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Tenets of Islam

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Short passages on numerous Islamic beliefs, including God, Prophethood, Imamate, and the Day of Judgement

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About the Author

From time to time there appeared in the horizon of Islamic world, certain outstanding personalities, whose names have shone in the pages of history like brilliant stars. People benefited from their light according to their merits and capabilities.

Among those few eminent personalities the name of Shaykh Tusi tops the list. In fact he has become immortal by sincerely sacrificing his whole life in search of knowledge and spreading Islamic teachings.

Shaykh Abu Ja'far, Muhammad bin Hasan was born at Tus, one of the cities of Khurasan (Iran), in the month of Ramadan 385 A.H. At the age of 23 he left for Baghdad (Iraq) and acquired knowledge from the eminent scholars like Shaykh Mufid and Sayyid Murtadha.

After completing his studies he started delivering lectures on Islamic Jurisprudence and its principles. A large number of great scholars used to attend his lectures and the number of his students reached up to 300.

After the demise of his teacher, Sayyid Murtadha, in 436 A.H., Shaykh Tusi became the central figure of the Shi'ah world. The Shi'ah as well as the Sunni scholars acknowledged his supremacy in Islamic studies.

When the first Saljuqi King Tugril Beg invaded Baghdad in 448 he destroyed the Shi'ah Public Library and burnt the books of Shaykh Tusi and plundered his house. On this critical and dangerous situation he left Baghdad and turned to Najaf al-Ashraf. There he laid the foundation stone of religious centre which is still a centre of Shi'ah religious studies.

It is evident that the high status of Shaykh Tusi does not need any explanation and no one can overestimate it. If someone wants to know his towering personality he should go through his books. He has written many books on different subjects. Out of the four famous and outstanding books of Shi'ah: Usulul Kafi, Man La Yahdhuruhul Faqih, at- Tahzib and al-Istibsar, the last two of them were compiled by Shaykh Tusi; on them the edifice of Shi'aism depends.

He passed away on 22nd Muharram 460 A.H. at the age of 75; and according to his will he was buried in his own house. Later on his house was turned into a masjid (mosque) and now it is one of the most famous masajid of Najaf al-Ashraf (Iraq) where Islamic scholars discuss and deliver lectures on Islamic knowledge.

Foreword

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent the Merciful.

All praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Universe and His blessings be on the last of all Prophets and Apostles and his infallible descendants, from whom Allah removed uncleanness and cleansed them a thorough cleansing[1], and appointed each one of them the leader of mankind after the Holy Prophet.

One of the most eminent Shi'ah scholars, Shaykh Abu Ja'far Muhammad, who was born at Tus and buried at Najaf, has said:

The acknowledgement of Allah is incumbent on everyone obligated to observe the religious precepts, because Allah is the Benefactor. It is, therefore, necessary for us to acknowledge Him so that we may be thankful to Him.

1. Surah al-Ahzab, 33:33

The Attributes of Allah

Existence

Allah exists for He has made the world and brought it into existence, and who has done so must be existing.

Self-Existence

Allah is self-existing in the sense that he does not depend on anyone for His existence. He is not a possibly existing being, for if He had not been self-existing, He like this world would have required someone to bring Him into existence, and that is not possible in the case of the Benefactor worthy of worship.

Eternal

Allah is eternal and has always existed in the sense that there was no time when He did not exist. He will always be existing in the sense that there will be no time when He will not exist. He is All-Powerful and has the power of willing and choosing in the sense that if He wills, He does a thing and if He does not will, He does not do it. This is evident for He made the world when He liked.

Omnipotent

Allah the Almighty can do all that can be done and knows all that can be known, for all things are on the same level in relation to His Holy and Absolute Being. To say that He can do certain things and cannot do some others, or that He knows certain things, but does not know some others would mean giving preference to certain things to others without any co-gent reason, which is impossible.

Omniscient

Allah is All-Knowing in the sense that everything is clear and manifest to Him and there is not anything hidden from Him, for Allah's all acts are perfect and thorough. Therefore, He is evidently All-Knowing.

All-Perceiving

Allah perceives everything, not with the help of any physical means, but in the sense that He knows everything that is perceived by senses, for Allah is free from having a body and its accessories. Allah Himself says: Eyesight does not perceive Him, but He perceives eyesight. He is Subtle and All-knowing.[1]

When Allah says that He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing, that means that He knows everything that is audible, but not through an ear and that He knows everything that is visible, but not through an eye.

Ever-Living

Allah is living in the sense that it can be said about Him that He is able to do everything and that He knows everything, for it has been proved that He has power and know-ledge, and anyone who has power and knowledge is certainly living.

Speaker

Allah is Speaker, not in the sense that He speaks physically, but in the sense that He creates speech in some organism or body so that His message may be conveyed to His creatures. He has said: Allah spoke to Moses in a particular way.2 As Allah is Powerful, He is able to speak.

Truthful

Allah is Truthful in the sense that He tells actual truth, because every lie is abominable, and Allah is free from all that is ugly.

The Will Of Allah

Allah has a will in the sense that He does a thing as and when He deems it fit. He created a particular thing at a particular time in a particular form. He gives orders and that shows that He has a will.

Aversion

Allah is averse in the sense that He prefers not to do a thing that He knows will cause evil. He did not create certain things at a particular time, although His Knowledge and Power are always on the same level. He has forbidden certain things. That shows His aversion.

1. Surah al-An'am 6:104
2. Surah an-Nisa, 4:164

Monotheism

Allah is One in the sense that He has no partner in His Divinity. He has said:

Say: He is Allah, the One.1

If He had a partner, there would have been conflict between the two and that would have caused disorder, as Allah has said: Had there been several gods in the heavens and the earth, they would have been disordered.2

Abstract

Allah is not composed of anything. If He had been made up of several parts, He would have depended on them, and a dependent cannot be self-existing.

Immaterial

Allah is not a body, nor a quality nor an essence, for if He had been any such thing, He would not have been self-existing and would have required a maker. And that is impossible.

Invisible

Allah cannot be seen by the sense of sight, neither in this world, nor in the next, for He is Abstract. Everything visible must have a body and a direction while Allah is free from them. He has said:

You will never see Me[3]

He has also said:

"Eyesight does not perceive Him[4]

Unchangeable

Allah is not subject to any eventualities, or else He would have become transient, but His transience is impossible.

Non-Incarnation

Allah can not be described as incarnate, for that would mean the combination of the self-existing with what is not self-existing and that is impossible.

Non-Combination

Allah does not combine with anything else, for combination turns two things into one without any addition or subtraction and that is impossible. Nothing that is impossible can be attributed to Allah.

His Attributes Are His 'Self'

Allah does not have any additional concepts or attributes in the sense that He is not knowing with knowledge and He is not Able with ability, for if He had any additional attributes, He would have been subject to eventualities if these attributes originated in time, and there would have been several eternal and ever-lasting beings if these attributes had no beginning. Both these things are impossible. More-over, in this case the Self-existing Being will be in need of His attributes supposed to be distinct from Him and thus will no longer remain self-existing, which is absurd.

Independent

Allah is Independent in the sense that He is not in need of anyone or anything else, for being Self-Existing He cannot be needy. Allah has no direction and no place, for anyone having direction and place is in need of them. Further, it has proved that Allah is not an organism, nor is He an essence nor a quality. Therefore He does not have a place or a direction.

Absolute

Allah does not have a child or a wife for it has been proved that He is not in need of anyone else. Further all that is besides Him is not Self-Existing. Then how can a non-self-existing being become self-existing? The Holy Qur'an says:

There is not anything like Him.5

Jesus is like Adam. Allah created him from clay.6

1. Surah al-Ikhlas, 112:1
2. Surah al-Anbiya', 21:22
3. Surah al-A'raf, 7:143
4. Surah al-An'am, 6:104
5. Surah ash-Shura, 42:11
6. Surah Aal-e-Imran, 3:59

Justice

Allah is Just and Judicious in the sense that He does not do anything obnoxious and does not derange what is obligatory to do because what is obnoxious is a fault and deranging what is obligatory will be a fault. Therefore Allah is free from everything obnoxious and from disturbing anything obligatory.

It is a disputed point whether it is a matter of common sense or a matter of Islamic law that certain things are right and certain others are wrong. We hold that it is a matter of common sense that certain things like justice, truth, honesty and faithfulness are right and certain things like tyranny, oppression, and transgression are wrong.

The Asha'irah maintain that it is only a matter of Islamic law in both cases. Therefore only that which has been described by it as right, is right and only that which has been described by it as evil, is wrong.

Resignation to the Will of Allah

It is obligatory to be content with what has been destined and decreed by Allah. Whatever has happened or will ever happen takes place by Divine decree and fate appointed by Allah but that does not mean any compulsion or coercion, for Divine decree in this case means Divine knowledge and announcement. What is meant is that Allah knows everything as it is and makes an announcement about it.

Whatever Allah does, that is the most proper, otherwise it will follow that He does things in vain also, which He does not, for He says:

Do you think that We have created you in vain? 1

1. al-Mu’minun, 23:115

Grace of Allah

Showing grace is incumbent on Allah, He had created people and furnished them with passion. If He does not show grace to them, that would mean alluring them, which is bad.

In this case grace signifies furnishing arguments, developing intellect, sending Prophets during the period fixed for their sending and after their termination continuation of the Imams so that the chain of obtaining the objective may not be broken.

Prophethood

Our Prophet Muhammad (May Allah's blessing and peace be on him and his descendants) son of Abdullah, son of Abdul-Muttalib, son of Hashim, son of Abd Munaf, is a true and rightful Prophet. He claimed Prophethood and wrought miracles, which proved that he was a true Messenger of Allah. His greatest miracle is the Holy Qur'an - the glorious distinguisher between truth and falsehood.

It will continue to exist till the Day of Resurrection. It is a proof of its authenticity for the whole mankind. It is inimitable on account of its extraordinary eloquence and the beauty of its diction and style. When challenged, no rhetorician or man of letters could produce even a small surah (chapter) or a complete verse like it.

Our Prophet (May Allah's blessing and peace be on him and his descendants) was a Prophet to himself before he was formally raised. Afterwards he was a Prophet for the whole mankind. He himself has said: “I was a Prophet when Adam was still between water and clay”. And if it were not so then preference to the inferior over superior becomes necessary which is absurd.

Infallibility

All Prophets were infallible and free from all defects, sins, and negligence and forgetfulness in their deeds and sayings from their early childhood till their death, for if they had committed a sin or a mistake, they would have lost their position in the hearts of the people who would not have had confidence in what they said or did. In this way the benefits of Prophethood would have come to naught. Therefore certain stories mentioned about them in the Holy Qur'an must be explained away.

The Prophets (peace be on them) must be the best and the most learned men of their time, for it is absurd to give preference to the inferior people.

The Seal of the Prophets

Our Prophet (May Allah's blessing and peace be on him and his descendants) was the last of all the Prophets and Apostles in the sense that there would no more be any Prophet till the Day of Resurrection. Allah says: Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the seal of the Prophets.1

1. Surah al-Ahzab, 33:40

The Superiority of the Holy Prophet [s]

Our Prophet is superior to all other Prophets, for his Prophethood has proved and he himself has informed us of his superiority. The Holy Prophet said to Fatimah: “Your father is the best of all Prophets; your husband is the best of all successors; you are the chief of all the women of the world, and your sons, Hasan and Husayn are the chiefs of the youth of Paradise, but their father is superior to them.”

Ascension

The Holy Prophet's 'Ascension' with his physical body openly, not in a sleeping state, is a true fact. The reports about this event are continuous, clear and specific. Therefore anybody who denies it is outside the pale of Islam. The Holy Prophet passed through the gates of the heavens, so there was no question of their being torn and patched up again. The flimsy arguments in this connection have been refuted at their appropriate place.

Abrogation of Previous Religions

The religion of our Prophet has abrogated previous religions, for what is suitable changes with the change of time and persons as the treatment of a patient changes with the change in temperament and disease.

Leadership of Imam Ali [a]

Ali ibn Abi Talib is the Imam after our Prophet (May Allah's blessing and peace be on him and his descendants). The Holy Prophet addressing Imam Ali said: “Ali, you are my brother, the heir of my knowledge, my successor after me and payer of my debt. You are to me as Aaron was to Moses, but there shall be no prophet after me.” The Holy Prophet also said: “Greet Ali as the Commander of the Faithful, listen to him and obey him. Get knowledge

from him but do not teach him.” On another occasion the Holy Prophet said: “This Ali is the master of him whose master I am. May Allah be friendly to him who is friendly to Ali and be hostile to him who is hostile to Ali.”

The Leaders of Islam

Following Imam Ali there are eleven leaders in his progeny (Peace be on them). The first of them is his son, Hasan, then Husayn, then Ali ibn Husayn, then Muhammad ibn Ali, then Ja'far ibn Muhammad, then Musa ibn Ja'far, then Ali ibn Musa, then Muhammad ibn Ali, then Ali ibn Muhammad, then Hasan ibn Ali then al-Hujjah al-Qa’im al-Mahdi al-Hadi ibn Hasan, Master of the Time (May Allah hasten his blessed advent). They are all rightful Imams, one after another, for each one of them designated the next one as his successor. The reports of this designation are continuous. The Holy Prophet himself has said: “This son of mine, Husayn is an Imam, son of an Imam, brother of an Imam and father of nine Imams. The ninth of them is their Qa'im who will fill the earth with justice and fair-play as it be filled with tyranny and oppression.”

Imams are Infallible

All the Imams are necessarily infallible and cleansed of all sins, petty or grave, committed intentionally or unintentionally, pertaining to sayings or doings, for if they committed sins, they would lose their position in the hearts of the people who would not have confidence in them. In such a condition how would they guide the straying and the misleading? There is a consensus of opinion that no one is infallible except the 12 Imams. Thus their leadership is an established fact.

Superiority of the Imams

The Imams must necessarily be most learned and the best of all people. Should they not be so, giving preference to the inferior without any cogent reason would follow, which is absurd by all rational and traditional standards.

The excellence of our Imams is well known. Their superiority is clearer than daylight and surer than the day which has passed.

The Religion of the Ancestors of the Prophets & Imams

It must be believed that the fore-fathers of our Holy Prophet and our Imams have always

been Muslims. Not only that but most of them have been deputies. The reports about Abu Talib's Islam which have come down to us from the members of the Holy Prophet's House are indisputable and exact. His life account is also a proof of His Islam.

The Awaited Saviour

The awaited Mahdi, Muhammad ibn Hasan (Peace be on him) was born during the lifetime of his father. He is in occultation, but is alive and will continue to live so long as the world lasts, for an infallible Imam must exist at all times. It is an agreed opinion of the Ummah that there could be no time when there would not be a master, either known and manifest or hidden and concealed. Moreover, Allah's grace is obligatory at all times. The Imam is His grace and so his existence is also obligatory.

His long life is not a far-fetched idea, for during the past ages many other persons such as Prophet Shu'ayb, Noah, Luqman, Khizr and Isa (Jesus) (Peace be on them) and Iblis (the Devil) and Dajjal (the Imposter) lived three thousand years or more. Moreover long life is possible, and whatever is possible, is within the power of Allah.

Imam Mahdi (Peace be On him) is not expected to have concealed himself of his own accord, for he is infallible and he cannot refrain from doing what is obligatory. Nor can be ordered by Allah to conceal himself, for Allah being Just and Judicious would not order him to do a wrong thing. Obviously it is improper for an Imam to hide himself from the eyes and to deprive the people from being benefited by his instructions. Therefore his occultation is due to the abundance of the enemies and the infidels and the paucity of the supporters.

The Mahdi must reappear, for the Holy Prophet has said: “Even if only one hour of the world was left, Allah would lengthen that hour until a man of my progeny would appear. His name would be the same as my name and his patronymic (kunyah) would be the same as my patronymic. He would fill the earth with justice and fair-play as it would be filled with tyranny and oppression. It would be obligatory for everybody to follow him.

Certain benefits continue to accrue from the Imam even during his occultation in the same way as the sun is beneficial even when it is under the cloud or a lamp is beneficial even when it is behind a curtain.

The Return (Raj'ah)

During the time of the Mahdi (May Allah hasten his blessed advent) our Holy Prophet and our infallible Imams (Peace be on them) will return to this world along with a body of men belonging to the past and the subsequent nations, with a view to demonstrate their power and establish their rights. This is what has been expressly mentioned by a number of continuous reports and Qur'anic verses. Allah says:

The day on which We will assemble a group from every people.

Therefore it is obligatory to believe in the doctrine of 'Return' (raj'ah).[1]

1. Surah an-Naml, 27:83

The Resurrection

Surely Allah will physically resurrect the dead as they were in this world in order to restore the rights to all those to whom they were due. The Resurrection of the dead is not inconceivable and the Prophets have informed us of it. The Holy Qur'an is full of the verses telling about Resurrection, and there is no possibility of interpreting them in some other way. Therefore it is obligatory to have belief in physical Resurrection.

Faith in the Message of the Holy Prophet [s]

It is obligatory to have faith in all that has been conveyed by the Holy Prophet and the Imams including what they have said about the Prophethood of the past Prophets, about the revealed Books, the existence of the angels, the account of what is going to happen in the grave, its punishment and its reward, revivification, its horrors, reckoning, the 'balance', the path, speaking of the limbs and organs, the existence of the Paradise, the Hell and the Fountain (a reservoir of nectar in Paradise) from which Imam Ali, Amirul Mu'minin will give water to the thirsty to drink on the Day of Resurrection, intercession of the Holy Prophet and the Imams on behalf of those who loved them out of the perpetrators of grave and deadly sins. The infallible Imams and the Holy Prophet have told us about all these things.

Repentance

Repentance, means regretting about anything wrong committed in the past, ceasing to commit it immediately and taking a firm decision not to commit it in future. It is obligatory as so many verses of the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Holy Prophet clearly indicate. common sense also appeals that one must take steps to ward off any possible harm.

Enjoining Good & Forbidding Evil

Urging what is right and forbidding what is evil are obligatory provided there is a chance of their being effective and there is no fear of any harm.

Invocation

O Allah! We complain of the loss of our Prophet, the absence of our Guardian, the paucity of our number and the abundance of our enemies. Therefore, O Allah, hasten the reappearance of our Guardian, the master of the Time. (May peace be on him) O Compassionate! O Benefactor!

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