefore, they have ability to offer guidance to their followers about the issues of unseen.
6. They are conversant with the divine law and hence they have authority over their followers.
7. All the Imams are *Maasumin* i.e they are protected from sin by Allah.

### The twelve Imams of the Shia

The following tables shows the chronological list of the Twelve Holy Imams of Shia:

Agnomen (Kunyah)	Name	Father's name	Date of birth	Date of death	Matyred by means of	Place of burial
Abu-Hassan Abu-Hussein Abu-Turab	Ali	Abu Talib	13 <sup>th</sup> Rajab, 10 years before the prophethood	Struck on 19 <sup>th</sup> Ramadhan and died on 21 <sup>st</sup> Ramadhan, 40 A.H	Sword- while he was engaged in prayers	Najaf-al-Ashraf, Iraq
Abu Mohamed	Hassan	Ali	15 <sup>th</sup> Ramadhan. 3 A.H	7 <sup>th</sup> Safar, 50 A.H	poison	Madinah, Saudi arabia

Abu Abdilla	Hussein	Ali	3 <sup>rd</sup> shaaban, 40 A.H	10 <sup>th</sup> Muharram, 61 A.H	Sword-in the battle of Ashura	Karbala, Iraq
Abu Mohamed	Ali	Hussein	5 <sup>th</sup> shaaban, 38 A.H	25 <sup>th</sup> Muharram, 94 A.H	poison	Madinah, Saudi arabia
Abu Jafar	Muhammed	Ali	3 <sup>rd</sup> safar, 57 A.H	7 <sup>th</sup> Dhul-Qadah, 148 A.H	poison	Madinah, Saudi arabia
Abu Abdillah Abu Musa	Ja'far	Muhammed	17 <sup>th</sup> Rabiul-Awwal, 83 A.H	25 <sup>th</sup> Shawal, 148 A.H	poison	Madinah, Saudi arabia
Abu-Hassan Al-Awwal	Musa	Ja'far	7 <sup>th</sup> Safar, 129 A.H	25 <sup>th</sup> Rajab, 183 A.H	poison	Kazimiyyah, Iraq
Abu Hassan Al-Thani	Ali	Musa	11 <sup>th</sup> Dhul-qadah, 148 A.H	17 <sup>th</sup> Safar, 203 A.H	poison	Mash-had (Tus, Khurasan), Iraq
Abu Jafar Al-Thani	Muhammed	Ali	10 <sup>th</sup> Rajab, 195 A.H	30 <sup>th</sup> Dhul-Qadah, 220 A.H	poison	Kazimiyyah, Iraq
Abu Hassan at-thalith	Ali	Muhammed	2 <sup>nd</sup> Rajab, 212 A.H	3 <sup>rd</sup> Rajab, 254 A.H	poison	Samara', Iraq
Abu Muhamed	Hassan	Ali	8 <sup>th</sup> Rabiul-thaniy, 232 A.H	8 <sup>th</sup> Rabiul-Awal, 260 A.H	poison	Samara', Iraq
Abu Qasim	Muhammed	Hassan	15 <sup>th</sup> shaban, 255 A.H	Still alive, but in ..... occulation	.....	.....

### The criteria used by the Muslims to appoint Imam (Muslim leader)

The following are the measures used by the Muslims to appoint their leaders:

- By considering that an Imam is a person with a thorough knowledge of the Quran, Hadith and fiqh (knowledge of Islamic Sharia)
- By ensuring that an Imam is a person of a high degree of taqwa (piety)
- Muslims consider that the leader is of refined and good moral values
- By considering the maturity of age and mind

### Qualities of an Imam

An Imam is required to have the following qualities:

- i) He should know and understand the Holy Qur'an and Hadith.
- ii) He should be able to recite the Qur'an correctly and nicely.
- iii) He should be a respected member of the community.
- iv) He should be acceptable to the believers.
- v) Imam is also required to be very knowledgeable in all aspects of Islamic Sharia.
- vi) He should be pious and morally upright.

### **Duties and significance of an Imam**

The following are the functions performed by an Imam in the Muslim society:

- An Imam leads Muslims during prayers.
- The Imam may also serve as a member of the larger leadership team in a Muslim community.
- The Imam may be involved in community and social services like visiting the sick, raising funds for the needy members of the community.
- As a respected member of the community, the Imam may be consulted for personal or religious issues.
- The Imam is involved in ensuring peace, harmony and social cohesion in the society e.g. engaging in inter-faith service programs.
- He gives spiritual advice and is consulted in family issues, or in other times of need.
- Officiating Muslim marriages and organizing educational gatherings in the mosque.
- The Imam is a teacher for he teaches others about the Muslim religion, through lectures and Friday sermons.
- The Imam also conducts Islamic religious ceremonies.
- An imam is the leader of a Mosque.

### **Roles of the imam of a Mosque**

The following are the duties that an imam of the mosque should perform:

- a) He must lead the Muslims (ma'mumah) during all the prayers in the prescribed mosque

- b) He should appoint someone to lead the congregation prayers in case of his absence
- c) He should strictly observe the times for the faradh prayers
- d) He should guide the Muslims during funeral rites
- e) He should guide the Muslims through lectures, dawaa, Friday and Eid khutbahs (sermons)
- f) He should conduct Islamic religious ceremonies and functions such as Nikah and Quran competition