

IN HIS NAME & BY THE REMEMBRANCE OF HIS LAST HUJJAT (ATFS)

GHADEER LECTURE SERIES

Lecture 5: QURANIC VERSES ON IMAMAT

Verse of Ulil Amr

In Surah Nisa, v 59 Allah says

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

O you who believe! obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those in authority from among you; then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allah and the Apostle, if you believe in Allah and the last day; this is better and very good in the end.

The word under discussion is *Ulil Amr*

The word اولو is plural and does not have a singular. It is translated as “**people of**”. Example: اولوا الالباب means “**people of** wisdom”; اولو النهى means “**people of** intellect”

Based on this, the word اولي الامر (Ulil Amr) means “**people of power or authority**” or “rulers”. According to the rules of Arabic grammar, اولو & اولي are same in meaning. When Ulul is used, it implies that ‘subject’ and when Ulil is used it implies ‘object’. Hence, there is no contradiction in the two words viz Ulul & Ulil. As we mentioned earlier, this word only has a plural meaning.

This blessed verse orders us to **obey three individuals** – Allah, His Messenger and ‘those who possess authority’ (*Ulil Amr*)

All great scholars of the Ahle Sunnah are unanimous that the word *Ulil Amr* in this verse implies ‘leader’ or ‘ruler’ or ‘governor.’ It can also mean ‘great scholar’ or ‘ideological mentor.’ Hence, the Ahle Sunnah have used this term for their caliphs, the companions of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) & military commanders who lead the army during the wars. They

don't believe that the leader should have some special or unique or distinguishing characteristics, except that he should be from "*among the Muslims*". They only believe that he should be "having authority" and "power". Based on this interpretation, they accept Yazid Ibn Muawiyah as *Ulil Amr*. Irrespective of his beliefs and morals, they are of the opinion that his obedience is obligatory and is at par with the obedience of Allah & His Messenger. The same is true for all such leaders and rulers. This is the general belief of all Sunnis.

But, the Shia scholars believe – in the light of traditions and evidences – that the *Ulil Amr* must be "infallible" (Masoom). Hence, our belief is not restricted merely to the translation of the word. We also believe in the 'infallibility' (ismat) of the leader and ruler.

The Shias don't include the four 'special representatives' of Imam Zamana (as) in the group of *Ulil Amr*. Nor do they consider as *Ulil Amr* all those companions who were appointed in different areas by the various Imams to handle and administer the affairs of the Shias. Even the Fuqaha (Jurists) of every era – whose authority upon the people is delegated by Imam (as) – are not among the *Ulil Amr*.

According to the Shias, the *Ulil Amr* are only twelve. The first is Ameerul Momeneen (a.s) and the last is Hazrat Baqiyatullah Hujjat Ibn Hasan Askari (atfs). The Fuqaha of the current era are representatives of *Ulil Amr* - Imam Zamana (as). But they themselves are not *Ulil Amr*.

Before we discuss traditions, we will refer to the verse itself in which there are two evidences to prove that *Ulil Amr* must be infallible.

1st proof

The blessed verse orders us to obey three individuals, yet has used the word "Obey" only twice. The order to obey to Allah is separate from the order to obey the Messenger and

the *Ulil Amr*. But the order to obey the *Ulil Amr* is along with the order to obey the Messenger.

If Quran would have wanted it could have used the word of “Obey” thrice – one each for Allah, Messenger & *Ulil Amr*. Or it could have used it once for all of them – Obey Allah, His Messenger & *Ulil Amr*. But it has used it twice? What is the secret behind this?

The wisdom behind this is that Allah wanted to separate the level of His obedience from the level of obedience of His Messenger and *Ulil Amr*. Since, Allah is our creator, hence His obedience is absolute and unconditional. Then in the light of Allah’s obedience and to fulfill His command, we are obedient to His Prophet. Hence, the obedience to Allah is original and absolute. While obedience to His Prophet is an extension of the obedience to Allah since He has ordered for it. So, in both cases obedience is obligatory but the level and grade of obedience is not the same.

However, the obedience to *Ulil Amr* is alongside the obedience to Prophet. Then, *Ulil Amr* is at par with Prophet vis-à-vis obedience. In status, he is the same as Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a). Then the argument of the Ahle Sunnah, that *Ulil Amr* includes all caliphs of Bani Umayyah or any other oppressive and tyrant leaders, is fallacious and invalid. Their obedience can never be the same as obedience to Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a). They are not infallible. They are not Divine representatives. If Allah wanted to include the obedience of all kings and rulers, then He should have used the word of “Obey” thrice and separated the obedience of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) from the obedience of such dubious and cheesy *Ulil Amr* of Bani Umayyah and Bani Abbas and their likes.

On the basis of this argument of the use of a single word “Obey” for both Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) and the *Ulil Amr*, while Allah’s obedience is distinct from their obedience, we can conclude that the *Ulil Amr* – as per the words of this verse, is the Hujjat of Allah and is infallible, just like the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a).

2nd proof

In the Holy Quran when Allah has ordered us to obey certain individuals – who may give orders against the commands of Allah – then it has regulated and restricted their obedience. For example, about obedience to parents, Allah says

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا إِلَىٰ مَرْجِعِكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

“And We have enjoined on man goodness to his parents, and if they contend with you that you should associate (others) with Me, of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them, to Me is your return, so I will inform you of what you did”

In this verse, immediately after ordering the obedience to parents, Allah has confined and limited their obedience. *‘If your parents force you to associate someone with Me and push you to follow their polytheistic religion, then don’t obey them.’* So, the obedience to parents is conditional. But obedience to Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) and *Uli Amr* is not like that. It is unconditional and total. Why? It is because never the Prophet and the *Uli Amr* will order someone to disobey Allah and rebel against Him. Hence, the Divine order for absolute obedience to Prophet and *Uli Amr* is a proof of their infallibility.

These are the two evidences to support the belief of infallibility of the *Uli Amr*

O Allah! For the sake of Ameerul Momeneen (a.s) , hasten the Zuhoor of Imam Zamana (as)