

## **Myths and Facts about Prostration 'Sajdha' out of Respect or Thanks**

The influence of Wahabism<sup>1</sup> has, no doubt, inspired some of our compatriot shias to the extent that they have begun to question and eradicate centuries old Shia rituals and became accustomed to the norms of the enemies of the Ahlul Bait<sup>as</sup>.

This is evident from the fact that more and more emphasis has been placed on pronouncing 'Ya Allah<sup>swt</sup> Madad' instead of 'Ya Ali<sup>as</sup> Madad'<sup>2</sup>.

They have also embraced Wahabi' beliefs on 'Tauheed', i.e., 'Prostration is only for Allah<sup>swt</sup>'. This ideology is further supported by some of the political figures, who staunchly try to hide Shia-Sunni differences, even at the expense of altering Shia's basic acts of worships for the sake of establishing Muslim Brotherhood<sup>3</sup>; Some go even further and show that there was, in fact harmony between the Ahlul bait<sup>as</sup> and their enemies<sup>1.a</sup>. To achieve these, some of our foremost and highly recommended<sup>4</sup> supplications, i.e., Hadith-e-Kisa have been replaced with some of those supplications, which ask for forgiveness directly from Allah<sup>swt</sup>.

These trends are slowly seeping into our religious beliefs and practices and create rifts among the ranks of orthodox Shias and those influenced by the Wahabism. In this short article, however, we will only confine our discussion to one such topic: 'The prostration of reverence or gratitude': A centuries' old Shia tradition, facing extinction, but when it is rarely observed, makes some of our fellow shias frown in bewilderment while a few even raise their eyebrows in anger and disgust! This act is generally performed by the courteous and devout shias at holy shrines and sacred places<sup>5</sup>, or at the end of the chest beating ritual 'matam' as a gesture of 'Gratitude.'<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The followers of Abdul Wahab, who do not believe in Masomeen<sup>as</sup>'s intercession.

<sup>2</sup> This is the core of Shia beliefs-all Prophets<sup>as</sup>, including Hazrat Mohammed<sup>saww</sup>, called upon Mola Ali<sup>as</sup> (Nad-e-Ali-un....), we will write, inShaAllah, in more detail on this topic.

<sup>3</sup> Ithad Ban-ul-Muslameen

<sup>4</sup> Most suitable for collective recitation, as recommended by Masomeen<sup>as</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Door-steps of an Imam Bargah, at the door of Masoom<sup>as</sup>'s Haram/Zari, in front of an 'Alam', replica of Masoom<sup>as</sup>'s 'Taboot' or 'Zuljinah'

<sup>6</sup> A brief and simple approach has been adapted in view of saving time for those who are subjected to tough and busy modern day living conditions, however, for those with more appetite for knowledge, background details are included in the appendix or cited references.

**Myth 1:****Prostration (Sajdha) is only for Allah<sup>swt</sup>!**

This baseless statement is made when someone bows down or performs prostration, out of respect or to acknowledge Allah<sup>swt</sup>'s blessings<sup>7</sup>, before an icon created to symbolise the signs of Allah<sup>swt</sup> (Shar-Allah<sup>8</sup>), e.g., Alam, Taboot, Zuljinah (Appendix D).

**Fact 1:**

- (1) This objection is usually based on suspicious and speculative assumptions, being implanted by Iblis, against the righteous intention of a fellow momin. The first one who marched along this path was 'Iblis', who thought his creation, out of fire, was superior to that of Adam<sup>as</sup>. (being created out of mud).

*'So we told the angels: 'Go down in prostration (Asjodo) before Adam' . They (all) knelt down to prostrate except for Iblis. He refused and acted proudly and became a disbeliever'.<sup>9</sup>*

In the context of the upper verse, we present a hadith from Bihar-ul-Anwar<sup>10</sup>:

Hassan bin Mohammed has narrated from Ibn Saeed .... and he from Abi Al-salat Al-Haravi who from Imam Raza<sup>as</sup> that Imam<sup>as</sup> has referred from Amir-ul-momaneen<sup>as</sup> who said that Rasool Allah<sup>saww</sup> told us, 'Allah<sup>swt</sup> has given a higher rank to Prophets<sup>as</sup> and 'Mursaleen'<sup>11</sup> (Prophets<sup>as</sup>), as compared with his adored angles<sup>as</sup>. And I was given a superior status over all Prophets<sup>as</sup> and, after me, Ya Ali<sup>as</sup> you and your family (Masomeen<sup>as</sup>) share this status with me. Prophet<sup>saww</sup> further explained, when Adam<sup>as</sup> was created then Allah<sup>swt</sup> placed our 'Noor' into his 'Sulb' (heart) and asked all angels to bow down in prostration, in front of Adam<sup>as</sup>, in respect of our Divine status and our eloquent virtues. The intention of their prostration was to worship Allah<sup>swt</sup> (by obeying His command) and to show respect to Adam<sup>as</sup>. The respect to Adam<sup>as</sup> was due to our presence in his 'Sulb', so why won't we be superior to all angels since they performed prostration of respect to us!

There is another tradition from the same source<sup>12</sup>:

<sup>7</sup> Sajjadah-e-Shukar.

<sup>8</sup> Chapter 5, The Table, 176, 2.

*You, who believe, do not profane (be disrespectful) God's sacred symbols (Shair Allah) nor the hallowed month, nor the offerings and the [beasts with] headband, nor those intent on visiting the Hallowed House to seek bounty and approval from their Lord. Once you are permitted to [go on your way], then go hunting. Do not let ill will towards any folk incriminate you, just because they blocked your way to the Hallowed Mosque, so that you act aggressive; cooperate with one another for virtue and heedfulness, and do not cooperate with one another for the purpose of vice and aggression. Heed God [Alone]; God is strict with punishment!*

<sup>9</sup> Al-Baqara, 2, verse, 34

<sup>10</sup> Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 2. chap. 2, pp. 139

<sup>11</sup> Prophets who were sent down to preach their nations and are 313 in total (see, pp. 23, Kashaf-al-Asrar, Sibtain Sersavi)

<sup>12</sup> Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 26. chap. 6, pp. 314

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Adam<sup>as</sup> went down in prostration when his prayers were answered by Allah<sup>swt</sup>. Then Allah<sup>swt</sup> sent a Divine message towards Adam<sup>as</sup>, Although He knew intentions and emotions of Adam<sup>as</sup> but still Allah<sup>swt</sup> asked, 'O! Adam<sup>as</sup> what was the purpose of your prostration?' Adam<sup>as</sup> replied, 'my intention was to worship Thee, as well as to show respect of those (Masomeen<sup>as</sup>) to whom you have blessed and made eloquent'.

It is quite evident from the above two traditions that the prostration of respect was performed by angels, while facing Hazrat Adam<sup>as</sup>, and in accordance with the command of Allah<sup>swt</sup>. However, another question is posed, related to the direction of Qabah, which forms Myth no. 2.

**Myth 2:**

**Prostration (Sajdha) should only be performed in the direction of Qabah!**

This is usually said: 'If one intends to perform the prostration of respect/thanks, he/she should face the Qabah and should not bow down in any other direction!

**Fact 2:**

Here, we present a verse, where prostration was performed instantly, without any consideration of the direction:

***So the magicians threw themselves down in prostration. They said: 'We believe in the Lord of Aaron and Moses.'***<sup>13</sup>

There is another verse:

***The East and West are God's: wherever you may turn, there will be God's countenance (Waj<sup>14</sup>), for God is Boundless, Aware!***<sup>15</sup>

There are several traditions from Masomeen<sup>as</sup> in the interpretation of this Verse, but are mostly related to the offering of prayers while travelling. There is, however, a tradition from Amir-ul-momaneen<sup>as</sup> within the context of our topic, which we present below<sup>16</sup>:

It is narrated by Sulman-e-Mohamadi (Farsi) that Amir-ul-momaneen<sup>as</sup> replied to several questions of Jasaqeen in detail. One of his question was, please tell me; 'which direction is Allah<sup>swt</sup>?' Amir-ul-momaneen<sup>as</sup> asked for some firewood and ignited fire and then asked Jasaqeen which is the direction of the flame? He replied it is in all directions. Imam<sup>as</sup> then said: This fire is an artefact, a creation of Allah<sup>swt</sup>, and one cannot identify its direction. Then how it is possible to confine Allah<sup>swt</sup> who cannot be approximated with anything of His creations. Then Amir-ul-momaneen<sup>as</sup> recited this Verse.

<sup>13</sup> *TA-HA, Chapter 16, Section 20, Verse 70.*

<sup>14</sup> Amir-ul-Momaneen a.s. says in Nahjul Asrar, Hadith-e-Tariq, we are the Waj-ul-Allah, see, e.g., (<http://hubeali.com/new/khutbat/Hadith-e-Tariq.pdf>)

<sup>15</sup> *The Cow (2), Verse 115.*

<sup>16</sup> Al Tauheed, Sheikh Sadduq, Haith-e-Jasaqeen.

**Myth 3:**

**They commit a forbidden act 'Shirk' when they perform the act of Prostration (Sajdha) to Alam or Zuljinah!**

**Fact 3:** To answer this serious allegation, I would request readers to refer to the Holy Quran, . Chapter 12, wherein the story of Hazrat Yaqoob<sup>as</sup> and Hazrat Yusuf<sup>as</sup> has been narrated.

Hazrat Yusuf<sup>as</sup> is one of the twelve brothers, greatly adored by his father, because his mother had died during his childhood. The other (half) brothers became jealous of him and threw him in a water-well. He<sup>as</sup> was later rescued from that and sold as a slave-boy by his rescuers, in the bazaar of Egypt. He grew up as a personal servant of the king of Egypt. The wife of his<sup>as</sup> master, one-day tried to seduce him. He refused to commit a sin. But she accused him, anyway, of wrongdoing. He was sent to prison. While in jail he listened to fellow prisoners and told them the meaning of their dreams. Years later, one of those prisoner becomes the wine-attendant for the king. The king had a dream and he wanted to know the meaning of his dream. The same attendant referred to Yusuf<sup>as</sup> (still a prisoner) as a wise man who could help the king in better understanding the meanings of his dream. Yusuf<sup>as</sup> was consulted and released from the prison. The king was very much impressed by his wisdom and appointed him as his state-treasurer.

Away from all this, Yaqoob<sup>as</sup>, grieved by the absence of his lost son, used to cry extensively and eventually lost his eyesight in both of his eyes. The town where they lived was inflicted with a severe famine. Yusuf<sup>as</sup>'s other brothers incidentally went to Egypt in search of food. Yusuf<sup>as</sup> recognizes them and confide in one of them (who was his real brother) about his identity. Yusuf<sup>as</sup> gave his shirt to his brothers and told his brothers to just touch his father's eyes with it. By touch of Yusuf<sup>as</sup>'s shirt, his eyesight was restored immediately. Yaqoob<sup>as</sup> discovered his long lost son. The parent Yaqoob<sup>as</sup>, his wives and other sons prepared to meet Yusuf<sup>as</sup>.

When they finally arrive in Egypt, the holy Quran describes that scene as follows:

*Wa rafa abwayhi ala al-arshi wa kharru lahu sujjadan.....*

*'So he placed his parents on a throne and they fell prostrate (all) to him. He said: 'O my father! This is the interpretation of my dream of old. My Lord has made it true, and He has shown my kindness, since He took me out of the prison and has brought you from the desert after Iblis had made strife between me and my brothers. Verily my Lord understand best the mysteries of all that He planned to do, for verily He is full of knowledge and wisdom.....(Chapter.12: Verse 100)'*

**There are two major lessons, which could be learnt:**

1. Why did Yusuf<sup>as</sup> send his shirt to Yaqoob<sup>as</sup> for the recovery of his eyesight? Both father and son were infallible prophets, if anyone of them had prayed to Allah<sup>swt</sup>, Yaqoob<sup>as</sup>'s eyesight would have been restored on Allah<sup>as</sup>'s command, without any need of intercession (here it was a Prophet's shirt).
2. The second point is that even though Yusuf<sup>as</sup> had placed his parents and his brothers on a throne, they fell prostrate to him (kahrru lahu sujjadan). If the word lahu is not used, it would be obvious that they were performing prostration of thanks to Allah<sup>swt</sup> that they managed to find their lost son Yusuf<sup>as</sup>. But Quran Majeed contains precisely selected Divine words without any element of ambiguity. There are at least two other verses in the Quran where the expression of kahrru sujjadan has been used (see Q.19:58, and 32:15).

*'Thos are some of the prophets from adam's offspring Whom Allah has favoured, and some of those We transported along with Noah, and some of Abraham's and Ishmael's off springs, as well as some (others) We have guided and chosen. Whenever the Mercy-giving's signs are recited to them they drop down and perform prostration and weep'.<sup>17</sup>*

*'The only ones who believe in Our signs are those who drop down in prostration, whenever they are reminded of them, and recite prayers. They do not act so proudly'.<sup>18</sup>*

According to Arabic grammar, if the expression is used without an explicit object, it is implied that the sajdha is being done to Allah<sup>swt</sup>. In the verse in Sura Yusuf, the addition of the word lahu means to 'him', which refers to no one but Yusuf<sup>as</sup>. So, Yaqoob<sup>as</sup>, a Prophet, who was also the father of Yusuf<sup>as</sup>, has performed prostration to his son! Well its in Quran and the holy Quran has recorded an important historical event without disapproving it.

We present a tradition of Imam Mohammed Baqir<sup>as</sup>:<sup>19</sup> It is narrated in Tafseer-e-Aiashi from Abu Baser that Imam Mohammed Baqir<sup>as</sup> said: 'when the father, aunt and brothers of Yusuf<sup>as</sup> arrived at his kingdom, Yusuf<sup>as</sup> rushed to greet them and hugged them with tears of joy and brought them inside. Then he honoured his father and aunt by offering them seats on his throne and left the palace. Yusuf<sup>as</sup> returned back to palace dressed-up as a king. Upon seen him, they all went down in prostration, in front of him, to show their respect and thank Allah<sup>swt</sup>. Yusuf<sup>as</sup> then said, indeed this has already been shown to me in my dream.

<sup>17</sup> *Al-Mary, 19, verse, 58*

<sup>18</sup> *Al-Sajadah, 32, verse, 15*, Please note when you hear these verses, Sajdha immediately become compulsory.

<sup>19</sup> Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 12. chap. 9, pp. 318

The same tradition is referred to from another source<sup>20</sup>: Ibn Abi Umeer has narrated from various sources, who refer to Imam Jafar-e-Sadiq<sup>as</sup> that Yusuf<sup>as</sup> made his father sit on 'Arsh', a four legged throne, then they all went down in prostration in front of Yusuf<sup>as</sup>.

**So if prostration is polytheism, then the angels of Allah<sup>swt</sup> and the brothers of the Prophet Yusuf<sup>as</sup> would all be characterised as 'polytheists' and only the cursed Iblis would qualify as a monotheist!**

Before we go any further, it is paramount to deal with the following myth:

#### **Myth 4:**

**Prostration should not be performed in front of non-alive Images or Symbols<sup>21</sup>!**

**Fact 4:** To explain Myth 4, we present the following verse:

*(Remember) when they were told: 'Settle down in this town and eat wherever you wish in it, and keep reciting the word 'Hattah' 'Relieve [us]! Go down in prostration at the entrance of the gate. We will forgive you your mistakes; We will give even more to those who act kindly''.*<sup>22</sup>

Imam<sup>as</sup> has explained the meanings of the Verse 'enter through the gate while in prostration', 'Allah<sup>swt</sup> had inscribed the images of 'Mohammed<sup>saww</sup> and Ali<sup>as</sup>' at the gate and the children of Israel were asked to go down in prostration while passing under these images, while reciting the word 'al Hattah' and renewing their oath of alliance for their 'Wialat' (absolute authority). They asked if we perform prostration in obedience to Allah<sup>swt</sup> and in acceptance to eloquent status of 'Mohammed<sup>saww</sup> and Ali<sup>as</sup>' while having firm belief and confidence in their lordship, while entering through the gate, will our sins be forgiven? And will this be our source of intercession for success in the hereafter? Allah<sup>swt</sup> replied, 'Yes, if you do so you, I will forgive your sins'.<sup>23</sup>

The same tradition is referred in another source: Imam<sup>as</sup> said: Allah<sup>swt</sup> said to the children of Israel, recall that time when I gave command to your forefather to bow down in prostration when you enter through the gate 'Hattah'. Imam<sup>as</sup> says this was due to the fact that Allah<sup>swt</sup> had carved the pictures of Mohammed<sup>saww</sup> and Ali<sup>as</sup> on both side of the gate and asked children of Israel to perform prostration of respect

<sup>20</sup> Bihar ul-Anwar, vol 12, Chapter 9, pp. 260.

<sup>21</sup> Indeed, prostration out of respect has been made void in Islam, although it was permissible before preislamic era, pp. 91, Tafseer Fasul-al-Kitab, Syed Ali Naqi Naqvi (Naqan)-However the presented Arabic references, do not justify the Agha Naqan's statement.

<sup>22</sup> Chapter 7, The HEIGHTS, Section, 9, Verse 161.

<sup>23</sup> Bihar ul-Anwar, vol 13, Chapter 9, pp. 183

when entering into the city through the gate 'Hattah' and cleanse your souls by reciting, 'both of them are our maters' and renew your pledge of love for them.<sup>24 25</sup>

Amir-ul-momaneen<sup>as</sup> said: I am among you like Aron<sup>as</sup> was in the nation of Pharaohs and I am as sacred as 'Bab-e-Hattah' was for the people of Israel and (saviour) as 'Noah<sup>as</sup>'s Craft' was for the nation of Noah<sup>as</sup>.

(Al-Kafi, vol. 8, pp. 29, khutabah Amir-ul-Momaneen a.s.)

### **Myth 5:**

**Prostration of respect was permissible during the pre-Islamic era but it has been prohibited in Islamic practices<sup>26!</sup>**

**Fact 5:** The above myth stems from Mr. Ali Naqvi (known as Naqan), who has made serious mistakes in the past, which had led to serious disgust and outrage among Indian shia community, here again he records those reference which do not, in anyway, imply this restriction has been imposed by Allah<sup>swt</sup> for nation of Prophet Mohammed<sup>saww</sup>. According to the general Divine rule, a new verse would be revealed in order to abrogate a previous command or an act being practised. Mr. Naqan does not quote a Quranic verse but instead a fabricated statement. However, let us try to find out from Quran if prostration of respect will be performed in the future?

***The Day when their shinbone will be laid bare and they will be called upon to bow down in prostration, and they will not manage to do so<sup>27</sup>:***

It is narrated in Tafseer-e-Qummi<sup>28</sup> on this day, all the obscure matters will be revealed and usurped rights of Mohammed<sup>saww</sup>'s progeny will be made known to everyone present. The oppressors will recognise the attributes of Imam Ali<sup>as</sup> and would like to show respect by going down in prostration but their backbones will become so stiff that they will not be able to bow down (along with momaneen).

We would also like to give you an example of prostration which was performed to Imam Ali bin Hussain<sup>as</sup> and Imam Mohammed Baqir<sup>as</sup> through the following traditions:

It is narrated from Jabir that Imam Ali bin Hussain<sup>as</sup> asked him to ask them (companions who were present at that time) 'If it is within my abilities to turn into the appearance of my son Mohammed Baqir<sup>as</sup>? When Jabir asked them they remained

<sup>24</sup> Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 13, pp. 165

<sup>25</sup> Amir-ul-momaneen<sup>as</sup> said: I am among you like Aron<sup>as</sup> was in the nation of Pharaohs and I am as sacred as 'Bab-e-Hattah' was for the people of Israel and (saviour) as 'Noah<sup>as</sup>'s Craft' was for the nation of Nuah<sup>as</sup>. (Al-Kafi, vol. 8, pp. 29, khutabah Amir-ul-momaneen<sup>as</sup>)

<sup>26</sup> Indeed, prostration out of respect has been made void in Islam, although it was permissible before preislamic era, pp. 91, Tafseer Fasul-al-Kitab, Syed Ali Naqi Naqvi (Naqan)-However the presented Arabic references, do not justify the Agha Naqan's statement.

<sup>27</sup> The Pen, 68, Verse 42.

<sup>28</sup> PP. 1089, Maqbul Ahmed.

silent. Then Imam<sup>as</sup> asked Jabir again to ask them if my son could turn into my appearance? Jabir asked this question from them but they again kept quiet. Imam<sup>as</sup> then asked Jabir, 'why they do not reply to my questions?' Jabir replied, I have asked them again, 'why you do not reply to Imam<sup>as</sup>', they again did not reply and showed a bewilder-ness! Imam<sup>as</sup> then said to Jabir, don't worry, they will remain like this, as I have informed you earlier. Then Imam<sup>as</sup> addressed them directly and asked 'why you do not reply to my questions?' They started looking at each other and reluctantly replied we lack knowledge and could not reply due to our ignorance. Afterwards, Imam Zain-ul-Abadeen Ali bin Hussain<sup>as</sup> looked at Imam Mohammed Baqir<sup>as</sup> and asked them who is he? They replied, 'O! Son of Prophet<sup>as</sup>, he is your son'. Imam<sup>as</sup> asked who am I? They replied, 'You are his father, Imam Ali bin Hussain<sup>as</sup>', Thus Imam<sup>as</sup> recited few words which we could not understand and immediately Imam Mohammed Baqir<sup>as</sup> turned into Imam Ali bin Hussain<sup>as</sup> and Imam Zain-ul-Abadeen Ali bin Hussain<sup>as</sup> became Imam Mohammed Baqir<sup>as</sup>. Upon observing this, all the companions started reciting 'La la ha Il-llah'. Imam Ali bin Hussain<sup>as</sup> said, 'Do not be surprised at the supremacy of Allah<sup>swt</sup>'. 'I am Mohammed<sup>as</sup> and Mohammed<sup>as</sup> is from Ali<sup>as</sup>'. Imam Mohammed Baqir<sup>as</sup> then explained, 'O! People, do not be surprised to see the 'Amr Allah', I am Mohammed<sup>as</sup> and Ali<sup>as</sup> is in my (Mohammed's) appearance. We are all the same, from one 'Noor' and our souls are 'Amr Allah'. Our first, was Mohammed<sup>as</sup>, our middle one was Mohammed<sup>as</sup> and our last one is also Mohammed<sup>as</sup>, in fact we are all Mohammed. Upon listening this, they all went down in prostration and uttered we all believe in your authority- also in your hidden attributes, in your clear miracles and we submit to your eloquent status and high ranks.

Imam Ali bin Hussain<sup>as</sup> said, rise from prostration and lift your faces, now you truly recognise us and have succeeded! You have witnessed the facts and perfected your beliefs and by doing so you have found means of reaching Allah<sup>swt</sup>. Be aware! Allah<sup>swt</sup> does not show these signs to the one who have weak-beliefs and are among 'mukassareen'<sup>29</sup> - which you are observed today from my son Mohammed<sup>as</sup> and myself. If you are going to narrate what you have seen today then people will not admit it and make ridicule of you. They replied we have understood it and we will obey you. Imam<sup>as</sup> said, now go away since you achieved comprehensive guidance. And they went away.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> The ones who are stingy in admitting our attributes

<sup>30</sup> Bihar ul-Anwar, vol 26, Chapter 14, pp. 16



**Imam-e-Zaman<sup>as</sup>'s Traditions**

We now present two replies of Imam-e-Zaman<sup>as</sup> to two questions related to 'Prostration of Thanks'<sup>31</sup>:

**Requested query**

*Some of our people say it is 'innovation'<sup>32</sup> to perform prostration of thanks<sup>33</sup> upon completion of compulsory prayers. We would be obliged to know if it is permissible to perform prostration of 'thanks' after offering obligatory prayers? If it is permissible then when should we perform it? After finishing three-part 'Maghrib' prayers or after four further recommended prayers, which are offered after 'Maghrib'?*

**Imam-e-Zaman<sup>as</sup>'s reply**

*The 'Prostration of Thanks' is the most important and highly recommended tradition of Rasool Allah<sup>saww</sup>. Whoever calls it an 'innovation' in fact, is himself intends to propagate 'innovation' at first place. There is a tradition (from Rasool Allah<sup>saww</sup>), in which it has been recommended to perform 'Prostration of Thanks' after 'Maghrib' prayers. However, it has not been specifically revealed whether it may be performed after 'Maghrib' prayers or after four recommended prayers? Since compulsory prayers are higher in rank as compared with the recommended ones and as recitation of supplications and 'Tasbih' are preferred after compulsory prayers. Thus is better to perform prostration of 'Thanks' straight after 'compulsory prayers, although it is still permissible to perform prostration of 'Thanks' after four recommended prayers.*

**Requested query**

*A person who visits one of the 'Sacred Graves of Masomeen<sup>as</sup>, can he perform prostration on the surface of the holly grave or he should refrain from doing so?*

*Also whoever offers prayers close to Masomeen<sup>as</sup>'s holy graves, Is it permissible for him to stand behind the grave so that he faces the grave? Or stand either on the left or right side of it? Or he could offer his prayers while standing in front of the grave while keeping grave at his back?*

**Imam-e-Zaman<sup>as</sup>'s reply**

*It is not permissible to perform prostration on the surface of the holy grave, neither while offering compulsory prayers, nor during recommended one nor while reciting ziarat. But, the norm is to put down your right cheek at the surface of the grave.*

*As far as prayers are concerned, one should face the holy grave and stand behind it. It is not permissible to keep grave at back or stand either on the right or left side of it while offering prayers. This is because no one is permissible to stand either at front or besides a masoom Imam<sup>as</sup>.*

<sup>31</sup> Bihar-ul-Anwar, pp. 740, vol. 12.

<sup>32</sup> 'Biddah'

<sup>33</sup> 'Sajadah-al-Sukar'

It is important to note that the prostration on the grave is forbidden but not in front of it. There are other traditions, which recommend one to taste the soil of the holy grave, please see Appendix II.

**Our Sincere Advise!**

It is not a sin in Islamic religion to perform a prostration out of respect or to offer 'Thanks', so why not join those who perform it or at least do not oppose those-who you see engaged, individually or collectively in this very Islamic ritual!

So, please do not be influenced by the Wahabis and their agents in criticising some rituals of Azadri-e-Imam Hussain<sup>as</sup>, i.e., when you see fellow shias touching their foreheads to the Taboot and Alam and going down in prostration after doing matam.

Finally, if in a doubt about the act(s) of your brother momin, please ask him, in private, prior to instigating a fitna.

Mola Ali<sup>as</sup> Waris.

Admin

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**APPENDIX I**

Standards (Alams) and Matam (beating oneself out of grief), the former is the model of the holy flag that was given by the holy prophet (Muhammad<sup>saww</sup>) to his successor (Imam Ali<sup>as</sup>) during all holy wars. Later, in Karbala, it was presented to Hazrat Abbas<sup>as</sup> by Imam Hussain<sup>as</sup>. Hazrat Abbas<sup>as</sup> looked after this Alam (symbol of Imam's strength) more than his own life, until Hazrat Abbas<sup>as</sup> was surrounded by enemies from all sides and was martyred. For the latter (Matam), its just sign of natural grief, every time we raise our hands and bring them down on our chest in lament, we mean: 'Alas, we were not present, at that time, to support you and die with you, our Imam<sup>as</sup>'. Our matam is also according to the traditions of Hazrat Zaynab<sup>sa</sup> and other Ahlul-Bait<sup>as</sup> who performed matam and sessions of lament, when and where restrictions were lifted.

The name of Imam Hussain<sup>as</sup>'s horse has been quoted as Tho Al-Janah (Zuljinah) or Murtajiz, white in colour. Zuljinah took active part in the Jihad and remained faithful while being attacked from all directions until Yazids' army<sup>la</sup> injured Imam Hussain<sup>as</sup>, he brought Imam<sup>as</sup> to the ground with ease (as best as he could) and started encircling Imam<sup>as</sup> in order to save him<sup>as</sup> from his attackers. Until the sad moment of Shimr's<sup>la</sup> cowardly attack on Imam<sup>as</sup>, while he was in the prostrate to Allah<sup>swt</sup>, with his blunt dagger, striking Hussain<sup>as</sup> through the backside of Imam<sup>as</sup>'s neck. Zuljinah, after staining his face with Imam<sup>as</sup>'s blood, went back to the tents of Imam<sup>as</sup>'s household and broke the tragic news. He was screaming and showing the blood of Imam<sup>as</sup> to Sakina<sup>sa</sup> (Imam<sup>as</sup>'s daughter). It is said, that later on, he went to the Furat (Euphrates) river and disappeared therein.

Our rituals are carried out, simply, with the same intention, as a believer would kiss the cover of Holy book (Quran) or the Holy Kabah in Mecca. These are called signs of Allah 'Shair Allah'<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> A famous tradition by Holy prophet (Hazrat Muhammad<sup>saww</sup>): A Muslim visited Holy Prophet and asked him what shall he do-he had taken an oath that he would kiss a 'Hoor' and the doorstep of the heavens? Prophet asked him to go and kiss the graves of his deceased father and mother and if he could not find their graves, create two fresh ones and then kiss them.

## **APPENDIX II**

Saad Bin Saeed relates from Imam Kazim<sup>as</sup>:

*"Consumption of soil is as much haram as consumption of blood and meat of swine except the soil of the grave of Imam Hussain<sup>as</sup> because in it is cure for the diseases and security from all feats." (Kamiluz-Ziyarat pg. 285)*

Imam Sadiq<sup>as</sup> said:

*"The soil of Imam Hussain (a.s)'s grave is a cure for all diseases, at the time of eating it say 'Bismillahe-wa-Billah O Allah' make it for me a expanded subsistence, beneficial knowledge and cure for all diseases. Surely you are Omnipotent." (Ibid pg. 284)*

Imam Sadiq<sup>as</sup> says:

*Our sixth Imam, Imam Jaafer-Sadiq (a.s) advised to Hussain Bin Abitulla that:  
" Make your children to taste the soil of Imam Hussain<sup>as</sup>'s grave." (Ibid pg. 278).*