

## The Necessity of the Existence of a Permanent Imam in the Sources of Both Sects

### Abstract

**Presenter (Dr. Asdaf):** According to the interpretation of certain Quranic verses, Almighty God never leaves the earth without a guiding Imam. In every era, an infallible Imam is appointed by God to guide the people and bear witness to their deeds. On the Day of Judgment, people will be known by their Imam. This concept is addressed in various ways in the Quranic verses, which we have referenced in this study, particularly from the sources of both sects, especially the reputable sources of Sunni tradition. We have examined these references to support our claim. Additionally, we noted that the presence of an Imam among the people does not necessarily mean his physical presence, as the primary role of the Imam is to provide inner guidance and to act as an intermediary between the Creator and the creation, which does not require his visible presence among the people.

**First Critic (Hujjat-ul-Islam Shaban Dadashi):** The textual evidence presented in the article does not align with the article's title, "The Necessity of the Existence of a Permanent Imam in the Sources of Both Sects." Initially, logical arguments should have been used to establish the necessity of an Imam, with textual evidence serving as supporting material. It would have been appropriate for the researcher to address foundational topics such as the concept of "Imam" in the introduction, to clarify and define the dispute. The concept of Imamate defended by Shia Muslims differs from that recognized by Sunni Muslims. The discrepancies between the abstract and the article's content, the lack of key terms in the abstract, and the misalignment between the article's content and its title need to be addressed. The term "Imams" in the guidance verse does not refer to the specific, disputed meaning of Imamate. Sunni scholars believe in the infallibility of the community and the assembly of those with authority ("Ahl al-Hall wa al-'Aqd") but do not hold that the Imams are infallible. The textual references and arguments provided are insufficient to establish the necessity of an Imam in all times and places.

**Second Critic (Hujjat-ul-Islam Dr. Ezzedine Rezanejad):** The article fails to provide an appropriate explanation of its main claim. Considering that the Shia and Sunni perspectives differ in defining the term "Imam," it would have been appropriate to clarify the intended meaning of "Imam" in the title of the article within the introduction. Furthermore, it should be clearly stated which type of Imam is considered necessary at all times. In other words, what is meant by "Imam" in the phrase "the necessity of the existence of a permanent Imam"? Is the reference to an infallible Imam? Or to a proof (Hujjah)? Or to an absolute guide? Or to a relative guide? Given that the respected researcher mentioned in his research proposal that "the essence of the Imam...", my question is: Do Sunni scholars, in their hadith and non-hadith texts, acknowledge such an Imam? Moreover, does such an Imam (i.e., the Imam as a divine proof) necessarily have to be a "person," or can reason also be a manifestation of it? And if it must be a "person," is the Imam the same figure that the Shia believe in, or could it be the figure acknowledged by the Sunnis? The respected researcher, relying on the Quranic verse "And for every people, there is a guide," has discussed the Imam as a guide and warner. This raises several questions: Is the guidance being referred to internal or spiritual? Has the Imam mentioned by the researcher existed throughout all past times? The researcher has emphasized that the Imam must be alive based on verses related to "witness" (verses indicating that the Imam is a witness and observer). The question arises: Is this conditional on the Imam's presence or not? If you say presence is a condition, then how can the witness role of an absent Imam be explained? And if it is not conditional on presence, then first, Isa (peace be upon him) is alive and can serve as a witness, so there would be no need for the existence of the current Imam (peace be upon him). Secondly, according to narrations, the spirits of the divine prophets and others influence this world, so again, there would be no need for the existence of the

current Imam (peace be upon him). The respected researcher, relying on certain narrations mentioned in Sunni hadith sources, has concluded that the authors of these books also believe in the necessity of the Imam's existence. However, we argue that the Imam they refer to is different from the Imam recognized by Shia scholars. The researcher claimed that he intended to prove the necessity of the Imam's existence using the sources of both sects, particularly Sunni sources, but in practice, he only cited a few limited Sunni sources, and even those citations are not relevant to his claim.