

L17

Topic: Imamah

Shi'ites and Sunnis

After the death of the Prophet of Islam, the Muslims were divided into two groups: One group believed that the Holy Prophet did not designate a successor to himself. This group is called **Sunnis**. The other group believe that the selection of such a person could only come from God through the Holy Prophet of Islam and that the Holy Prophet did this and he selected Imam 'Ali (p.b.u.h) as his successor. This group is called **Shi'ites**.

Logical, Friendly Discussions

Discussions which are logical and **reasonable**, free of discrimination and quarreling, held **in a friendly environment**, are not only not a cause for disunity and separation, but rather they decrease the distances and common points of belief get strengthened.

Definition of *Imamah*

From the point of view of Shi'ism, an immaculate Imam does not just mean an Islamic leader, but rather, **includes spiritual and material, esoteric and exoteric leadership** as well. In other words, they are responsible for leadership on all levels; they are responsible for the preservation and **guardianship of Islamic beliefs** and ideology, without any errors or deviation. In every age and era, there must be a divine representative; a prophet or a pure Imam must be upon the earth to preserve the precepts of truth and guide those who long for the truth.

The Philosophy of *Imamah*

1. Spiritual Perfection along with Divine Leadership

The way to perfection cannot be taken without the presence of a pure leader who is a divine teacher. Therefore existence of the Imam is necessary to complete the goal of the creation of human beings. In this sense, Allah's kindness and wisdom would not be complete without the Imam. (Law of Kindness).

2. Guarding the Heavenly Laws

An infallible leader must always act as a guardian of the authenticity of a school so that they guard against any deviation, extremism, alien ideas and superstitions.

3. The Political and Social Leadership of the Ummah