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The title “Al-Qa’im” (The Riser)

Question:

As everyone knows, one of the titles of the Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) is “Al-Qa’im” (The Riser). A tradition has been related regarding the reason for his being given this title that requires contemplation, since it apparently indicates that this title was given because that personage will reappear after death. Yet we have over approximately one thousand traditions regarding that personage, his occultation, and long life, in view of which that tradition cannot be relied upon. However, if some clarifications about its narrators, text, and meaning can be given, it would be useful.

Answer:

The great scholar Shaykh al-Tusi narrates an unreliable tradition that apparently indicates that the “Qa’im” was given this title because he will arise after death. Shaykh al-Tusi has provided a bit of explanation about this tradition, but before we enter this topic, we consider it necessary to mention the basics of *Imamah* in Shiaism, which verses of the Noble Qur’an, traditions, and rational proofs affirm. These principles are as follows:

1. *Imamah* is a Divine covenant, and individuals—who are worthy of bearing it—are specified and appointed by Allah, and this Divine selection and appointment is announced to the people by the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family).
2. The most important conditions of the Imam are sinlessness and being more knowledgeable than all other people, such that all be in need of his knowledge, guidance, and direction, which he be free of need of all, as has been related about Khalil ibn Ahmad that he said about the *Imamah* of Amir al-Mu’minin (peace be upon him):

إِحْتِيَاجُ الْكُلِّ إِلَيْهِ وَاسْتِعْنَاؤُهُ عَنِ الْكُلِّ دَلِيلٌ عَلَى أَنَّهُ إِمَامٌ الْكُلِّ.

“The dependence of all others on him and his independence from all others are proof that he is the Imam of all.”¹

3. The earth will never be without a Divine Proof and Imam, and whoever dies without having recognized the Imam of his time dies the death of ignorance.

4. The Imams, as per the text of *mutawatir* traditions from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), are twelve personages.

5. They are twelve and all are from the Ahl al-Bait (peace be upon them) of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), and according to the meaning of the *mutawatir* traditions of Thaqalayn (The Two Weighty Things), they are equals of the Qur’an and shall never part from the Qur’an.

6. The Imams possess all of the religious and administrative stations except prophethood, which was sealed with the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his family). And as Imam ‘Ali (peace be upon him) has said in *Nahj al-Balagha*, they are قوام الله, or the Divine Guardians² over the creation, and on the basis of another tradition, they are the ship of salvation.

لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ عَرَفَهُمْ وَعَرَفُوهُ وَلَا يَدْخُلُ النَّارَ إِلَّا مَنْ أَنْكَرَهُمْ وَهُمْ سَفَنُ
النَّجَاةِ وَأَمَانُ الْأُمَّةِ مِنَ الضَّلَالِ وَالْإِخْتِلَافِ.

“None shall enter Paradise except one who recognizes them and whom they recognize, and none shall enter Hell except one who denies them; they are the ships of salvation and refuge of the ummat from deviation and discord.”³

7. The name, qualities, and order of the *Imamah* of the Imams (peace be upon them) was specified by the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), and in addition, each Imam specified the following Imam.

These are among the important foundations of belief in the principle of *Imamah*, and for every Muslim who believes in the unseen world and in Allah, messengership, and the messengership of the Seal of the Prophets (peace be upon him and his family), the criterion of truth of these fundamentals is a rational proof, Qur’anic verse, or definite and *mutawatir* tradition. And most of these fundamentals can be proven by all three means.

The fact that *Imamah* is a Divine covenant and Allah specifies it has been argued by rational and Qur’anic proofs and the consecutively-narrated *sunnat*. ‘Allamah Hilli has established one thousand proofs of this issue in *Alfain*, and in fact this issue has its roots in the unity of Allah, and like the principle of Divine Unity, it comprises unity of rulership and authority over creation:

لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَلَهُ الْأَمْرُ وَهُوَ السُّلْطَانُ وَهُوَ الْحَاكِمُ وَهُوَ الْوَلِيُّ وَهُوَ الْعَالِمُ بِمَصَالِحِ
عِبَادِهِ لَا أَمْرَ وَلَا نَهْيَ لِأَحَدٍ دُونِهِ.

“His is the command and rule, He is the King and the Ruler and the One in authority, He is the one who is cognizant of the interests of His servants. Commanding and Forbidding is for none save Him.”

In the issue of the necessity of sinlessness and being the most knowledgeable as well, abundant rational, Qur’anic, and narrational proofs exist, among which is this verse:

أَفَمَنْ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ أَحَقُّ أَنْ يُتَّبَعَ أَمَّنْ لَا يَهْدِي إِلَّا أَنْ يُهْدَى

“Then is one who guides to the truth more worthy to be followed, or one who does not find guidance except by being guided?”⁴

The late ‘Allamah has also established one thousand proofs about the issue of the necessity of sinlessness.

Regarding the principle that the earth shall not remain without a Proof and Imam, in addition to verses such as:

وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ

“And every people has a guide.”⁵

وَلَقَدْ وَصَّلْنَا لَهُمُ الْقَوْلَ

“And certainly we conveyed them the verses of Qur’an continuously.”⁶

يَوْمَ نَدْعُو كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ

“The day when We will call every people with their leader.”⁷

Mutawatir traditions are also found, among which is the well-known tradition of Kumail ibn Ziyad from

Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) which has been mentioned in *Nahj al-Balagha* and all other books of Zaydi and Twelver Shi'a and even in the reliable books of the Sunnis, such as *Tadhkirat ul-Huffaz*. From this it is known that all are agreed that the earth will never be empty of a Proof; of course, it makes no difference whether the Proof is apparent or hidden.

And in *Sawa'iq* and other books of the Sunnis, a discourse has been related from Imam Zain al-'Abidin (peace be upon him) in which it has been explicitly mentioned that the world is not without an Imam from the Ahl al-Bait (peace be upon them).

These principles have even been explicated in the supplications of the Imams from Ahl al-Bait (peace be upon them). In this regard, we will suffice with only a portion of the supplication of the day of 'Arafah from Imam Zain al-'Abidin (peace be upon him). That personage says:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ أَيَّدْتَ دِينَكَ فِي كُلِّ أَوَانٍ بِإِمَامٍ أَقَمْتَهُ عِلْمًا لِعِبَادِكَ وَ مَنَارًا فِي بِلَادِكَ
بَعْدَ أَنْ وَصَلْتَ حَبْلَهُ بِحَبْلِكَ وَ جَعَلْتَهُ الذَّرِيعَةَ إِلَى رِضْوَانِكَ وَ افْتَرَضْتَ طَاعَتَهُ وَ
حَذَرْتَ مَعْصِيَتَهُ وَ أَمَرْتَ بِامْتِنَالِ أَوْامِرِهِ وَ الْإِنْتِهَاءِ عِنْدَ نَهْيِهِ وَ أَنْ لَا يَتَقَدَّمَ
مُتَقَدِّمًا وَلَا يَتَأَخَّرَ عَنْهُ مُتَأَخِّرٌ فَهُوَ عِصْمَةُ اللَّائِذِينَ وَ كَهْفُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَ عُرْوَةُ
الْمُتَمَسِّكِينَ وَ بَهَاءُ الْعَالَمِينَ

“Allah! You have supported your religion in every age with an Imam whom You established as a standard for Your servants and a beacon in Your lands, after You linked his covenant with Yours and made him the means of Your pleasure, made obligatory his obedience and cautioned against his disobedience, commanded to execute his commands and shun what he forbids and that none should precede him nor stay back from him. Thus he is the guard of those seeking refuge and the recourse of the believers, handle of those who grasp (guidance) and the glory of the inhabitants of the universe.”⁸

Anyone who looks carefully at this portion of the supplication will both come to recognize the Shi'a viewpoint regarding the principle of *Imamah* and will also understand that this station and these affairs were established for the Imam from the beginning and no one has added anything to them.

As for the issue that “Whoever dies without recognizing the Imam of his time dies the death of ignorance,” this is also a principle which reliable traditions have conveyed explicitly. The reliable traditions of *Thaqalain* (the two weighty things), *Safina* (the ship of salvation), and *Aman* (safety) all indicate this point.

And it has been explicitly mentioned in *mutawatir* traditions that the Imams are twelve personages, all of whom are from the Ahl al-Bait of the Prophet, and eleven of them are from the progeny of 'Ali and Fatimah (peace be upon them), the first of them being Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him), and after

him Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba (peace be upon him), followed by the Prince of Martyrs Imam Husayn (peace be upon him), and after him nine people from his progeny, of whom the ninth—who is the twelfth Imam—is Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return).

Thus, since these principles have been established with firm proofs, eminent scholars such as Shaykh al-Tusi, Shaykh al-Mufid, Ibn Babawayh, 'Allamah Majlisi (Allah's mercy upon them all) have refuted by relying on these principles the statement of anyone who, previous to their time or subsequent to it, has said something to the contrary or given attention to a rare and unaccepted tradition. This is because the buttress of the proofs of these principles is reliable to an extent that it can even be claimed that after the principle of Divine unity and prophecy, no principle is so reliable.

In view of all this, no Shi'a scholar has held that the rising of the Qa'im (may Allah hasten his return) will occur after his death. And if anyone has brought up baseless possibilities, taking into account the points mentioned and since they are completely against objective realities, they must not be given any attention, since they have no scientific value.

After this preface and explanation of this point, the life and long occultation of the Imam has been established on the basis of these principles. There remains no room for this tradition that says the Qa'im (may Allah hasten his return) will rise after death, since this notion would result in the severing of the thread of *Imamah*, the earth's remaining without the existence of a sinless Imam, and the refutation of many traditions which indicate the life and long occultation of that personage.

Aside from all of these objections, the above-mentioned tradition's chain of narrators is not reliable, and none of the 'Ulama' or Fuqaha' (jurists) has relied on such traditions in even a single secondary issue. This is because one of the narrators is Musa ibn Sa'dan al-Hannat, whom scholars of rijal (the science of the study of narrators) have described as weak and whose narration they consider unreliable. He has narrated this tradition from 'Abdullah ibn Qasim, whom they have titled "The Ever-Lying Hero." He in turn narrates from Abu Sa'id al-Khurasani, and if we don't consider his existence unknown according to reference books of rijal, then his position—in terms of being truthful or dishonest—is unclear.

Now, contemplate; how can this tradition—whose narrator is the champion of fabrication—be relied upon in opposition to those firm fundamentals and hundreds of reliable traditions?

As for the reason for employing the title "Al-Qa'im" for the Imam of the Age (may Allah hasten his return):

"Al-Qa'im" means "the one who rises." The Imam shall rise against political conditions and religious and social deviations and fill the world with justice and equity after it had become filled with injustice and oppression. Additionally, the issue of rising with the sword and armed struggle is also understood from that title.

Nevertheless, since "rising" has weak and strong degrees, it can be understood from traditions that all of

the Imams were قائم بالأمر “*Qa’im bi ’l-amr*” (upholders of the affair), and it is proper and befitting to employ this title for all of them, in accordance with the positions they had. But since the rising of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) is a world uprising that subsumes all social, individual, political, and economical conditions of humanity and brings to fruition Allah’s promises to His prophets and the prophets’ prophecies to their people, this title is used without qualification for that personage. Thus, anytime they say “al-Qa’im” and their is not context that another one of the Imams is intended, Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) is understood from that.

In a tradition that Shaykh Saduq narrates in the book *Kamal al-Din* from Imam Muhammad at-Taqi (peace be upon him), the ninth Imam, it has come:

إِنَّ الْإِمَامَ بَعْدِي ابْنِي عَلِيٍّ...)

“The Imam after me is my son ‘Ali – Imam ‘Ali al-Naqi (peace be upon him) – whose command is my command, whose speech is my speech, and obedience to whom is obedience to me. And the Imamah after him has been placed in his son Hasan – Imam Hasan al-‘Askari (peace be upon him). His command is his father’s command, his word is his father’s word, and obedience to him is obedience to his father.

The narrator says, After that the Imam fell silent.

I asked, O’ son of the Messenger of Allah, then who is the Imam after Hasan (peace be upon him)?

The Imam at first wept to a great extent and then said, After Hasan, his son is the Establisher of Truth, the Awaited (القائم بالحق المنتظر).

I said, O’ son of the Messenger, why has that personage been named “Qa’im” (The Riser)?

The Imam replied, because after his name and remembrance is forgotten and most of the believers in his Imamah turn back from their creed, he shall rise.

I said, Why has he been named “Muntazar” (The Awaited)?

He replied, because he has an occultation with a very long duration, such true believers will wait for his advent and appearance, but people of doubt and uncertainty will deny and rejecters will ridicule him. Those who specify a time for it will become many and those who are hasty during that occultation will be destroyed, but the Muslims—those who submit—will achieve salvation.”⁹

‘Allamah Majlisi has said, the meaning of “death” that has come in that weak tradition is that that personage will arise after his name and memory has been forgotten.

And Shaykh Mufid relates a tradition from Imam as-Sadiq (peace be upon him) in *al-Irshad* in which he says, "سمي القائم لقيامه بالحق" "He was named the 'Qa'im' because he shall arise with truth."¹⁰

And from some narrations another reason that is understood is that the Imam was given this title by Allah because, in the worlds before this world, he used to stand and pray.

Regarding the entitling of that personage with the title "Al-Mahdi" as well, appropriate reasons have been mentioned. Of course, it is not the case that "Al-Qa'im" is the original title and "Al-Mahdi" is a secondary title. Both are titles and the usage of each name has a separate reason. Rather, it can be said that since the concept of the "Mahdi" is "the one whom Allah has guided" (من هداه الله), according to rank, a person must be "Qa'im" whom Allah has guided.

That is, the "Qa'im" must be "one whom Allah has guided," but it is not necessary that "one whom Allah has guided" must always be "Qa'im." However, the actions, reforms, movement, uprising, and stand that will take place by the Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return), such as establishment of a world government, are dependent on rising and the becoming actualized of the title "Qa'im."

These titles are not classified into primary and secondary, and all have been heard from the blessed tongues of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) and pure Imams (peace be upon them); nor do they have "old" and "new." Each has its own particular concept and each has been used with attention to a particular aspect. In texts, sometimes all of these titles are mentioned, sometimes one, and another time one title is mentioned before another.

In any case, application of these titles is on the basis of essential and actualized titles, all of which that personage possesses.

1. Mu'jam Rijal al-hadith, Volume 7, Page 76 and Tanfih al-Maqal, Volume 1, Page 403

2. Nahj al-Balagha, Subhi al-Salih, Speech 152, Part 7

3. Bihar al-Anwar, Volume 6, Page 233

4. Surah Yunus (10), Verse 35

5. Surah Ra'd (13), Verse 7

6. Surah Qasas (28), Verse 51

7. Surah Isra' (17), Verse 71

8. Sahifah Sajjadiyah, Supplication 47

9. Kamal ad-Din, Volume 2, Page 378, Section 36, hadith 3. See also, Ma'ani al-Akhbar

10. Irshad of Shaykh Mufid, Page 364

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