

THE QUESTION OF SIMILARITY

BY

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A-lal lahu Muqamah

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Of late the question of SIMILARITY between the seal of the Prophethood and that of Sainthood has become a subject for discussion. What is surprising to me is that many of those who participate in discussions do not even have the basic knowledge of Daai (داعی) Tabai (تابعی) Mathbu (متبوع) and their limitations. Infact Hazrath Afzal-ul-ulema, in one of his articles, appeared in Urdu Monthly NOOR-E-HAYAT in June 1981, has in detail discussed the issue most convincingly. As most of the members of young generation and particularly those who are settled abroad are not fully conversant with urdu, I thought it would be appropriate if this article is put into English. Hence I did so and later in April - June this year when I visited States, I showed this to Hazrath Abul Fateh Syed Nusrat Saheb in Chicago. I am glad to say that Haz. Nusrat Miyan Saheb despite his health and being in rest after a major Surgery case, took pains to go through the article minutely, and carried out corrections /additions/ alterations wherever necessary and thereafter forced me to get it printed for the benefit of one and all.

Hence it is coming to you on this auspicious & memorable day of 574th Birth Anniversary of IMAM MEHDI A.S. with the co-operation of Hazrath Jalal Miyan Saheb of NOOR-E-HAYAT.

I do not think that the work is flawless and I shall be thankful if our readers take the trouble to bring the same to my knowledge so that errors if any are removed in the next edition.

I am thankful one and all who helped me in this respect and pray Allah the most beneficent and merciful to bless them all.

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The Article By

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THE SIMILARITY BETWEEN THE TWO SEALS

May Allah bless them and give them peace

Shortly before he expired, Hazrat Imam Mahdi (PBUH), while resting his head in the lap of Bandagi Miyan Syed Khundmir Siddiq-e-Wilayat (RZA) recited and stated the (Divinely taught) meaning of the following Quranic verse:

قل هذه سبيلي ادعوا الى الله على بصيرة انا ومن اتبعني و سبحان الله وما انا من المشركين
(١٠٨ . يوسف)

Meaning : Say thou (O Muhammad): "This is my way, I do invite unto Allah on an insight, clear as the seeing with one's eyes, I and the one who followeth me. Glory be to Allah! And I am not of the polytheists:". (Al-Quran 12/108)

The "Rationalist Commentators" (Mufasssireen-e-Mutakallimeen) have taken little care in interpreting this particular verse. The words "ILAL-LLAH" meaning "towards Allah", were interpreted by them as "ILA DEENILLAH" "towards the religion of God" which means that I call towards the religion of Allah. The Quranic word "Baseerath" was interpreted by them as 'a clear logic'. The term "Tabi-Follower" in the verse was interpreted as a common follower, whether he happened to be a perfect or a defective follower. The said scholars meant that it was them who had to invite people towards religion of Islam

through argument and logic.

We differ with this kind of interpretation of the verse. In standard dictionaries the word "Baseerath" has been defined to mean "Insight" besides "clear logic" etc, and several saintly/sufi commentators have preferred to adopt "insight" instead of "logic" etc. God Almighty in the above verse used the word "Tabi-Follower" in an absolute sense and from the absolute "Mutlaq" as a rule, always the most perfect individual of the kind of group is interpreted. Hence, the defective follower who cannot follow the Prophet (May Allah bless him and give him peace) perfectly cannot be meant as the "follower" mentioned in the verse and his call cannot be admissible. An "innocent" i.e, one who is free from sin, can be perfectly followed only by the one, who is himself an "innocent". His call towards Allah will be as obligatory to respond as the call of the Messenger of Allah himself (PBUH). And that happens to be the person of the Caliph of Allah Imam Mahdi (PBUH). The following tradition of the Prophet (PBUH) happens to be the real interpretation of the term "Follower" in the verse:

المهدى منى يقفو اثرى ولا يخطيح

"Al-Mahdi-u Minni Yaqfoo Asari Wa La Yukhti"

(Meaning) The Mahdi is from me, he will walk in my foot steps and he will never err.

It is written in the commentary of Quran called the "Taweelat" that by the words "Hazihi Sabeeli" - this is my way, is meant the oneness of the person of God. And Shaik Akbar (Muhiuddin Ibn Arabi) R.A. has said that from the word "Mann" in the phrase "Manit-taba-ani" Imam Mahdi (PBUH) is meant.

Our Imam (PBUH) too said that by the word "Maun" in this verse is meant my own humble self.

A rule of Arabic grammar lays down that when negative particle Ma = ما = Not, precedes an independent pronoun (first person), the quality it negates becomes the specific trait of the said first person. Hence, in the Quranic Verse:

وما انا من المشركين

WA MA ANA MINAL MUSHRIKEEN

meaning "And I am not of the polytheists", particle "Ma" ما has preceded the 1st person pronoun "Ana" This makes the total negation of polytheism the specific quality of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) because the independent pronoun denoting 1st person "Ana" meaning "I" stands for the very holy person of the Prophet himself (PBUH).

And since total negation of polytheism is the quality of the "Da-ee Illalahi ala baseeratin" the one who calls towards Allah on an insight, i.e. the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and his perfect follower, Imam Mahdi's holy person too is the one who calls people towards Allah on an insight, the total negation of polytheism would be his quality also. Hence, while stating the divinely taught meaning of the verse our Imam (PBUH) said that:

ماهر دو از جمله مشركان نه ايم

"Ma her do az jumla-e-Mushrikan Na-aim"

we both are not from among the polytheists

On hearing this Bandagi Miyan Syed Khundmir (RZA) inquired softly from Hazrat Syed Mahmood, Sani-e-Mahdi (RZA) as to what kind of shirk-polythesim is meant by this and it should be clarified, otherwise it would be difficult in the future. Thereupon, Imam Mahdi (PBUH) opened his eyes and told that one who envisioned Allah as limited is the polytheist. This statement of Imam Mahdi (PBUH) means that one who envisions Allah as limited is a polytheist or "Mushrik" and since both the Seals - "Khatimain" only do not envision Allah as limited they are not polytheist - "Mushrik", The vision of God is of two kinds, one is absolute or unlimited and the other is limited. The unlimited vision of Allah is called Ruyat-e-Mutlaqa, it is absolute and without any medium and there is no end to it. On the other hand Ruyat-e-Muqayidah is limited, it is indirect and it stops at some station (Maqam). Both the Seals of God (may Allah bless them and give them peace) happen to be the "mirror" of the person of oneness. Their vision is not through any medium. This kind of vision is referred to as "Ruyat-e-Mulaqa". Except the two seals (peace be upon them) whoever beholds Gods beholds Him ii. the "Niche" - Mishkath of the seal of Vilyah of Muhammad (PBUH), i.e. Mishkat-e-Khatim-e-Vilayatt-e-Muhammadiya This is a 'limited vision'. Since this kind of vision has an element of 'Strangeness', the term 'shirk' can be notionally applied to it. The two Seals (peace be upon them) are free and over and above from this nominal 'shirk' also. *"Wa Ma Ana Minal Mushrikeen"* - I am not one amongst the polytheists is the dominion of this Station".

Some people mistake "Fana-e-Kamil" - perfect effacing of self and "Ruyat-e-Mutlaqa" - absolute vision, as one and the same. Whereas, after Fana-e-kamil - perfect annihilation of self, the

medium of the Niche of the Seal of Vilayah of Muhammad is a must. The place of absolute vision is a higher than the perfect annihilation since, it is the 'station' specially meant for the two seals, (peace be upon them). "Sar Ta Pa Musalmani" or being Muslim from top to toe, and the direct blessing "Faiz-e-Bila Waseta", etc are some of the interpretations of this 'station'.

Since our Imam has given the glad tidings of "Sar Ta Pa Musalmani" -being muslim from top to toe and Faiz-e-Bila Waseta, direct blessings to Meeran Syed Mahmood and Miyan Syed Khundmir, after the two seals (peace be upon them) only the 'Syedain' - the two pious Syeds (RZA) by the grace of Allah were Muslim from top to toe and both of them reached the station of absolute vision. The only difference is that for the two Seals, the station of absolute vision is originally meant and the Syedain have reached it as their followers.

The other form of Ruyat-e-Muqayidah - limited vision is that the quest of the seeker of God ends at one station and he becomes content with one glorious vision or he may be a manifestation of only one trait. This is termed as 'limited vision'. Since the two Seals are the manifestations of the very 'person' and they are the real 'Abdullahs' - Servants of God, their 'Sair' or quest does not end at any point. That is why our Imam (PBUH) said that there is no limit to the 'person of Allah' and there is no end to the quest of the two Seals. This is the Ruyat-e-Mutlaqa or the absolute vision. Compared to this unending Ruyah - vision, the vision mentioned earlier which ends at a 'station' is notionally treated or taken as 'Shirk' - polytheism from which the two seals (peace be upon them) are completely free. As the 'Syedain' - the

two Seals (peace be upon them) are completely free. As the 'Syedain' the two Syed have 'Sair' - journey in the 'Being' of the two Seals , the Syedain too have an unending spiritual journey which does not end at a given point. From this point of view the two Syeds (RZA) also have the Ruyat-e-Mutlaqa or absolute vision which is the special trait of the two seals. The two Syeds are attributed with this trait in following the two Seals.

ذالك فضل الله يوتيهِ من ايشاء

That is the grace of Allah, He grants to whoever he likes.

This very 'Station' is the place where there is no difference between the Messenger and the Mahdi (peace be upon them) and between Meeran Syed Mahmood (RZA) and Miyan Syed Khundmir (RZA). If this particular fact is kept in view, there remains no doubt in the mind about the equality of the two Seals and the equality of the two Syeds being the truth.

The 'equality of Syedain' is our Quami Eteqad - collective faith of our group which is based on the sayings of Hazrat Mahdi, the promised one (PBUH), which happens to be beyond any question and which does not require any proof or argument to be accepted as true. However, the equality of the Messenger and the Promised Mahdi (Peace be upon them) is not confined to the Mahdavis alone. The 'Muhaqqiqqen of Ahl-e-Sunnah' the realists, meaning the Saints and Sufi scholars belonging to the people of Sunnah are also convinced and they believe in the equality of the two Seals (Peace be upon them). According to them Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) is the Seal of Prophets and Hazrat Mahdi (PBUH) is the Seal of Saints of Islam. The relationship between

Hazrat Rasool Ullah (PBUH) and Hazrat Mahdi the promised (PBUH) as contemplated by the said realist scholars is the same which we Mahdavis believe. The Sunni scholars have given different interpretations to these relations. Some of them describe this relation between the two Seals as 'Similarity', some call it 'Resemblance', some others call it 'resemblance in totality', yet some others call it 'Equality'. Mahdavia term the 'Taswiath - Equality' is the same describing the relation between the Prophet and the Imam (peace be upon them).

Before we ascertain the relationship between the two Seals it would be interesting to know if there can be a person identical to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH).

About 100 years ago in India, scholars discussed the issue whether from the followers of the Prophet (PBUH) there can be a person similar to him? Maulvi Abdul Hai Farangi Mahli quoting a tradition (Hadith) argued in favour of the possibility. Hazrat Ibn Abbas narrated that - Like the seven skies, there are seven Earths and each Earth has a Prophet like your Prophet and also prophets like Adam, Noah, Abraham and Jesus (Peace be upon them). (from the books of Tabarani, Bai-Haqi and Hakim etc.) Abdul Hai Sahib answered all the objections made regarding the above tradition and proved that the tradition is sound and designated as 'Marfoo' or narrated from the Prophet himself (PBUH).

Some people have based their argument upon the prophethood and it's end with the Seal of prophethood. They say that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) is the Prophet and the Seal of

all Prophets hence it is not possible that there could be a person identical to him, whereas, it is not necessary for a person identical to him to be a prophet also. Amongst thousands of earlier prophets, in spite of their being prophets there was not a single prophet identical to the Messenger, may Allah bless and give him peace and his being Khatim-ul-Anbiya Seal of the Prophets does not necessarily mean that identification and similarity to him is impossible. Maulvi Hyder Ali of Rampur believed in the possibility of a similarity and he wrote that a King may have two officials with different designations and duties but as far as their status is concerned they may be held by the King equal in rank. Maulvi Fazal Haq of Khairabad was a great scholar in philosophy and logic. He vehemently denied the possibility of a similarity. He wrote a book titled 'Imtina-annazeer' i.e. impossibility of a Similarity'. Maulvi Abdul Hai, Maulvi Hyder Ali and Maulvi Fazal Haq died and the debate reached no conclusion.

Maulvi Faza! Haq's son Maulvi Abdul Haq Khairabadi was very learned and believed like his father in 'Imtina-annazeer' i.e. impossibility of similarity. When he came to Hyderabad, the issue was discussed and in the gathering, some of the scholars were with Maulvi Abdul Haq Khairabadi. Another scholar Maulvi Abdus Samad Qandhari was also present in the gathering. Maulvi Abdus Samad Qandhari happened to be the father of our ulema, Maulana Syed Nusrat and Maulana Syed Anwar Shamsi (RA). Maulvi Abdus Samad Qandhari said the following at the said occasion:

"Even after accepting the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) as the

Khatimul Anbiya - Seal of the prophets, his holy being will not be without one of the following conditions: his being would be obligatory indispensable or impossible or possible"

If his being happens to be Wajib ul wujud - obligatorily indispensable, it would amount to God being more than one. What is Mumtani-ul Wujud. impossible, is simply non-existing. In this case the holy being of the prophet is existing. Therefore the 'being' of the prophet is Mumkin - possible.

If the similar of the 'possible' is indispensable, again there would be multiplicity of the indispensable and the similar would become superior to the original and this is obviously wrong. If the similar of the possible is impossible it is against the possibility that exists in the possible. When the similar of possible cannot be either indispensable or impossible then it is proved that the similar of the possible is possible.

Allamah Abdus Samad Qandhari stated the soundness of the tradition of Ibn Abbas (RZA) and made a strong argument citing both the conventional and the rational evidences in favour of possibility of similarity. Abdul Haq Khairabadi did not give a reply. Thus, it is established that some outstanding Sunni scholars also believe in the possibility of the similarity.

Dr. Iqbal, apart from logic and philosophy was conversant with the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (PBUH). Perhaps he was aware of the Islamic traditions, sayings of the researchers and he must have been awaiting the coming of Imam Mahdi himself. It is strange that while praising the Prophet

(PBUH) he wrote the following couplet in his Kuliyaat:

مجھ کو انکار نہیں آمد مہدی سے مگر
غیر ممکن ہے کوئی مثل ہو پیدا تیرا

*Mujh ko Inkar Nahin Aamed-e-Mahdi se Magar
Gair Mumkin Hai koi Misl Ho Paida Tera*

The fact is there is only one impossibility in this matter. Allah the most High cannot create another Allah like Himself. Even this is disputed and some 'Rationalist' scholars citing the Quranic verse.

ان اللہ علی کل شئی قدیر

Verily Allah has power over everything say that this is also possible but it was never decreed. A group of people say that:

ذات تو قادر است بہ ایجاد ہر محال الایہ آفریدن چوں خود یگانہ
*Zaat-e-tu Qadir Ast ba Eejad-e-Har Muhal Illa ba
Aafreedan-e-Choon khud Yagana-e-*

Therefore, from the conventional and the rational evidences it is quite clear that a 'Similar' to the Messenger (PBUH) is not impossible.

From the saying of Imam Mahdi that:

It indicate the equality of the Rasool and Mahdi. Similarly the equality could be proved from the verse:

عسی ان یعتک ربک مقاماً محموداً
*Asa Anyab-asaka Rabbuka Muqamam Mahmoodah
(79:17 Bani Israel)*

Allah has promised Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) a divine stage to be awarded soon.

Commentators interpret this as divine mercy and the blessing of Allah for Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The realist commentators have interpreted Muqam-e-Mahmood as

هو مقام ختم الولاية بظهور المهدي

This is the interpretation of 'Tafseer-e-Taveelat' and most of the Realist Commentators have mentioned the same. Hazrat Imam Mahdi also stated that the stage of Muqam-e-Mahmood is 'Wilayat-ullah' the essence is that Allah the Most High promised his Messenger (PBUH) that right now you are in the stage of 'Hamidiyat' - praising and in the dress of prophethood you are propagating the rules of Shariah-Law, but very soon Allah will send you in the station called 'Muqam-e-Mahmoodah' which is the station of the Seal of Wilayath of Muhammad (PBUH) to propagate the rules of 'Haqeeqat' in the dress of wilayah. That means that the address in the words :

يبعثك ربك مقاما محمودا

is to the inner-being of Messenger of Allah and that is the 'being' of the promised Mahdi. Therefore, the appearance of Imam Mahdi in the station of Wilayat-ullah or Khatim-e-Wilayat-e-Muhammadi Seal of the Wilayah of Muhammad is exactly the appearance of the Messenger of Allah. Hazrat Jami (may Allah have mercy upon him) has pointed towards this fact in his couplet:

اے یہ سرا پرہ یثرب خواب
خیز کہ شد مشرق و مغرب ضراب

Hafiz Shirazi stated that

مژدہ اے دل کہ مینا نھنے می آمد
کہ ز انھاس خوشش بوئے کسے می آید
خبرم نیست کہ منزل آمد مقصود کجاست
ایں قدرت ہست کہ بانگ جر سے می آید

In Irshadul Arifeen it is written that:

از حیثیت نبوت خاتم نبوت شد و محمد نام یافت و از حیثیت ولایت خاتم
ولایت آمد و محمد مہدی نام یافت

The above means that the single truth appeared in the place of Nubuwwah as the Seal of Nubuwwah and got the name Muhammad, and in place of Wilayah appeared as the Seal of Wilayah and got the name of Muhammad Mahdi. Since the two Seals happen to be one truth, it has nothing to do with transmigration which is impossible and forbidden according to Shariah.

Maulana Runu says that

این نیست تناسخ سخن وحدت حرف است منکر مسویدش
کافر شود آن کس کہ بانکار برآمد درد و زخیاں شد

Hence from holy verse

عسلی ان یبعثک ربک مقاماً مَّحْمُوداً

it is proved that two Seals are one with all thier attributes. Wilayat-ullah or Wilayat-e-Muhammadiyah, which is termed as the 'Ta-ayune-e-Awwal' or the first determination and which appeared twice. Once in the dress of Prophethood and again in the dress of Wilayah. The difference is nohting but being the first and the last.

The argument of Mahdavis is based upon the text of Quran. The principle of equality can be discussed on guidelines of Rationalists as well as the Realists of Ahl-e-Sunnah in many ways.

For instance, based on the principles of the Rationalists (Mutakalimeen) the Messenger of Allah's holy personality is Khaleefatullah- Caliph of God, Massomanil-Khata- free from sin, attributed with Khulq-e-Azeem- Great moral character and he is the Dafe-e-Halakat-e-Ummat,- Saviour of the Ummah. Since the Prophet himself stated that the Mahdi is a Khaleefatullah-a Viceregent of God, except Imam Mahdi nobody else is attributed with this quality like the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). Great Sunni scholars have based their argument about the Ismath- innocence (being free from sin) of Imam Mahdi on the tradition in which the Messenger of Allah said:

المهدى منى يققواثرى ولا يخطى

Al Mahdi-u-Minni Yaqfoo Asari Wa Laa Yukfi

Meaning: 'Imam Mahdi belongs to me (my progeny), he will walk in my footsteps ande will not err'.

This tradition establishes that the Messenger of Allah and the Imam Mahdi, both have the common attribute of being free

from sin and it is obvious that one who is free from sin alone can perfectly follow the one who is free from sin. And the rule that a follower cannot be equal to the one whom he follows applies to the followers who are defective. Since Imam Mahdi is free from sin, he is the most perfect follower of the Messenger of Allah and for the same reason, he is equal to the Messenger in all his actions except the specific personal qualities. Hence the "Qual" - spoken word and "Fel" - the deed and "Haal"- the condition of Mahdi (PBUH) being same like the Qual, Fel and Haal of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) is proved from the very saying of the Messenger. Moreover, in the trait of Ismat-innocence (being free from sin) Mahdi (PBUH) is similar to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). in respect of the great moral character of the Messenger, Allah the most High mentioned that- And the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said that in the matter of moral character Mahdi is just like me. Thus the likeness of Rassol (the Messenger) and the Mahdi in 'great moral character' is proved.

The Messenger of Allah said that Mahdi (PBUH) is the Saviour of the Ummah from destruction just like himself. Hence, the similarity between the Rasool and the Mahdi in this attribute also is established.

Only a few great attributes have been cited here in which no other person except Imam Mahdi is similar or equal to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH).

After citing a few evidences on the principles of the Mutakallimeen-Rationalists it seems proper to look into the line of argument of the 'Muhaqqiqeen'- the Realists. The Muhaqqiqeen

have discussed in depth about the delicate relationships between the 'khatim-ul-Anbiya' - the Seal of Prophets and 'Khatim-ul-Auliya' the Seal of Saints. However, this is not the occasion to go into details.

In short, respected Sufis believe that the 'Nabuwah' -prophethood of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) is most perfect and superior to the prophethood of all the earlier prophets. So also, his Wilayah (sainthood) which is also termed as 'Wilayat-e-Muhammadi' - the 'Sainthood of Muhammad', 'Noor-e-Muhammadi'- the 'Light of Muhammad' and 'The Haqeeqat-e-Muhammadi' - the Essence of Muhammad etc, is superior to the Wilayah of all the earlier prophets. The noble Sufis call the most perfect manifestation (Mazhar-e-Atum) of this Wilayah of Muhammad as the 'Khatim-e-Wilayat-e-Muhammadi' of 'The Seal of the Wilayah of Muhammad', 'Khatimul Auliya' or the 'Seal of the Saints' or 'Batin-e-Khatimul Anbiya'- 'The inner-being of the Seal of Prophets' and they prove from evidences that the 'Seal of Muhammad's Wilayah' or the 'Seal of Saints' is Imam Mahdi, the promised (PBUH)

The author of 'Tajalliyat-e-Rahmani' wrote that:

چنانچه ختم نبوت بر رسول الله است ہم چنان ختم ولایت
بر مهدی علیه السلام است

It means that 'as the Nubuwh' prophethood came to an end with the 'Messenger of Allah' (PBUH),so also, the end of Wilayah will be with Imam Mahdi (PBUH).

The author of 'Mafateehul E jaz' writes follows:

خاتم الالولياء عبارت از ولایت محمدی است که موعود حضرت رسالت
است علیه السلام

It means that by the Seal of the Saints is meant Mahdi, the Promised one, whose advent was promised by the Messenger of Allah (PBUH).

Maulana Abdur-Razzaq Kashani writes under 'Istilah-e-Sufya'-the Sufi Terminology' that:

وهوالمهدى الموعود فى آخر الزمان

It means ,he is the Promised Mahdi who will appear towards the end of time.

Hazrath Shaikul Akbar (Muhiuddin Ibn Arabi) also writes that the Seal of Wilayah of Promised Muhammad is Hazrath Mahdi (PBUH).

Hence ,the Messenger of Allah is the "Seal of Prophets" and the Mahdi is the "Seal of Saints" (peace be up on them). In this attribute of "Khatimiyat" or being the "Seal" or being Concluder, Imam Mahdi (PBUH) is similar to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). And this is the honour and speciality which is not pos-

essed by anyone in the Ummah except Imam Mahdi (PBUH).

The author of "Gulshan-e-Raz" and its commentator, the author of "Mafateehul Ejaz" wrote that between the 'Seal of Prophets' and the 'Seal of Saints' a perfect relationship and 'Kamal-e-Yaktai' - complete oneness exists. The Seal of Saints is the inner- being of the Seal of Prophets and the inheritor of the 'Station' of 'Lee-Ma-Allahi Waqt' (I have a time with Allah) which is the exclusive 'Station' of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH)

'Nisbat-e-Ta-Ammah' of perfect relationship means that there should exist three kinds of perfect relationships. Nisbat-e-Sulbi - Blood relationship; Nisbat-e-Qalbi Relationship of hearts; and Nisbat-e-Haqqi - Relationship in truth. Since the Seal of Saints belongs to the 'Aal of Muhammad' - Descendant of Prophet's Daughter, he possesses the blood relationship. And since the sacred heart of the Seal of Saints by virtue of his perfect and flawless following of the Seal of Prophets has become a mirror of unending glimpses, the relationship of heart is also established.

And since the Seal of Saints inherited the 'Station' of 'Lee-Ma-Allahi Waqt' which happens to be the exclusive station of the Messenger of Allah in which there is no room for any other prophet or angel close to God, the 'relationship in truth' and reality is also established. Further, he writes that this particular relationship is higher and superior to all other relationships. Therefore, the author of 'Mafateehul Ejaz' has interpreted the equality of 'Rasool' and 'Mahdi' as the most perfect relationship and in fact complete oneness.

Shaik Akbar Muhiuddin Ibn Arabi writes in his Fusoosul Hikam, the 6th chapter, that some persons acquainted with God say that we did not identify Him as it should have been. That means one group made it limited and the other's quest came to an end. Both of these are called Ruyat-e-Muqaiyedah' or 'limited vision' in the Mahdavia Terminology. The third situation in the knowledge and cognizance of God is a station where the cognizant neither claims cognizance nor their quest comes to an end. As the person of God is infinite, their quest too is endless. Mahdavees call this absolute vision. In the terminology of 'Muhaq-qiqeen' - Sufi Seekers of God it is called 'Ilm Billah' - knowledge from Allah, Illm Sukooti' - mystical knowledge 'not letting expression' or 'Sair-e-La-Mutanahi' - unending journey. Then, the Shaik goes to write that this third station is not reached expected by the Seal of Prophets and the Seal of Saints (PBU them).

Our Imam (PBUH) said that the 'Being' of God is infinite and the quest of the two seals too has no limit.

From the assertions of Shaik-e-Akbar, it is evident that in the matters of 'knowledge from Allah' and the 'the quieting gnosis' and unlimited journey in quest, the Messenger of Allah and the Promised Mahdi (PBU them) are equal. The saying of the Imam that:

ماہر دواز جملہ مشرکان نہ ایم

meaning that both of us are not from the polytheists is the verdict of this station.

Shaik Akbar while making a delicate discussion of the issue observes that not only the saints of the Ummah but the prophets (peace be upon them) and even the Seal of prophets (PBUH) have the vision in 'Mishkath' a niche in the wall (where a lamp is placed) of the Seal of saints (PBUH). Even though the Seal of saints is the follower of the Seal of prophets in the matter of the rules of Shariah but this apparent following does not make any difference in the prestige and dignity of the Seal of saints because he is low from one angle, he is high from the other. The respective explanations of this saying of Shaik ul Akbar given by Maulana Abdur Rahman Jami and Maulana Abdur Razzaq Kashani in their own commentaries on the Fusoos cannot be discussed here in detail. The gist is that the Mahdi (PBUH) is the Seal of saints and the 'Batin' - inner - being of the Seal of prophets. He has both higher and lower relationships with the Messenger of Allah. From one side he is the follower of the Messenger of Allah and from the other side he is the one who is followed. And the Messenger of Allah is the one who is followed from one side and the follower from the other side.

These two position of being follower and followed are established from the sayings of the Muhaq-qiqeen of Ahl-e-Sunnah and they have been confirmed by our Imam (PBUH) He said that:

ما تابع رسول الله ﷺ هستم در شریعت و متبوع در معنی

It means that 'I am the follower of the Messenger of Allah in Shariah and followed in reality'. This is an evidence of perfect equality.

The essence of research of the authors of 'Gulshan-e-Raz' and its commentators, the author of 'Mafateeh-ul-Ejaz' the author or 'Irshad-ul Arifeen', Shaik Akbar, Abdul Rahman Jami and Abdul Razzaq Kashani etc. the Muhaqqiqeen of Ahl-e-Sunnat is this. The Seal of Saints, Hazrat Mahdi's person has three distinctive aspects. First, Allah the most high made him the 'Nasir' - Supporter of the religion of the Messenger, Consolidator of the rules of Shariah, Caliph of the Messenger in Shariah and his follower. Our Imam also said that I am ordered by Allah to say that:

قل انى عبدالله تابع محمد رسول الله

meaning that I am servant of Allah and follower of Mohammed, the Messenger of Allah.

The second aspect of his person is that he is the Seal of Saints or the concluder of the Wilayah of Mohammad. And from this aspect he is the 'Maraj-e-kul' or the source to turn back for one and all. Whether common or uncommon, saints or prophets, all get the vision in the niche of the Seal of Saints. Towards this the best of creation Imam Mahdi has pointed out when he said that:

ما تابع رسول الله هستيم در شريعت و متبوع در معنى

and this is the very 'station' where from the Imam said that:

از مهدى كے بزرگ نيست بجز خدا

No one is more venerable than Mahdi, except Allah.

The third capacity is this. No one other than the Seal of

prophethood and the Seal of Sainthood has the 'Ilm-e-Sukuti', the knowledge, not letting expression', Ilm Billah' - knowledge from Allah and the Sair-e-La Mutanahi the unending journey which is our terminology is the station of 'Ruyat-e-Mutlaq absolute vision. In this capacity, the sacred persons of the two seals are so much equal to each other in the ranks of knowledge from God and in the degrees of nearness to God that a differentiation of an hair's breadth between the two is not proper. This is the station about which our Imam said about the Messenger of Allah and himself that:

ما بر دواز حسله مشرکان نه ایم

meaning that 'both of us are not from the polytheists'.

وما انا من المشركين

meaning 'And I am not one of the polytheists'. Here, by the verdict of God, both the Seals are equal.

This belief in the equality was taken to be subsidiary by some of our people, but this is wrong. Whatever is established from the text of Quran is fundamental. It carries so much importance that one who makes a distinction between the Rasool and the Ma'mun to the extent of a thousandth part of an hair (for example) is unfortunately devoid of Iman-faith.

Perfection in knowledge, firmness of faith and honesty require that every rank should be kept at its proper place. To confuse issue and to unify opposites is bound to be damaging and disturbing.

Well known 'Tabee' successors of the companions of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), Ibn Sireen's (RZA) saying is comprehensive of all the apparent and intrinsic arguments of the rationalists and realists scholars of Ahl-e-Sunnah. The author of Aqduddurar has narrated from Auf bin Munabbah that Ibn Sireen said that:

meaning 'Mahdi (PBUH) will be equal to our Prophet (PBUH).

In conclusion, Mahdavis are not alone in their faith in the equality of the Rasool and the Mahdi (peace be upon them) but their belief is totally in accordance with the findings of Muhaq-qiqeen of Ahl-e-Sunnah. This belief of the Mahadavis is derived from the verse of the Holy Quran :

وما انا من المشركين

meaning 'And I am not one of the polytheists' and also:

عسى ان يعثك ربك مقاماً محموداً

Apart from the text of Quran it is based on the traditions of the Prophet (PBUH) and the sayings of Hazrat Mahdi (PBUH) which have been mentioned above. When the sayings of the Prophet and the Mahdi (peace be upon them) are there, there is no need of any other evidence of argument. However, Mahdavia's belief is not different from the various relationships between Rasool and Mahdi (peace be upon them) proposed by the Muhaq-qiqeen of Ahl-e-Sunnah. Nevertheless, Mahdavis interpret these relations comprehensively and call them 'Taswiath' or equality.

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