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Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA

Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya

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Prerequisites of a Rightly Guided Khilafa

Adam Walker, Alislam Team

It is disheartening to see many writers impose certain stringent characteristics and qualities as a pre-requisite to becoming a Khalifa. They mean to set a uniform standard to which every prospective Khalifa must meet otherwise he would not be a worthy of the office. It is not unreasonable to expect a Khalifa to tick all the boxes which are required of all Muslims in adherence to the blessed 'Articles of Faith,' however, to devise such strict classifications is an error and the proceeding paragraphs are aimed to alleviate such misconceptions.

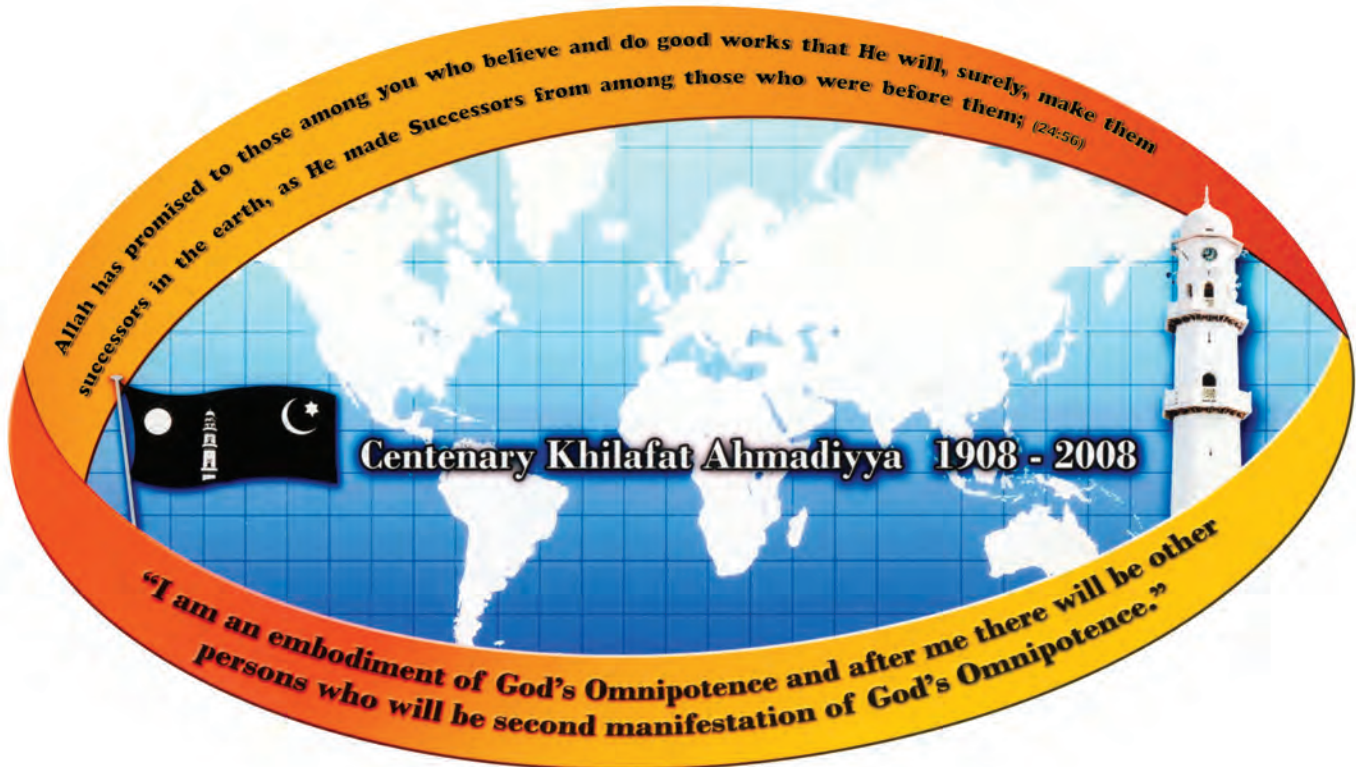


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It is important to first note that some classical writers have imposed certain 'skills/knowledge requirements' on the office of Khilafat-e-Mulk (*Temporal Khilafat, Kingship*) which have subsequently, throughout the echoes of time, been manipulated to cover both Rightly Guided leadership and ordinary Kingship as if the two were the same. Other classical writers have not set out to impose prerequisites upon Khalifas but have created scholarly treaties which merely highlight characteristics which were common amongst the Rightly Guided Khalifas. A final category of writers have stipulated prerequisites which are not based on independent reasoning but rather taken from the Book of Allah the Almighty and Sunnah, these prerequisites amount to standards which should be upheld by all sincere believers. A number of Modern writers have done a disservice to the true intentions of these classical writers by creating mischievous ambiguities.

As mentioned above, several classical commentators have outlined common qualities required of a Khalifa, for example Hadhrat Shah Wali Allah (may Allah's mercy be on him) writes that there are several qualities which a Khalifa

should have but that these qualities are universal to all types of Kings and Rulers both in Islam and other societies. The universal qualities listed are,

"(1) Sanity, (2) malehood, (3) bravery, (4) wisdom and the ability to hear, observe and articulate."

In addition to these universal prerequisites he says that Islam places its hallmark on the required qualities of a Khalifa by stipulating a further three, namely,

"(1) total loyalty to Islam, (2) keen insight and understanding in the matters of shariah and, (3) a high level of integrity and high level of conduct ("adalah")."

In his book, Minhaj, Ibn Taymiyyah puts forward the following qualities as required by a Khalifa,

"(1) The Imam should be a Qurayshi, (2) He should be appointed by the con-

sultation of the Muslims, (3) He should receive the oath of allegiance from the Muslims, and (4) He should possess the quality of Justice."

With respect to the potential candidates and their eligibility for the post of Khalifa, there are seven conditions of eligibility outlined by one of the most prominent classical writers on Khilafah and the Islamic state, Al-Mawardi, in his al-Ahkam, these are set out as follows,

"(1) Justice or probity with all its attributers; (2) Knowledge conducive to the exercise of independent judgment in crisis or decision making; (3) Sound hearing vision and speech so that perception could serve as a correct basis for action; (4) Physical fitness and freedom from handicaps to movement or agility of action; (5) Prudence that ensures wise handling of the subjects and able mainte-

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nance of their interests; (6) Dauntless courage in defence of the homeland and repulsion of its enemies; and (7) Notable Qurayshite descent, a matter indisputably settled by explicit text and general consensus.”

The above prerequisites are, in general, standard qualities, except the last one, which common sense demands of any ruler of the faithful. Other commentators unnecessarily impose much stricter prerequisites upon a Khalifa, however, there are several important reasons why it is illogical for them to do so. It is clear that a Rightly Guided Khalifa comes to assume his position through the Divine manifestation of Allah’s Will. Keeping this in mind it would be untenable to question or place provisos upon Allah’s Will, with the exception to those stipulations which Allah the Almighty and His Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) have already stated in the primary and secondary sources of Islam. Ordinary man has no place in this process for surely Allah the Almighty has said in the Qur’an,

“Do you see what you sow, is it you who grow it or are we the grower?”

It is here made clear that Allah’s Majesty brings about change and not the ef-

forts of man as man is only able to sow a crop by virtue of the fact that God has created a system which permits it to bear fruit. This is furthermore highlighted in the verse of Istikhlaf where Allah the Almighty explicitly says that it is He Who will establish Successors on this Earth.

The relationship between Allah the Almighty and His appointed Khalifa is a private one which no person is capable of intruding upon it with independent prerequisites. This special relationship is most beautifully described by Hadhrat Shah Wali Allah (may Allah’s mercy be on him) as follows,

“The Will of God which descends from above the seventh heaven to spread the prophetic guidance among the people, to protect the prophetic light and make it dominant, and to effect the execution of the promises made to the Prophet, creates an urge in the heart of the khalifa. There may be thousands whose hearts are filled by divine inspiration, with the urge to help the Religion of the prophet, but this khalifa is among them (the Muslims) as the heart is among organs of the body. First of all, the divine inspiration enters the heart of the khalifa and then from there it reaches the hearts of other persons. This inspiration enters

the heart of the khalifa through the agency of the Prophet and urges from inside, and unless it urges from inside no one can become special khilafah.”

Highlighted here is that the office of Khalifa is not any ordinary seat of authority but requires Divine appointment and inspiration. The post of Khalifa is not like any worldly role; there is no apparent chain of authority to climb so as to attain the status of a Khalifa, and it is certainly not possible to google a Khalifa’s job description. The following saying of the Holy Prophet illustrates this point,

Allah’s Apostle said, “(O ‘Abdur-Rahman!) Do not seek to be a ruler, for, if you are given the authority of ruling without your asking for it, then Allah will help you; but if you are given it by your asking, then you will be held responsible for it (that is, Allah will not help you). And if you take an oath to do something and later on find another thing, better than that, then do what is better and make expiation for (the dissolution of) your oath.”

The mission of each Khalifa can only be understood when placed beneath the shadow of the deceased Prophet they have succeeded. As a starting point, it is a mistake to believe that with the passing of

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a Prophet his Prophetic mission is complete. The purpose of Khilafah is to nurture and continue the mission of the deceased Prophet as certain objectives of that mission may not be realized until long after his passing away. Commenting on this Hadhrat Khalifatul-Masih IV (may Allah's mercy be on him) writes,

“Khilafat is the successor after the prophet in the form of a person who is representing the deceased prophet...”

Further expanding this Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih II (may Allah be pleased with him) writes:

“According to nature’s physical laws, man has only a limited life span, but the task of reformation and training of society requires a much longer time. So, Allah has established the system of Khilafat after the system of Prophethood. The Khalifa continues and carries on the task of the Prophet. The seed sown by the Prophet is protected and nurtured by the Khalifa till it becomes a strong and sturdy tree.”

This concept is also wonderfully delved into by Hadhrat Shah Wali Allah (may Allah's mercy be on him) who explains, by means of analogy, that Allah the Almighty has fixed the prescribed times for the five daily prayers and we cannot fulfill our obligations to pray each of those prayers prior to their appointed times. Similarly a Prophet may come about to revive and warn mankind and whilst some of his goals may be initiated during his lifetime they may only come into fruition at a later divinely appointed time after his death, hence the need for Khilafah to nourish and help bring about these initiatives.

Touching on this issue, and more broadly explaining the description of what and who a Khalifa is, the following quotation is extremely insightful and comprehensive. Quoting from the Isti'ab of Ibn 'Abd al-Bar, Hadhrat Shah Wali Allah (may Allah's mercy be on him) writes that the special Khilafah (Al-Khilafah Al-Khassah) is based on three fundamental principles,

“The prophets are created with the purest and noblest souls and it is on account of this quality that they become the recipients of divine revelation and are given the charge of guiding mankind.



“According to nature’s physical laws, man has only a limited life span, but the task of reformation and training of society requires a much longer time. So, Allah has established the system of Khilafat after the system of Prophethood. The Khalifah continues and carries on the task of the Prophet. The seed sown by the Prophet is protected and nurtured by the Khalifah till it becomes a strong and sturdy tree.”

– Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IIth

Only God knows as to who among them posses this pure and refined nature, for the Qur'an says, “Allah knows the soul to which he assigns the commission of proph-ecy.” Similarly, in the ummah also there are some people whose soul is created almost pure and noble as that of the Proph-ets, and these are the people who become the real successors of the prophet. They get the spiritual illumination from the Prophet that others cannot get. And whatever knowledge they receive from him they believe in as if they have seen its truth and received its essence indepen-

dently and the prophet has only con-firmed it by giving its details. So the spe-cial Khalifa means that just as the Khalifa is the head of the Muslims in the temporal sense he is also their head in the spiritual sense.

The real successor of the prophet is like a pipe. When someone plays on a pipe and produces a sweet melody in the atmosphere this performance is attributed not to the pipe but to the piper. Similarly God has promised to do many things through the Prophet but he called him

back before all of them were realized. The remaining things were then performed by his successors, and this performance will be attributed to the Prophet rather than these people, because they are, like the pipe, his mere organs. Thus the special Khalifa is one who compliments the works of the Prophets which have been explicitly and implicitly mentioned in the Qur'an and Hadith.

The Khalifa is an office of great responsibility. But satisfaction of the uncontrollable physical desires and devilish tendency are ingrained in the very instinct and blood of man. Therefore, if the Khalifa is elected by the people, the possibility is there that he may do tyranny and injustice. Hence there must be some factor to remove this possibility, so that normally it might be impossible for the khalifa to be negligent or tyrannical in performing his duties. This fear, however, cannot be removed except by the text (nass) of the Book or the Sunnah. So the special Khalifa is one whose knowledge and sense of equity are guaranteed by God and His Prophet."

There is no greater example of this than that of the Rightly Guided Khalifas who followed the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). An in-depth study into each of their blessed terms as Khalifas draws us to the conclusion that each of them was gifted different personal qualities of excellence. For example, after the passing of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) each of the companions reacted differently but it was the unique strength of Hadhrat Abdu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) which led him to stand firm and lead the Ummah in its greatest time of distress. Commenting on this the great mufassir (commentator on the Holy Qur'an) Al-Qurtubi very poignantly points out that this very action of Hadhrat Abu Bakr was the highest display of courage, "if bravery is defined as having a firm and steadfast heart during times of hardship and calamities. And there was no calamity that was greater than the death of the Holy Prophet."

Another such example is that Hadhrat Khataman-Nabiyyeen (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) gave

orders for a military expedition to be dispatched to Syria under the command of Hadhrat Usama bin Zaid, however, it was not until the Khilafah of Hadhrat Abu Bakr (may Allah's mercy be on him) that this order was fulfilled. Despite many of the companions being against this expedition for noble reasons Hadhrat Abdu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) stood firm in fulfilling the command of Hadhrat Mohammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him).

Qureyshite Descent

As you may have gathered, there are several scholars who stipulate that a Khalifa must be of Quraishite descent, some go so far as to say that he must be a direct descendent of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). There are several faults in this contention; firstly this would go directly against the Qur'anic injunction,

"O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female; And We have made you tribes and sub-tribes that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable among you, in the sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous among you. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware."

How can it be that the most honorable among the dwellers of this world are those who are most righteous yet only a member of the Quraish can achieve the status of Khalifa. Furthermore, how can it be that Allah the Almighty has raised righteous Prophets before Mohammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) from non-Quraishite lineage yet a Khalifa must now be of Quraishite descent?

This contention also goes against the following verse of the Holy Qur'an,

"Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do good works that He will, surely, make them successors in the earth, as He made Successors from among those who were before them; and that He will, surely, establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them; and that He will, surely, give them in exchange security and peace after their fear; They will worship ME and they will not associate anything with ME. Then whoso disbelieves after that, they will be

the rebellious."

Here Allah the Almighty makes no mention of the need for a person to be of the Quraish to achieve the station of Khalifa but instead says those 'who believe and do good works'.

We must also consider the farewell sermon of the Holy prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) (*Khutbatul Wada*) in which he (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) said,

"All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black, nor a black has any superiority over a white - except by piety and good action."

The distinction of one believer over another is here defined by piety and good action; lineage is not only not mentioned but expressly ruled out as a defining factor.

Knowledge

It is also common amongst classical commentators (al-Mawardi, Shah Wali Allah, al-Junaid and Ibn Taymiyyah) to stipulate that a Khalifa should have sufficient knowledge to allow him to come to an independent decision. This requirement is not highlighted as a primary requirement but nevertheless is stipulated, the scholars do not generally elaborate on this issue. It is of course reasonable to hold that a Khalifa, or indeed any person of authority, should have an advanced level of spiritual and theological knowledge, however, it is unwarranted to stipulate they must have been educated in such and such institute or studied such and such subject in a strictly prescribed manner. In addressing this issue we must once again return to the words of Allah the Almighty, "Do you see what you sow, is it you who grow it or are we the grower?" Allah the Almighty is all Powerful and thus elevates whom He wishes, and by whatever means He wishes, to any status He pleases. Such appointments are Divinely ordained and to place 'worldly' limitations of learning upon them would be a contradiction in terms.

Hadhrat Shah Wali Allah writes in his 'Izalah' that a Khalifa requires a good grasp of Islamic law in relation to the

Qur'an and Sunnah so as to be able to discharge the following,

- *Judicial functions at the highest level;*
- *revival of the religious sciences; and*
- *Enjoining good and forbidding evil.*

These prerequisites are easily misunderstood, thus, in order to clarify the stand point of Hadhrat Shah Wali Allah (may Allah's mercy be on him) we must turn to the following explanation of the above as offered by Hadhrat Muhammad al-Ghazali (may Allah's mercy be on him),

"It is therefore, necessary for the khalifa to possess thorough knowledge of a large body of Islamic injunctions (ahkam) along with their detailed proofs (al-adillah al-tafsiliyya) derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, consensus (ijma) and analogical reasoning (qiyas). This means that he should understand each injunction pertaining to his functions as khalifa in relation to its effective cause (illah). However, according to Shah Wali Allah, the Khalifa need not be an independent (mustaqill) mujtahid like Abu Hanifa or al-Shafi'i. It would rather suffice for him to be a mujtahid muntasib, that is, a mujtahid affiliated with any one of the four major schools of law. This would require, instead, an acute understanding of the investigations made on legal injunctions along with their supporting arguments by the first elders of the Muslim community (salaf)."

One could easily fall into the worldly and short sighted trap of assuming that knowledge is the premise from which we should judge if a man is fit to be a Khalifa or not. It is here that I once again reiterate that the position of Khalifa cannot be compared with any worldly role for indeed a Khalifa is a Divine appointment and not reliant on the temporal substance of this world but is elevated to his position through the Grace and Wisdom of Allah the Almighty. Again, when describing special

Khilafah (or Khilafah Khassah as he terms it) Hadhrat Shah Wali Allah (may Allah's mercy be on him) gives us another unique insight into this subject as described by Muhammad al-Ghazali,

*"...a Khalifa belonging to the category of khilafah khassah, is distinguished by his auxiliary role in the realization of the supreme objectives that have been regarded as part of the Prophet's mission, according to the Qur'an and Prophet's traditions. The achievement of these objectives is indeed attributed to the Prophet, but the Khulufa' do become instrumental in it in some way. Further, such Khulufa' command an extraordinarily high degree of confidence and faith of the Muslim community in their leadership. This faith stems from the explicit and implicit approval pronounced in the Qur'an and by the Prophet's traditions in favor of their installation. On the other hand, a Khalifa who belongs to the category of Khilafah ammah, does not enjoy this lofty level of faith from the community. **Members of the community do support his appointment on account of his high level of knowledge and integrity, but they do so merely on the basis of their opinion in that behalf and not pursuant to any revelational indication or Prophetic approval to that effect.**"*

Hadhrat Shah Wali Allah (may Allah's mercy be on him) makes it crystal clear in the above summary that one could reach a lofty level of temporal knowledge but this would in no way suffice, that is to say, that only with the support of Allah the Almighty can one really qualify as a Khalifa.

To silver stamp this point Hadhrat Shah Wali Allah (may Allah's mercy be on him) shows that during the lives of the Rashid Khulafa there were several individuals who were relied upon as sources of knowledge within the Khilafah. Hadhrat Shah Wali Allah (may Allah's mercy be on him) identifies certain individuals as those companions whom succeeded Hadhrat Mohammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) in the domain of knowledge, these include (1) Abd 'Allah Ibn Masud (field of Qur'anic Sciences and Law), (2) Mu'adh ibn Jabal (Judiciary), (3) Zayd Ibn Thabit (Law of Inheritance).

Hadhrat Shah Wali Allah (may Allah's mercy be on him) defines the above successorships as partial Khalifa as opposed to what he labeled 'absolute Succession' (*al-khilafah al-mutlaqah*) which he says requires extra qualities allowing the 'khalifa al-mutlaqah' to be 'competent to shoulder the responsibilities of state and Government' in addition to knowledge.

I would conclude this matter with two quotations; the first is of Imam al-Shafi'i (may Allah's mercy be on him) who is reported to have said,

"Knowledge is not what is memorized, but what benefits."

The second is of al-Amiri (may Allah's mercy be on him) who goes to the heart of the subject emphasizing that a Divinely appointed ruler only achieves power through the Mercy and Grace of Allah the Almighty and not by means of temporal worldly pursuits, he writes,

*"Expressed in the most universal terms, the things necessary for (the preservation of the world) are two: true prophecy and real royal authority. Learning and wisdom know no higher force than prophecy. Power and dignity know no higher source than Royal Authority. No human being can have both or one of them, except as a gift from heaven. This is indicated in the following verse of the Qur'an: **'Or do they envy the people because of the favors God has bestowed upon them? We have given the family of Abraham the book and wisdom, and we have given them great royal authority (iv. 54/57). And the Qur'an speaks of Moses as addressing him people as follows: 'Remember the favor God bestowed upon you when He made prophets appear among you and made you rulers (v. 20/23).'***

There can be no doubt that this is so. Consequently, as we must realize, the ranks of rulers must strike for essential nobility in their moral qualities like nobody else, because rulers are the real example for all those below them. They are what a mirror is for a man that is not clean. A mirror which is not cleaner than the face of the man who looks into it, does not do the slightest good. Any ruler who does not try hard to subdue his ignoble qualities cannot hope to receive praise, nor can he rid his subjects of his faults."



The institution of Khilafah is frequently referred to as Imamate which is derived from the word Imam to denote, amongst other things, that the Khalifa is the Imam and leads the prayers as a part of his responsibilities. This is a position of extreme importance because the Imam is in effect the best manifestation of the Ummah and represents them before Allah the Almighty. We understand from the below hadith that believers are guaranteed great security and protection when planted firmly behind the Imam and remaining obedient to his command,

“Verily the Imam is a shield...”

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) further impresses this point in the following hadith,

“The Imam is like a shelter for whose safety the Muslims should fight and where they should seek protection...”

Khalifa as the Imam

Adam Walker, Alislam Team



Khalifatul Masih V, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

In this hadith the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) not only admonishes the believers to remain firmly attached to the Imam but that they should outwardly struggle and strive to keep hold of this blessed station of shelter. In the following hadith we are intricately reminded as to the precise degree of obedience required of us by the Imam,

“The Imam is (appointed) to be followed. So do not differ from him, bow when he bows, and say, “rabbana-lakal-hamd” if he says “sami‘allahu liman hamidah”; and if he prostrates, prostrate (after him), and if he prays sitting, pray sitting all together, and straighten the rows for the prayer, as the straightening of the rows is amongst those things which make your prayer a correct and perfect one.”

In history there exists no greater personification of the Imam than Hadhrat Mohammad (peace and blessings of Allah

be on him) whose characteristics amounted to nothing less than the Holy Qur’an itself. In a majestic couplet the Promised Messiah (peace be on him) describes the magnificence of the Imamate of Hadhrat Mohammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) writing,

Muhammad is the Imam and light of both the worlds;

He it is who illuminates time and space.

It is said that the love and obedience of the companions to the Holy Prophet’s (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) Imamate was so deep that on journeys many of them would ensure they took along with them someone who had previously travelled with the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) on the same journey so that he could show them the exact spot the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him)



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had stopped to pray at. They would then stop at that point and pray where the Beloved of Allah (*Habeebullah*) had prayed.

Another illuminating sign of the importance of the Imamate is found in the Holy Prophet's (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) appointment of Hadhrat Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) as the Imam during his time of illness. This incident is recorded in the following hadith Narrated by Hadhrat Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her),

“When the Prophet, became ill in his fatal illness, someone came to inform him about the prayer, and the Prophet told him to tell Abu Bakr to lead the people in the prayer. I said, “Abu Bakr is a soft-hearted man and if he stands for the prayer in your place, he would weep and would not be able to recite the Qur’an.” The Prophet said, “Tell Abu Bakr to lead the prayer.” I said the same as before. He (repeated the same order and) on the third or the fourth time he said, “You are the companions of Joseph. Tell Abu Bakr to lead the prayer.” So Abu Bakr led the prayer and meanwhile the Prophet felt better and came out with the help of two men; as if I see him just now dragging his feet on the ground. When Abu Bakr saw him, he tried to retreat but the Prophet beckoned him to carry on. Abu Bakr retreated a bit and the Prophet sat on his

(left) side. Abu Bakr was repeating the Takbir (Allahu Akbar, God is great) of Allah's Apostle for the people to hear.”

The above hadith provides one of the strongest proofs that Hadhrat Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) was rightfully entitled to become the first Khalifatur-Rasool (Successor to the Prophet). This fact alone shows how important the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) valued the position of Imamate. Discussing this Imam Al-Ghazali (may Allah have mercy on him) writes,

“As the entire life is regarded as ‘ibadah (servitude to God), therefore, the leader of the Muslim community in the temporal sphere was granted the same title as assigned to their leader in the ritual activity of salat. That is why, when the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) designated Abu Bakr as imam in the prayers during his last days, the Muslims generally took this to imply the Prophet's preference for him as his successor in the mundane affairs as well.”

The facts surrounding the great spiritual blessing of the Imam Mahdi's Imamate are so wondrous and vast that they expand beyond the remit of this article. For a most comprehensive understanding of this subject I refer you to the dazzling book of the Imam Mahdi Hadhrat Mirza

Ghulam Ahmad (peace be on him) which is titled ‘The Need for the Imam’ (*Darurat-ul-Imam*). It is however worth briefly mentioning two hadiths which illustrate the importance of the Imamate of the Imam Mahdi and the need for all sincere lovers of Allah the Almighty and His beloved Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) to actively seek and locate the Imam Mahdi. The hadiths are as follows,

1. *“He who dies in a condition that he has not recognized the Imam of the age dies a death of ignorance.”*

2. *“When you hear the advent of Mahdi then enter into his fold even if you have to walk on snow by crawling and creeping to reach him.”*

In light of the above illustrations it is important that seekers of truth cherish, and take benefit from the Khilafat-e-Waqt by ensuring they make solemn efforts to pray as sincerely and often as possible behind the Khalifa. An especial effort should also be made to attend the Friday prayers and drink from elixir of the fountain of spirituality which Allah the Almighty has showered upon the Khalifa and Imam of the Ummah. The Promised Messiah (peace be on him) has beautifully instructed that all believers should visit the Center (markaz) as often as possible because such visits offer us spiritual purification and enlightenment.