

## Aqeedah Corner - Infallibility of the Prophets

The infallibility of the prophets is an essential part of the Islamic Aqeedah. It must be stated at the outset that "infallibility" is a necessary characteristic of prophet hood for the following reason :

Prophets are responsible to deliver Allah (swt)'s message to His creation. The notion that a prophet may corrupt the message given to him by Allah (swt) or commit an error implies that the Creator could not protect His message. This in turn limits the power of the Creator. Since Allah (swt) is infinitely powerful and beyond any limits, such a notion is based on conjecture and contradicts reality. Therefore the prophets are protected from all sins and errors so that the message of Allah (swt) remains pure. The credibility of the prophets is closely related to their mission as messengers of Allah (swt) and any doubt in their credibility can affect the status of the message itself. Since committing a sin may introduce a doubt in their compliance with Allah (swt)'s commands thereby undermining their credibility, it becomes impossible for their mission to remain pure beyond any doubt. Therefore the prophets neither sin nor make any mistake in delivering the message.

The issue of forgetfulness on part of the prophets perhaps needs some clarification. It should be noted that forgetting while delivering the message constitutes error in the message itself and therefore not possible for the above mentioned reason. However a prophet may forget in performing an action only to teach a rule relevant to a particular situation. A prophet may also forget in matters not related in any way to the message he conveys. In such cases the issue neither affects the authenticity of the message nor constitutes disobedience to Allah (swt).

The quality of infallibility is restricted to the prophets and we should take notice of this exception because it makes us mindful of the difference between the conveyor of the message and a Mujtahid (an interpreter of the message). Infallibility of the prophets exists only because they are conveyors of Allah (swt)'s message and when a person has no message (i.e. he is

not a prophet) from Allah (swt), the issue of infallibility cannot be substantiated. However it is a well known and experienced fact that human beings have numerous shortcomings and therefore are hardly infallible. This goes on to prove that man is created with weaknesses and infallibility is only a protection from mistakes and sins extended to the prophets by Allah (swt) in as far as it pertains to their mission. The notion that an imam can be infallible (masoom) contradicts with the Islamic Aqeedah, and ascribing this essential characteristic of the prophet hood (i.e. infallibility) with anyone who is not a prophet encourages blind obedience to him and may lead one astray.

In conclusion it is sufficient to say that "infallibility" is an inherent and an exclusive characteristic of the prophet hood and hence cannot be ascribed in any way or form to anyone but the prophets. In addition there is an evident danger of attributing prophetic qualities to people other than prophets, thereby blurring the distinction between the interpretation of the already revealed message and an actual legislation.