



A Series of Ideological Researches

(33)

THE PROMISED SAVIOR

An inquiry into the imamate of Imam Mahdi (as) from the viewpoint of Muslim thinkers

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Islamic Truths Center

In the Name of God the Beneficent the Merciful

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In the Name of God the Beneficent the Merciful

Foreword

With the prophetic mission of Prophet Muhammad (s), the seal of the prophets, the last and the most perfect divine religion was conveyed to humanity and prophethood came to an end.

The religion of Islam emerged in Mecca but after twenty three years of arduous efforts made by the Messenger Allah (s) and a handful of his loyal companions it spread all over the Arabian Peninsula.

The continuation of this divine mission was a task that was entrusted publicly on Dhul Hijja, the eighteenth, by Allah, the Glorious, to Ali (a.s), the commander of the faithful and the first personality after the Holy Prophet (a) in the world of Islam.

With the proclamation of Hazrat Ali's guardianship and succession on this day, divine blessings were completed and the religion of Islam was perfected, being announced as the only religion chosen by Allah. That was how unbelievers and pagans got disappointed from destroying Islam.

Soon after [the demise of the Messenger of Allah (s)], some of the companions of the Holy Prophet (s) based on their pre-hatched conspiracies, brought deviation in the course of guidance and leadership. They closed the gate of the city of knowledge putting Muslims in perplexity. From the very beginning of their rule, they placed the truths of Islam – that were like shining sun – behind the dark clouds of doubt and skepticism by putting a ban on recording prophetic traditions , spreading fabricated traditions , casting doubts and using hypocrisy and deception.

Obviously, in spite of all conspiracies hatched by the enemies of Islam, the truths of Islam and noble sayings of the Messenger of Allah (s) were promulgated by the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (a.s.), his successors and a few of his devout companions and those truths kept flowing and manifesting themselves in one way or the other in the course of history. By explaining the truths, they did away with the doubts, hesitation, illusions, and unfounded beliefs inculcated by the enemies of Islam, making truths clear to all.

In this respect, great scholars and men of knowledge such as Sheikh Mufid, Sayyid Murtadha, Khaja Nasir, Allamah Hilli, Qadhi Nurullah, Mir Hamid Husain, Sayyid Sharafuddin, Allamah Amini etc. are like shining stars for they are the ones who defended Islamic truths, explained the realities of the school of Ahlulbayt (a.s.) and dealt with spurious arguments using their tongues and pens.

In our era, one of the of the scholars and researchers who has, with his eloquent pen and expressive writing, explained the truths of the religion of Islam and astutely defended the leadership and wilayah (guardianship) of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (a.s.) is Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Husaini Milani.

The Islamic Truths Center is proud to embark on reviving the fruitful and precious works of that great researcher by reviewing, translating and publishing them in a bid to make them available to students, scientific figures and those who are in search for Islamic truths.

The book in your hand is a translation of one of his works, intended to acquaint the English audience with Islamic truths. It is expected that this humble effort will earn the pleasure of the Remnant of Allah, the Imam of Time [the twelfth Shiite Imam] may Allah hasten his reappearance.

Islamic Truths Center

Translator's Note

Written by Professor Milani, *The Promised Savior* is a short but significant work that deals with the doctrine of Mahdaviyat (the belief in Imam Mahdi as ultimate savior).

Despite being short, it has not ignored any vital issues concerning the doctrine of Mahdaviyat. It is composed of three main parts.

The first part is devoted to introducing Mahdi and that the belief in his existence is not restricted to Shias alone. Based on authentic prophetic traditions, all Islamic sects accept the doctrine of Mahdaviyat in one way or the other.

As to the second part, it treats traditions that are apparently opposed to the traditions that prove the question of Mahdaviyat as an essential article of Islamic faith.

The last part sheds light on issues concerning Imam's life, his residence, the exact time of his reappearance, his methodology of judgment etc.

The top peculiarity of this work is that it deals with the issue in a particularly scholarly and impartial manner. It approaches the issue not only from a Shiite perspective but also from a Sunnite angle.

Though the time for translation was very limited and the translator was also faced with certain limitations, rendering was made with extensive care and many terminologies and phrases were replaced by new ones when the work was carefully reviewed. It was accomplished on Ramadan 21st, 1435 AH in Qom, Iran. May Allah accept this humble work.

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In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds and may prayer and peace be upon our master and Prophet, Muhammad, and his pure progeny, and may Allah's curse be upon all their enemies from the first to the last one.

Introduction

We Twelver Shias believe that Imam Mahdi, son of Imam Hasan 'Askari (a.s) and from the descendants of Imam Husain (a.s) is the twelfth infallible imam from the progeny of the Holy Prophet (s).

We believe that he is born and is alive though he lives away from people. This belief is among our essential religious beliefs and any Shia who casts doubts on it is no longer considered as a Shia.

In order to be able to hold dialogue with the followers of other religious sects and to invited them to accept this belief we need to make use of [generally] accepted arguments and valid methodologies. It is on the basis of such an approach that we can hold talks with fair-minded and impartial scholars of other religious sects. There are however people who do not pay heed to sound arguments and friendly admonitions. It is thus useless to engage in dialogue with such type of people. It seems as if the followers of Ibn Taymiyya, to cite an example, are among such people. Instead of paying attentions to sound arguments they use foul language and level accusations.

In his *Minhaj al-Sunna*, Ibn Taymiyya, mentor of such kind of Sunnis, commenting on Shias' belief in Imam Mahdi, says very rudely: "One of the stupid acts done by Shias is that they have devoted to awaited Mahdi particular places where they keep waiting for him. The basement (sardab) of Samirra considered by Shias as a place where Mahdi has disappeared is among such locations. They sometimes put animals such as mule, horse etc. over there so that the awaited imam would ride on them after reappearing. They commissioned a person to stand by the basement and keep calling on awaited Mahdi to reappear. They carry weapons whereas there is no one they need to fight with. Among Shias there are people who do not offer their prayer lest

they are not deprived from helping their imam if he reappears, due to getting engaged in prayer. This is while they live in cities like Medina that is far away from the place where he is likely to reappear. During the last ten days of the month of Ramadan or days that are better off than these days they turn their faces towards the east asking him earnestly to reappear.

Obviously, if there is a Mahdi and Allah orders him to reappear he will reappear, whether or not the Shias make any requests. [And if there is a Mahdi but] Allah does not allow him to reappear he will not reappear whether or not they make any request. In either case, what Shias do is futile. In addition, if he reappears, Allah will help him, providing him with vehicle and supporters. Thus it is not necessary for some misguided people who are struggling in vain, thinking they are doing something good, to keep waiting for him.

In the *Holy Quran*, Allah reproaches those who address in their prayers people and things that do not respond them... In the age of ignorance, they worshiped idols that were accessible to them and that sometimes contained evils that talked to them.

Obviously, the condition of those who communicate with a none-existing thing is far worse than that of those who communicate with an existing thing – though it is not alive.

Shias may possibly say, in response, that they believe in the existence of Mahdi, but they have to be reminded that their word is similar to that of idol worshipers. This is because they were also of the view that the idols they worshiped were able to intercede for them with Allah. Addressing them, Allah the Almighty says:

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَّا يَنفَعُهُمْ وَلَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَكَانَ الْكَافِرُ عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِ ظَهِيرًا²

And they serve besides Allah that which neither profits them nor causes them harm; and the unbeliever is a partisan against his Lord.

In short, both idol worshipers and Shias ask for assistance from those who are unable to help them. There is however a minor difference between the two. Idol worshipers regard idols as their intercessors and their objects of

²-*Quran*, Yunus, 18.

worship. Shias however believe that Mahdi is an infallible imam. They go so far that they regard their Mahdi as the standard of love and hatred just as idol worshipers deem their idols as such.

Just as some polytheists consider believing in gods as a basic article of their faith, Shias regard believing in Mahdi as a basic article of their faith, assuming that without such a belief no one's religion is perfect".³

Elsewhere he states: "Similarly it is not possible for anyone to know about the commandments and prohibitions of the Mahdi whom we should obey according to them. Thus if a Muslim will not achieve happiness except through obeying someone whose commandments and prohibitions are not clear and accessible, then such an obligation will be a clear example of unbearable obligations, but Shias try more than anyone else to prescribe such obligations both for themselves as well as for others.

If it is said that Mahdi's commandments are not anything other than the beliefs and rulings existing currently among Twelver Shias, it must be said in response that in such a case there is no need for believing in the existence of Mahdi. This is because Shia's religious commandments are known to everybody and his life or death, presence or absence will not change anything....

Shias are however among the most ignorant people. This is because to do intellectual and religious duties and not to do intellectually or religiously rejected things is either dependent on the commandment and prohibitions of this awaited imam or not.

If they are dependent on his commandments and prohibitions then we are obliged to do an unbearable obligation. In such a case to perform or not to perform an obligation is conditioned to something that is beyond the ability of anyone. This is because no one has honestly claimed to have seen him or heard him say anything in in the entire world.

If they are not dependent on knowing his commandments it will be possible to perform intellectual and religious obligations and to avoid intellectually or

³ - *Mihaj al-Sunna*, vol. 1, pp. 44-47.

religious unwanted things without relying on this awaited imam. In such a case there is no need for his presence and existence..."⁴

Elsewhere he mentions: "Some great Shias like Ibn Ud Hill⁵ are of the view that whenever Shias differed on any issue and the holders of one opinion are known whereas the holders of another opinion are not known the correct opinion is the opinion whose holders are not known, for the awaited imam is likely to be present among them.

This is the extremity of ignorance and misguidance. This is because even if there is such a person as the awaited infallible imam, it is not clear if he cherishes such an opinion, for he is not quoted directly or indirectly as having said such a thing. How can thus one make sure that he really cherishes such an opinion?

It can thus be concluded that Shia's religion is based on something that is unknown and non-existing".⁶

Elsewhere he says: "Any supposed imam who is useful in religious or worldly matters is far better than an imam who is not useful at all...

Can one thus find anyone more distanced from the objective of imamate and from goodness and dignity than Shias who follow a destination that brings them regret?"⁷

Commenting on Shias he points out: "No one benefited from him- neither those who believed in him nor those who denied him".⁸

Likewise he states that it is plain that this awaited imam – who has passed away according to general Muslim opinion and is alive according to Shiite opinion – is of no avail to any human being. His predecessors were also like him not being able to do anything an infallible imam is supposed to do for Muslims..."⁹

⁴ - Ibid,, pp. 87-88.

⁵ - Abu al-Qasim Najib al-Din bin Husain bin Ud Hilli (H.d. 679 AH. See *'Ayan al-Shi'a*, vol. 10, p. 296.

⁶ - *Mihaj al-Sunna*, vol. 1, pp. 89-90.

⁷ - Ibid, pp. 100-101.

⁸ - Ibid, p. 133.

⁹ - Ibid, vol. 3, p. 378.

Elsewhere he maintains that anyone who takes over people's affairs is far better than the non-existing awaited imam whom Shias introduce as [prophet's] successor having divine authority.¹⁰

He says that from among some religious sects some have claimed to be the promised Messiah, among whom are Qarmatiyan Mahdi, Ibn Tumert's Mahdi etc. The said claimants are however far better than Shias' Mahdi. This is because their Mahdi can never be traced...¹¹

According to him, the belief in Mahdi has, in addition, caused numerous evils of which only Allah is aware.¹²

On his opinion, Muhammad bin Jarir Tabari, Abd al-Baqi bn Qani'a and other historians are of the view that Hasan bin Ali Askari had no child.¹³

Explaining Shias' beliefs about Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance), the book in your hand studies the doubts and skepticisms raised about Imam Mahdi. This study is divided into three parts:

Part One: Mahdaviyat and Imam Mahdi from the view point of Muslim thinkers

Part Two: Counter traditions

Part Three: Question of Mahdaviyat and doubts about it

It is hoped that this humble effort will be accepted by Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance).

Sayyid Ali Husaini Milani

¹⁰ - Ibid, vol. 1, p. 548.

¹¹ - Ibid, vol. 8, pp. 258 and 259.

¹² - Ibid, p. 259.

¹³ - Ibid, vol. 4, p. 87.

Part One

Mahdaviyat and Imam Mahdi from the view point of Muslim thinkers

Here we will discuss about Mahdaviyat and Imam Mahdi from the viewpoint of Muslim thinkers from different perspectives.

Muslim Community and Imam Mahdi

All Muslims believe that Muslim community has a Mahdi. There is no difference among Muslims about it. The Holy Prophet (s) informed Muslims about his reappearance, telling his names, attributes, appellations and peculiarities.

The traditions narrated in this regard in Shiite and Sunni sources are far above the standard of succession (tawatur). That is the reason why there is no difference among Muslims in this connection. Anyone who is aware of such traditions and their accuracy and despite that refutes the doctrine of Mahdaviyat, rejects the words said by the Holy Prophet (s).

Shiite and Sunni hadith collections contain traditions in this regard. Great present and past scholars have compiled works on this issue, touching the traditions said by the Holy Prophet (s) concerning Imam Mahdi (a.s.).

Moreover, there are numerous verses in the *Holy Quran* that on some interpretations deal with Imam Mahdi (a.s.).

Given all these, one cannot pay heed to what a few historians such as Ibn Khaldun have pinpointed.¹⁴ Ibn Khaldun's opinion in this regard is so queer and strange that even some Sunni scholars have also rejected it.

Imam Mahdi and famous Sunni writers

Here are the names of some of the most famous Sunni writers who have recorded traditions concerning Imam Mahdi throughout history.

- Abu Bakr bin Abi Khaithama (d. 279 AH)
- Na'aeem bin Hamad Maruzi (d. 288 AH)
- Abu Husain bin Munadi (d. 336 AH)
- Abu Na'aeem Isfahani (d. 430 AH)
- Abu Ula 'Attar Hamadani (d. 569 AH)
- Abd al-Ghani Maqdisi (d. 600 AH).
- Ibn 'Arabi Andulusi (d. 638 AH)
- Sa'ad al-Din Hamuvi (d. 650 AH)
- Abu Abdullah Ganji Sha'fi'ai (d. 658 AH)
- Yusuf bin Yahya Maqdisi (d.658 AH)

¹⁴-*Tarikh Ibn Khaldun*, vol. 1, p. 311.

- Ibn Qayyim Jawziyya (d. 685 AH)
- Ibn Kathir Demishqi (d. 774 AH)
- Jalal al-Din Suyuti (d. 911 AH)
- Shahab al-Din Ibn Hajar Makki (d. 974 AH)
- Ali bin Hisam al-Din Muttaqi Hindi (d. 975 AH)
- Nur al-Din Ali Qari Hiravi (d. 1014 AH)
- Muhammad bin Ali Shukani Qazi (1250 AH)
- Ahmad bin Saddiq Ghamari (d. 1380 AH)

These are some of the most popular Sunni writers who have written books on traditions concerning Imam Mahdi (a.s). At present as well, there are writers who have written books on this issue. There is however no need to mention these books.

Companions as narrators of traditions on Imam Mahdi (a.s)

As mentioned above, there are traditions said by the Messenger of Allah (s) on Mahdviyat and imamate of Imam Mahdi (a.s). These traditions are reported by many of his great companions. Muslim scholars have narrated these traditions from the companions of the Apostle of Allah. Since their names are too many, we suffice to mentioning some of them.

- Imam Ali, commander of the faithful (a.s)
- Fatima al-Zahra (daughter of the Holy Prophet)
- Imam Hasan Mujtaba (Prophet's grandson)
- Imam Husain (Prophet's grandson)
- Abdullah bin Mas'ud
- Abudar Ghaffari
- Abu Ayyub Ansari
- Abdullah bin Abbas
- 'Ammar bin Yasir
- Abu Sa'aeed Khadri
- Hudayfa bin Yaman
- Umar bin Khattab
- Abd al-Rahman bin 'Awf
- Uthman bin 'Afan
- Talha bin Ubaidullah
- Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari

- Umm al-Mu'amineen Umm Salama
- 'Aisha, daughter of Abu Bakr

Sunni Scholars and the successively reported traditions on Imam Mahdi (a.s.)

There are many Sunni scholars who have dealt with the issue of the succession of traditions on Imam Mahdi (a.s), throughout different centuries in history. Below are the names of some of these scholars:

- Hafiz Jamal al-Din Mazzi (d. 742 AH)¹⁵
- Qurtubi, a great jurist and exegete (d. 671 AH)¹⁶
- Ibn Qayyim Jawziyya (d. 751 AH)¹⁷
- Ibn Hajar 'Asqalani (d. 852 AH)¹⁸
- Jalal al-Din Suyuti (d. 911 AH)¹⁹
- Ibn Hajar Makki (d. 974 AH)²⁰
- Sheikh Ali Muttaqi Hindi (d.975 AH)²¹
- Faqih Ahmad Zaini Dahlan Shaf'ae (d. 1304 AH)²²

Sunni scholars and authenticity of traditions on Mahdi

There are other Sunni scholars who (have not narrated these traditions in their books but) have however confirmed that these traditions are authentic. Among such scholars are:

- Timidhi, author of *al-Sunan*, one the six sahih collections.
- Muhammad bin Husain Abri (d. 363 AH)
- Abu Bakr Baihaqi, author of *al-Sunan al-Kubra*
- Farra Baghvi Muhyi al-Sunna
- Ibn Athir Jazari
- Shams al-Din Dahabi
- Nur al-Din Haithami

¹⁵- *Tahdib al-Kamal*, vol. 25, p. 146.

¹⁶- *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, vol. 8, p. 121.

¹⁷- *Al-Minar al-Nunif*, p. 135.

¹⁸- *Tahdib al-Tahdib* vol. 9, p. 125 and *Fath al-Bari fi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 6, p. 385.

¹⁹- *Ibraz al-Wahm al-Maknoon*, p. 436 compiled by Abu al-Fayz Ghamari.

²⁰- *Al-Sawaeq al-Muhriqa*, p. 162.

²¹- *Al-Burhan fi 'Alamat Mahdi 'Akhir al-Zaman*, p. 178.

²²- *Al-Futuh al-Islamiyya*, vol. 2, p. 211.

Given all these, there is no place for controversy over the doctrine of Mahdaviyat in Islam. Thus anyone who denies the existence of Imam Mahdi (a.s) is no longer according to all, a Muslim.

Chapter Two

Imam Mahdi and Mahdviyat in successively reported traditions

Every time there has to be an Imam who is acceptable to people and people follow him in every matter, considering him as an authority between themselves and Allah.

رُسُلًا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا²³

(We sent) apostles as the givers of good news and as warners, so that people should not have a plea against Allah after the (coming of) apostles; and Allah is Mighty, Wise.

Elsewhere the *Holy Quran* maintains:

إِذْ أَنْتُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الْقُصْوَى وَالرَّكْبُ أَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ وَلَوْ تَوَاعَدْتُمْ لِاخْتِلَافِئْتُمْ فِي الْمِيْعَادِ وَلَكِن لِّيَقْضِيَ اللَّهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولًا لِيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَن بَيِّنَةٍ وَيَحْيَىٰ مَنْ حَيَّ عَن بَيِّنَةٍ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَسَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ²⁴

When you were on the nearer side (of the valley) and they were on the farthest side, while the caravan was in a lower place than you; and if you had mutually made an appointment, you would certainly have broken away from the appointment, but—in order that Allah might bring about a matter which was to be done, that he who would perish might perish by clear proof, and he who would live might live by clear proof; and most surely Allah is Hearing, Knowing.

Quran again says:

سَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكْنَا وَلَا آبَاؤُنَا وَلَا حَرَمْنَا مِن شَيْءٍ كَذَلِكَ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ ذَاقُوا بَأْسَنَا قُلْ هَلْ عِنْدَكُمْ مِّنْ عِلْمٍ فَتُخْرِجُوهُ لَنَا إِنْ تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا تَخْرُصُونَ.²⁵

Those who are polytheists will say: If Allah had pleased we would not have associated (aught with Him) nor our fathers, nor would we have forbidden (to ourselves) anything; even so did those before them reject until they tasted Our punishment. Say: Have you any knowledge with you so you should bring it forth to us? You only follow a conjecture and you only tell lies.

Referring to reliable prophetic traditions, we come across three successively reported traditions that deal with the issue of imamate. These

²³ - *Quran*, Nisa, 165.

²⁴ - *Ibid*, Anfal, 42.

²⁵ - *Ibid*, 148.

three traditions prove that there is a perpetual need for an imam and declare that the number of imams does not exceed twelve.

1. Necessity of knowing the imam of the time

According to the first tradition (from among the said three successively reported traditions), everyone who dies without knowing the imam of his time dies the death of ignorance.

Every time there is a need for an imam. It is necessary for all to know him, believe in his imamate and it is obligatory for every Muslim to follow him. If a Muslim dies without knowing the imam of his time he dies the death of ignorance.

This has been reported through numerous chains from reliable transmitters. I do not think there is anyone who dares cast doubt on the chain or meaning of these traditions.

These traditions have appeared in *Sahih Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*, *Musnad*, *Sunan* and other tradition books. They are accepted by Shias and Sunnis alike.

Muslims unanimously agree that the Holy Prophet (s) said:

من مات و لم يعرف امام زمانه مات ميتة جاهلية

He who dies without knowing the imam of his time dies the death of ignorance.

This tradition has appeared with the same wording in some reference books. Taking it for granted, Sheikh Sa'ad al-Din Taftazani centers his discussions on imamate in his *Sharh al-Maqasi* on this tradition.²⁶

This tradition has appeared (in tradition books) in other wordings as well, but we believe that all conveys the same message. The Holy Prophet (s) intends to say that Muslims are always in need of an imam who guides them and it is obligatory upon all Muslims to follow him and seek guidance from him.

In his *Musnad*, Ahmad for example quotes the Holy Prophet (s) as having said:

²⁶ - *Sharh al- Maqasid*, vol. 5, p. 239.

من مات بغير امام مات ميتة جاهليه²⁷

He who dies without having an imam dies the death of ignorance.

The same is reported by Abu Dawood Tiyalisi in his *Musnad* and Tabarani in his *al-Mu'ajam al-Kabir*.

Ibn Hayyan in his *Sahih* maintains:

من مات و ليس له امام مات ميتة جاهليه²⁸

He who dies without having an imam dies the death of ignorance.

There are also books that have added something to this tradition saying:

من مات و لم يعرف امام زمانه فليمت ان شاء يهوديا و ان شاء نصرانيا²⁹

He who dies without knowing the imam of his time should die as he wishes – as a Jew or as a Christian.

A number of scholars have reported this tradition with this wording from *al-Masaal al-Khamsun* written by Fakhr Razi.

Though this tradition has also appeared in other wordings as well in *Sahih*, *Sunan* and *Musnad* hadith collections we suffice to what we have thus far reported. We will however elaborate on some of the peculiarities of the text of this tradition.

The phrase 'من مات و لم يعرف' 'he who dies without knowing..' shows that knowing the imam is an article of faith, for the lack of such knowledge causes one to die the death of ignorance. Thus we must translate this tradition as 'he who dies without believing in imam'...

It is likewise clear that the term 'imam' does not include anyone who is practically leading his society. It includes only a righteous imam who is appointed by Allah, the Almighty.

²⁷ - *Musnad Ahmad*, vol. 4, p. 96.

²⁸ - *Sahih Ibn Hayyan* vol. 10, p. 434.

²⁹ - *Al-Mu'ajam al-Kabir*, vol. 19, p. 388.

Thus, according to this tradition, he who dies without recognizing the imam of his time together with the peculiarities mentioned dies the death of ignorance.

The term 'imam' thus does not (as mentioned) include all rulers, for it is not obligatory to know them and not knowing them does not lead one to Hell nor does it cause one to die the death of ignorance.

Thus the imam we are obliged to know, obey and believe in has to be righteous appointed by shari'a laws. It is such an imam whom we must consider an intermediary authority between ourselves and Allah. If one dies without believing in such an imam he dies the death of ignorance.

In other words, he who dies without knowing the imam of his time should die as he wishes – as a Jew or as a Christian.

[The tradition of knowing the imam and its historical instances](#)

According to historians, Abdullah bin Umar did not pay allegiance to Imam Ali (a.s). As the night fell, he met Hajjaj in his house to pay allegiance to him as Abd al-Malik's deputy. Abdullah bin Umar did not want to pass one night without having an imam. As he himself mentions, he went to Hajjaj's house in order to act on the tradition that says: He who dies without having an imam dies the death of ignorance.

As the night fell, he went to Hajjaj's house. He knocked at his door, entered his house and asked Hajjaj to accept his allegiance. Addressing Hajjaj, he said that he had heard the Holy Prophet (s) say:

من مات و لا امام له مات ميتة جاهلية

He who dies without having an imam dies the death of ignorance.

Hajjaj however insulted him and stretching his foot (instead of his hand), he said: Pay allegiance to my foot. Abdullah bin Umar did what he was asked to do and thus he paid allegiance to him.

The story of Abdullah bin Umar is not surprising. This is because he did not pay allegiance to an important person like Imam Ali, commander of the faithful. He [who behaves so irresponsibly] must get humiliated and pay allegiance in such an embarrassing way to a person like Hajjaj.

In another instance, in the event of Hurra, Yazid bin Mu'awiyya put Medina for three days at the disposal of his army, allowing it to do whatever it wanted to the people of Medina.

It is well-known that in this event tens of thousands of ordinary people and hundreds of the Holy Prophet's companions were killed. They raped numerous Muslim women and as a result hundreds of illegitimate children were born.

Commenting on Abdullah bin Umar and the event of Hurra, historians point out that during the event of Hurra Abdullah bin Umar met Abdullah bin Muti'a. Abdullah bin Mut'a ordered his servant to bring a pillow for Abu Abd al-Rahman (Abdullah bin Umar). Abdullah bin Umar said that he had not come to sit. Instead, he said, he had come to tell him a tradition which he had heard from the Holy Prophet (s). He said he had heard the Holy Prophet (s) say:

من خلع يدا من طاعه لقي الله يوم القيامة لا حجه له و من مات و ليس في عنقه بيعه مات ميتة جاهليه.³⁰

He who gives up obeying [his imam] will meet Allah on the Day of Judgment without having any authority. He who dies without paying allegiance to an imam dies the death of ignorance.

Thus it is an indisputable fact that it is obligatory to know the imam of time, believe in his leadership and remain loyal to him. Traditions and the conduct of the companions of the Holy Prophet (s) testify to its truth. As mentioned before, the behavior of Abdullah bin Umar (whom Sunnis accept as a model) as an instance, indicates that it is necessary to know an imam and obey him.

It is said that this Abdullah bin Umar (finally) regretted over why he did not pay allegiance to Imam Ali, commander of the faithful and why he did not fight against Qasiteen (a rebellious group that fought against Imam Ali).

To know about the truth of the above-mentioned word, reference has to be made to books such as Ibn Sa'ad's *al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*³¹, Hakim's *al-Mustadrak 'Ala al-Sahihayn*³².

³⁰ - *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 3, p. 1478.

³¹ - *Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, vol. 4, pp. 185 and 186. According to this book Abdullah bin Umar says that only worldly thing over which is regretful is that he did not fight against Qasiteen. He further says that in this world

Our aim is not to elaborate on Abdullah bin Umar or others. Our aim, instead, is to bring instances from *Quran*, tradition and companions' conduct to show that imamate is an essential article of Islamic faith. In every time, there is a righteous imam who is appointed by Allah. It is obligatory on all Muslims to believe in his imamate and regard him as the authority between themselves and Allah.

In a tradition that is accepted by Shias and Sunnis alike, Imam Ali (a.s) says:

اللَّهُمَّ بَلَىٰ لَا تَخْلُو الْأَرْضَ مِنْ قَائِمٍ لِلَّهِ بِحُجَّةٍ إِلَّا مِمَّا ظَاهِرًا مَشْهُورًا وَإِمًّا خَائِفًا مَعْمُورًا لِنَا تَبْطَلَ حُجُّ اللَّهِ وَبَيِّنَاتِهِ³³

But this earth will never be without those persons who will prove the universality of truth as disclosed by Allah, they may be well-known persons, openly and fearlessly declaring the things revealed to them or they may, under fear of harm, injury or deaths hide themselves from the public gaze and may carry on their mission privately so that the reasons proving the reality of truth as preached by religion and as demonstrated by His Prophet may not totally disappear.

Speaking in this regard, Ibn Hajar says:

he has lost three things over which he is regretful: fasting during the hot days of the year, keeping vigilant at night (offering night prayer) and fighting against Qasiteen who rose to fight Imam Ali (a.s).

³²- *Al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn*, vol. 3, p. 558. According to this source, Abdullah bin Umar says that he did not regret for anything.... (blank space, something is omitted) except because of not fighting against Qasiteen.

³³-The full text of this tradition is as under:

If sensible trustees of knowledge and wisdom totally disappear from human society then both knowledge and wisdom will suffer severely, may bring harm to humanity and may even die out. But this earth will never be without those persons who will prove the universality of truth as disclosed by Allah, they may be well-known persons, openly and fearlessly declaring the things revealed to them or they may, under fear of harm, injury or deaths hide themselves from the public gaze and may carry on their mission privately so that the reasons proving the reality of truth as preached by religion and as demonstrated by His Prophet may not totally disappear. How many are they and where could they be found? I swear by Allah that they are very few in number but their worth and their ranks before Allah are very high. Through them Allah preserves His Guidance so that they, while departing, may hand over these truths to persons like themselves. The knowledge which they have acquired has made them see the realities and visualize the truth and has instilled into them the spirit of faith and trust. The duties which were decreed as hard and unbearable by them. They feel happy in the company and association of things which frighten the ignorant and uneducated. They live in this world like everybody else but their souls soar to the heights of Divine Eminence. They are media of Allah on this earth and they invite people towards Him. How I love to meet them O Kumayl ! I have told you all that I have to say, you can go back to your place whenever you like". *Nahj al-Balagha*, saying 147.

و في صلاة عيسى عليه السلام خلف رجل من هذه الامه مع كونه في آخر الزمان و قرب قيام الساعه
دلاله للصحيح من الاقوال ان الارض لا تخلو من قائم لله بحجه³⁴

The fact that Prophet Isa offers prayer after a man belonging to this community and the fact that he is in the end of the world and is close to resurrection confirm the tradition 'this earth will never be without those persons who will prove the universality of truth as disclosed by Allah'.

Commenting on the words of Imam Ali, commander of the faithful, Ibn Abi al-Hadid says that the reason why the earth is not devoid of such persons is that the earth must not be devoid of persons who lead people for the sake of divine order. According to him, this portion of Imam Ali's word, confirms the opinion expressed by Shias, though his co-thinkers are of the view that this refers to 'abdal' (a group of people who are righteous and truthful. Their number does not decrease. If one of them dies Allah replaces him with another one).³⁵

The co-thinkers of Ibn Abi al-Hadid did not know that the term 'hujja' does not include all sorts of rulers; it includes only an infallible ruler. No one has described abdal or pious people as infallible.

His co-thinkers did not either notice the final portion of this tradition that links the existence of imam to protecting the clear signs and proofs of Allah. It is only a divinely appointed imam after the Holy Prophet (s), who can perform such a task. That is why Ibn Abi al-Hadid is right when he confesses that Shiite religion is true.

2. Two successors of the Holy Prophet (s)

There is another tradition that says: "The Holy Prophet (s) left two successors among Muslim community".

It is reported in various successively reported traditions in different variations that the Holy Prophet (s) left two things behind introducing them as his successors. Muslims would not go astray as long as they adhere to them. They are Allah's book and the Holy Prophet's progeny (a.s). The Holy Prophet

³⁴ - *Fath al-Bari fiSharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 5, p. 385. This can also be found elsewhere in other Sunni sources such *Tafsir al-Razi*, vol. 2, p. 192,, *Sharh al-Maqasid*, vol. 5, p. 385, *Tarikh Baghdad*, vol. 6, p. 379, *al-'Aqd al-Farid*, vol. 1, p. 265, and *Ayun al-Akhbar* by Abu Qatiba, p. 7. This tradition can also be found in Shia sources including *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 136, *Kamal al-Din* vol. 1, p. 287 etc.

³⁵ - *Sharh Nahj al-Balagha*, vol. 18, p. 351.

(s) added that they would not separate from each other until they met him beside the pool on the Day of Judgment. Below are some examples of some sources that contain this tradition in its various variations.

The tradition as narrated by Zaid bin Thabit

Using his own chain of reporters, Ahmad bin Hanbal narrates from Zaid bin Thabit who quotes the Holy Prophet (s) as saying:

انى تارك فيكم خليفتين: كتاب الله حبل ممدود ما بين السماء و الارض او ما بين السماء الى الارض و عترتى اهل بيتى و انهما لن يفترقا حتى يردا على الحوض³⁶

I have left two successors: Allah's book which is a stretched rope between the heaven and earth (or from heaven to earth) and my progeny (my family), These two will never separate from each other until they join me by the pool.

The tradition as reported by Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari

Using his own chain of reporters, Tirmidhi quotes Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari as saying: "During performing hajj rituals on 'Arafa day I heard the Holy Prophet (s) who was sitting on the back of his quswa camel³⁷, say:

ايها الناس! قد تركت فيكم ما ان اخذتم به لن تضلوا: كتاب الله و عترتى اهل بيتى³⁸

O people! I have left something among you to which as long as you hold fast, you will never go astray: Allah's Book and my progeny (my family).

Using his chain of transmitters, Ibn Abi Shayba, author of al-Mussanaf, quotes Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari as saying:

انى تركت فيكم ما لن تضلوا بعدى ان اعتصمتم به: كتاب الله و عترتى اهل بيتى

I have left some things among you to which as long as you hold fast you will never go astray: Allah's Book and my progeny (my family).

The tradition as reported by Abu Sa'eed Khidri

Ibn Sa'ad Ahmad bin Hanbal and Tabarani have narrated from Abu Sa'eed Khidri who quotes the Holy Prophet as having said:

يا ايها الناس! انى تارك فيكم ما ان اخذتم به لن تضلوا بعدى امرين احدهما اكبر من الاخر: كتاب الله حبل ممدود ما بين السماء و الارض و عترتى اهل بيتى و انهما لن يفترقا حتى يردا على الحوض

³⁶ - *Musnad Ahmad*, vol. 5, p. 181.

³⁷ - A camel whose ear is partly cut (see, *al-Munjid*).

³⁸ - *Sahih Tarmidhi*, vol. 5, p. 621.

O people! I have left two things to which if you hold fast you will not go astray; two things one of which is greater than the other. Allah's book which is a stretched rope between the heaven and earth and my progeny (my family), These two will never separate from each other until they join me by the pool.

The tradition as narrated by Zaid bin Arqam

Relying on his own chain of reporters, Tirmidhi narrates from Zaid bin Arqam who quotes the Holy Prophet (s) as saying:

انى تارك فيكم ما ان تمسكتم به لن تضلوا بعدى احدهما اعظم من الاخر: كتاب الله حبل ممدود من السماء الى الارض و عترتى اهل بيتى و لن يتفرقا حتى يردا على الحوض فانظروا كيف تخلفونى فيهما³⁹

I have left two things among to which if you hold fast you will not go astray after me; one of which is greater than the other. Allah's book which is a rope stretched from heaven to earth and my progeny (my family), [These two] will never separate from each other until they join me by the pool. See how you deal with them after me.

Hakim Nayshaburi narrates from Abu Tufail from Zaid bin Arqam who says:

At a place between Macca and Medina where there were large trees, the Holy Prophet (s) dismounted his camel. People cleaned the place under the trees. The Holy Prophet (s) took rest over there and then offered there his noon prayer. Afterwards, he delivered a speech in which he praised Allah and admonished people telling whatever he was ordered by Allah to tell. He then said:

ايها الناس! انى تارك فيكم امرين لن تضلوا ان اتبعتموهما و هما كتاب الله و اهل بيتى عترتى

O people! I have left two things among you to which if you adhere you will never go astray; These two things are Allah's book and my progeny (my family).

Thereupon he thrice said:

ا تعلمون انى اولى بالمؤمنين من انفسهم؟

Do you know that I am closer to believers than their own selves.

People replied: Yes.

³⁹ - Sahih Tirmidhi, vol. 5, p. 621.

Thereupon the Messenger of Allah said:

من كنت مولاه فعلى مولاه

Of whomsoever I am a master then Ali is his master.

This very tradition is also reported by Hakim Nayshaburi, though from Yahya bin Ju'ada who narrates it from Zaid bin Arqam. Hakim says:

Muhammad bin Ali Shaybani told me in Kufa that Ahmad bin Hazim Ghaffari narrated from Abu Na'aeem, from Kamil Abulula from Habib bin Abu Thabit from Yahya bin Ju'ada who quotes Zaid bin Arqam as saying:

One day the Holy Prophet (s) and others (including me) went out till they reached Ghadir Khum. He ordered us to clean the place under the trees. It was extraordinarily hot. After praising Allah, the Apostle of Allah (s) said:

يا ايها الناس! انه لم يبعث نبي قط الا ما عاش نصف ما عاش الذى كان قبله و انى اوشك ان ادعى فاجيب و انى تارك فيكم ما لن تضلوا بعده كتاب الله.

O people! No prophet has come except that he has lived as long as half of what his predecessor lived. Soon I will be invited and I will accept the invitation. I leave among you something to which if you adhere you will never go astray. That is Allah's book.

Thereupon he stood up and taking Ali's hand, he said:

يا ايها الناس! من اولى بكم من انفسكم؟

O people! Who is closer to you than your own selves?

They replied: Allah and His Messenger know better.

Thereupon the Holy Prophet (s) said:

من كنت مولاه فعلى مولاه

Of whomsoever I am a master Ali is his master.

After quoting this tradition, Hakim Nayshaburi says:

The chain of the reporters of this tradition is authentic though Bukhari and Muslim have not mentioned it. In his *Talkhis*, Dahabi also agrees that this tradition is authentic.⁴⁰

Narrating this tradition from Zaid bin Arqam, Tabarani says: On Juhfa day the Holy Prophet (s) dismounted his camel. Turning his face towards people he after praising Allah said:

انى لا اجد لنبى الا نصف عمر الذى قبله و انى اوشك ان ادعى فاجيب فما انتم قائلون؟

I have not found any prophet living except half of the time of his predecessor. Soon I will be invited and I will accept the invitation. What are you saying?

They said: You were benevolent.

The Apostle of Allah said:

ا ليس تشهدون ان لا اله الا الله و ان محمدا عبده و رسوله و ان الجنة حق و النار حق و ان البعث بعد الموت حق؟

Don't you testify that there is no god except Allah, Muhammad is His servant and messenger, Hell is true, Heaven is true and that resurrection after death is true?

They said they testified they were true.

Thereupon he placed his hand on his chest saying:

و انا اشهد معكم

And I testify with you as well.

Then he said: ا لا تسمعون؟

Do you listen to my words?

They answered in the positive. Thereafter he said:

فانى فرطكم على الحوض و انتم واردون على الحوض و ان عرضه ابعده ما بين صنعاء و بصرى فيه اقداح عدد النجوم من فضه فانظروا كيف تخلفونى فى الثقلين.

⁴⁰ - *Al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn*, vol. 3, p. 533.

I will reach the pool before you and you will join me over there. The width of the pool is wider than the distance between San'a and Busra. There are silver bowls in the number of stars. Look out! How you will deal with the two heavy things?

At this moment somebody loudly said: O Apostle of Allah! What do you mean from Thaqalain?

The Messenger of Allah said:

كتاب الله طرف بيد الله عز و جل و طرف بايديكم فاستمسكوا به و لا تضلوا و الاخر عترتى و ان اللطيف الخبير نبأنى انهما لن ينفردا حتى يردا على الحوض و سألت ذلك لهما ربي. فلا تقدموهما فتهلكوا و لا تقصروا عنهما فتهلكوا و لا تعلموهم فانهم اعلم منكم

The first is Allah's book whose one end is in Allah's hand and the other in yours. Adhere to it and do not go astray. The second is my progeny. Allah, who is kind and knowing informed me that they will not separate from each other until they join me by the pool. I asked my Lord not to separate them from each other. Thus do not surpass the *Holy Quran* and my progeny as otherwise you will perish and do not fail to pay attention to them as otherwise you will perish. Do not teach anything to my progeny as they are more knowledgeable than you are.

Thereupon he took Ali's hand and said:

من كنت اولى به من نفسه فعلى و ليه اللهم وال من والاه و عاد من عاداه⁴¹

To whomsoever I am closer than his own self, Ali is his master. O Allah! Befriend those who befriend him and antagonize those who antagonize him.

Religious scholars are of the view that this tradition contains the Holy Prophet's last will. Ibn Hajar Makki says that this issue has appeared in several traditions including the following:

انى تارك فيكم ما ان تمسكنم به لن تضلوا بعدى الثقلين احدهما اعظم من الاخر: كتاب الله حبل ممدود من السماء الى الارض و عترى اهل بيتى و لن يفترقا حتى يردا على الحوض فانظروا كيف تخلفونى فيهما

⁴¹- *Al-Mu'ajam al-Kabir*, vol. 5, pp. 186 and 187.

I have left two things among you to which if you hold fast you will not go astray after me; one of which is greater than the other. Allah's book which is a rope stretched from heaven to earth and my progeny (my family), [These two] will never separate from each other until they join me by the pool. See how you deal with them after me.

Quoting this tradition, Tirmidhi says that this tradition is good though few have narrated it.⁴²

This tradition is however recorded by other scholars as well. Ibn Jawzi has mistakenly mentioned this tradition in his *al-Ilal al-Mutanahiya* [implying that this tradition is not authentic]. How is this possible whereas this tradition is mentioned in *Sahih Muslim* and other tradition books?⁴³

In his *Istijlab Irtiqā al-Ghuraf*, Hafiz Sakhavi says that the content of this tradition has appeared in other traditions as well. He mentions the name of Sulayman bin Mihran 'Aamash as an example of those who have mentioned such traditions.⁴⁴

In his *Jawahir al-'Aqdayn*, Hafiz Samhudi says: "Fourthly the Messenger of Allah encourages people to adhere to Allah's book and his progeny and treat them well after him. He will ask people about Thaqalain as they will join him by the pool on the Day of Judgment. Allah will also ask people as to how they dealt with Allah's book and Prophet's progeny after the Holy Prophet (s) passed away."⁴⁵

Moreover a variation of Thaqalain tradition contains:

⁴⁶ اوصيكم بكتاب الله و عترتي

I ask you to adhere to Allah's book and my progeny.

Religious scholars similarly mention that this tradition indicates that from among Prophet's progeny someone is always there until the Day of Judgment who is apt to be adhered to and who can lead people.

⁴² - *Sahih Tirmidhi*, vol. 5, p. 329.

⁴³ - *Al-Sawaeq al-Muhriqa*, p. 90.

⁴⁴ - *Istijlab Irtiqā al-Ghuraf*, vol. 1, p. 336.

⁴⁵ - *Jawahir al-'Aqdayn*, p. 231.

⁴⁶ - *Lisan al-'Arab*.

Ibn Hajar Makki says: "Thaqalain traditions indicate that there are always qualified people among Prophet's progeny, who are like Alla's book, always suitable to be adhered to and the land will never be devoid of them. That is why Prophet's progeny is considered to be the cause of the security of the inhabitants of the earth. The tradition mentioned proves what we have claimed. The Holy Prophet, somewhere in his speech, said: " في كل خلف من امتي "47
"عدول من اهل بيتي"⁴⁷ In every generation of my community, there is a very just person from my progeny.

In his remarks on Thaqalain tradition, Hafiz Sharif Samhudi says: "Thirdly this noble tradition shows that someone is always there from the progeny of the Holy Prophet (s) until the Day of Judgment, as otherwise Prophet's words that encourage people to adhere to two heavy thing will not be meaningful. Same is the case with the *Holy Quran*. [It should also be permanently reliable, for the Holy Prophet has advised us to hold fast to it]. That is why (as we will mention later on) Prophet's progeny is a cause of the security of the inhabitants of earth. If they pass away the inhabitants of earth will perish."⁴⁸

In his *al-Jami'a al-Saghir* Manawi has quoted the same thing from Samhudi and so has done Zarqani Maliki in his *al-Mawahib al-Ladunniya*.⁴⁹

Elsewhere Samhudi says: "Prophet's progeny to whom we are advised to adhere includes those who are in possession of knowledge of Allah's book. This is because the Holy Prophet (s) does not tell us to adhere to those who do not know about Allah's book. These scholars are always in the company of the Holy Quran until they join the Holy Prophet (s) by the pool. That is why he said:

فلا تقدموهما فتهلكوا و لا تقصروا عنهما فتهلكوا و لا تعلموهم فانهم اعلم منكم⁵⁰

Thus do not surpass the *Holy Quran* and my progeny as otherwise you will perish and do not fail to pay attention to them as otherwise you will perish. Do not teach anything to my progeny as they are more knowledgeable than you are.

⁴⁷ - *Al-Sawaeq al-Muhriqa*, p. 90.

⁴⁸ - *Jawahir al-'Aqdayn*, p. 244.

⁴⁹ - *Sharh al-Jami'a al-Saghir*, vol. 3, p. 15 and *Sharh al-Mawahib al-Ladunniya*, vol. 7, p. 8.

⁵⁰ - *Jawahir al-'Aqdayn*, p. 243.

Commenting on this issue, in his *Sharh al-Mishkat*, he says: "Since the inhabitants of a house (family) know more than anyone else about the owner of the house and his living conditions, therefore the term 'progeny' does not include all relatives of the Holy Prophet (s). It includes only those of his relatives who are knowledgeable and aware of Prophet's conduct and life style. Such type of Prophet's relatives have thus the same authority Allah's book has. It is due to this that the *Holy Quran* maintains: ⁵¹ *هو يعلمهم الكتاب و الحكمة* ⁵² he teaches them the Book and wisdom."

In his commentary, Nizam al-Din Nayshaburi, relying on Thaqalain tradition maintains that Prophet's progeny includes his heirs and successors. Commenting on ' *و كيف تكفرون و انتم تتلى عليكم آيات الله و فيكم رسوله و من يعتصم بالله فقد هدى الى صراط مستقيم* ' But how can you disbelieve while it is you to whom the communications of Allah are recited and among you is His Apostle? And whoever holds fast to Allah he indeed is guided to the right path, he says: "The phrase 'how do you disbelieve' implies reprimand and exclamation. It exclaims how they can disbelieve while in every cases new verses are recited to them by the Holy Prophet (s) and the Messenger of Allah is present among them, solving their problems and doing away with their doubts."

As to the *Holy Quran*, it has to be mentioned that it will remain until the Day of Judgment. As to the Holy Prophet (s), it has to be stated that though he has passed away, his instructions are available among people. That is why it can be said that he is really present among us. His progeny is his heirs and successors. He is replaced by them. That is why he says that he has left two heavy things. ⁵³

3. The twelve caliphs

The third tradition maintains that Prophet's caliphs and successors are twelve people. The Holy Prophet (s) determined the number of imams whom we are duty bound to know and whoever dies while not knowing them dies the death of pre-Islamic age. They are in the company of the *Holy Quran* and the *Holy Quran* is in their company. Traditions have dealt with this issue as under:

⁵¹ - *Quran*, Baqara, 129, Allmran, 164 and Jumu'a, 2.

⁵² - *Mirqat al-Mafatih fi Sharh Mishkat al-Masabih*, vol. 5, p. 600.

⁵³ - *Gharaeb al-Quran*, vol. 1, p. 347.

Ahmad quotes Masruq as below: "One day I was sitting beside Abdullah bin Masud who was reciting the *Holy Quran*. A man asked him as to whether he had asked the Holy Prophet about the number of his successors. He said that nobody had asked him about this issue ever since he had gone to Iraq. Thereupon he said: "Yes, we asked about this from the Holy Prophet (s) and he said: ⁵⁴ اثنتى عشر كعده نقباء بنى اسرائيل They are like the guardians of the children of Israel, twelve people.

Muslim Nayshaburi also narrates a tradition which is as under: لا يزال الدين قائماً حتى تقوم الساعة او يكون عليكم اثنا عشر خليفة كلهم من قريش ⁵⁵ This religion will remain stable until the Day of Judgment or until twelve people who are all from Quraysh tribe, rule you.

In his *Sahih*, Bukhari narrates from Jabir bin Samara who quotes the Holy Prophet (s) as saying: يكون اثنا عشر اميرا There will twelve rulers. Thereupon he said something which I did not hear. My father said: The Holy Prophet said: All these rulers belong to Quraish. ⁵⁶

⁵⁴ - *Musnad Ahmad*, vol. 5, p. 90.

⁵⁵ - *Sahih Muslim*.

⁵⁶ - *Sahih Bukhari*, vol. 4, p. 164.

Chapter Three

Mahid (a.s) belongs to Prophet's progeny

The third point is that Imam Mahdi (a.s) belongs to Prophet's progeny. The Holy Prophet explicitly mentioned that Mahdi who establishes justice in the world after it becomes full of injustice, is a member of his progeny.

The fact that Mahdi is a member of Prophet's progeny is stressed on in many successively reported traditions. The quotations we made from some Sunni scholars before testify to this fact. Let's now relate some of such traditions.

Though Ahmad bin Hanbal, Abu Dawood, Tirmidhi and others have narrated this tradition using various wordings, we suffice to relating it from Ahmad's *Musnad*. He quotes the Holy Prophet (s) as saying: لا تقوم الساعة حتى يلى⁵⁷ رجل من اهل بيتى يواطى اسمه اسمى There will be no Resurrection Day until a man from my progeny whose name corresponds my name appears.

Commenting on Mahid's reappearance, Ibn Maja says that Ali (a.s) quotes the Holy Prophet (a) as saying: Mahdi whom الله يجعله ليلا⁵⁸ من اهل البيت يصلحه الله فى ليله Mahdi whom Allah makes dominant overnight is a member of us the ahlulbayt.

Ahmad bin Hanbal also relates a tradition from Abu Sa'eed Khidri who quotes the Holy Prophet (s) as saying: لا تقوم الساعة حتى تمتلى الارض ظلما و عدوانا. قال: ثم يخرج رجل من عترتى او من اهل بيتى يملها قسطا و عدلا كما ملئت ظلما و عدوانا⁵⁹ There will be no Resurrection Day until the land is filled with injustice and oppression. Thereupon a man from my progeny or my family⁶⁰ appears. He will establish justice on earth after injustice and oppression spread all over it.

Hakim Nayshabur has also mentioned this tradition with the same chain of reporters with the phrase 'my progeny' making no hesitation. According to him this tradition is qualified on the basis of the conditions related by Bukahri and Muslim, though they themselves have not mentioned it in their books.

In his *Talkhis*, Shams al-Din Dahabi has agreed with what Hakim Nayshaburi has pointed out.⁶¹ Elsewhere, Hakim Nayshaburi has narrated this tradition

⁵⁷- *Musnad Ahmad*, vol. 1, p. 376, *Sunan Abi Dawood*, vol. 4, p. 151 and *Sahih Tirmidhi*, vol. 3, p. 343.

⁵⁸- *Sunan ibn Maja*, vol. 2, p. 1367.

⁵⁹- *Musnad Ahmad*, vol. 3, p. 36.

⁶⁰- The hesitation (is not part of the tradition; it) is made by the narrator.

⁶¹- *Al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn*, vol. 4, p. 557.

from Abu Sa'eed Khidri with the phrase من عترتي (from my progeny). According to him, this tradition is qualified on the basis of the conditions related by Muslim. Dahabi has also supported Hakim's point of view.⁶²

Mahdi (a.s) is from the descendants of Fatima (a.s)

There is another set of traditions that considers Mahdi (a.s) as one of the descendants of Fatima (a.s). These traditions are as under:

Abu Dawood, Ibn Maja and others say, using different wordings, that Um Salama says that she has heard the Holy Prophet (s) commenting on Mahdi, say: المهدى من عترتي من ولد فاطمه⁶³ Mahdi is a member of my progeny and one of the descendants of Fatima (a.s).

Hakim Nayshaburi and Zahabi have narrated from Sa'eed bin Musayyib from Um Salama who says she heard the Holy Prophet commenting on Mahdi, say: نعم هو حق و هو من بنى فاطمه⁶⁴ Yes he is (the manifestation of) truth and is from the progeny of Fatima (a.s).

The author of *al-Taj*, has considered the chain used by Abu Dawood and Hakim Nayshaburi as authentic.⁶⁵

Mahdi is from the offspring of Imam Husain (a.s)

There are many traditions that state that Mahdi is from the offspring of Imam Husain (a.s). Below are three specimens of such traditions:

Tradition one

The Holy Prophet (s) said:

لو لم يبق من الدنيا الا يوم واحد لطول الله عزو جل ذلك اليوم حتى يبعث فيه رجلا من ولدى اسمه اسمي

If there were only one day left for the world, that day would be lengthened until a man (Hazrat Mahdi) from among my children, who is my namesake, appears.

⁶² - Ibid. vol. 4, p. 558.

⁶³ - *Al-Taj al-Jami'a Lilusul*, vol. 5, p. 343. *Sunan Abu Dawood*, vol. 2, p. 510 and see also *al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn*, vol. 4, p. 557. *Sunan ibn Maja*, vol. 2, p. 1368.

⁶⁴ - *Al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn*, vol. 4, p. 557.

⁶⁵ - *Al-Taj al-Jam'a Lilusul*, vol. 5, p. 343.

Thereupon Salman Farsi stood up and said: O Messenger of Allah! Which of your children's offspring is he? The Messenger of Allah patted Imam Husain's shoulder saying: *من ولدى هذا* from the offspring of this child of mine. Many figures including Abu al-Qasim Tabarani, Ibn Asakir Demishqi, Abu Na'eem Isfahani, Ibn Qayyim Jawziya, Yusuf bin Yahya Maqdisi, Sheikh al-Islam Juwaini and In Hajar Maki, author of *al-Sawaeq al-Muhriqa* have mentioned this tradition in their books.⁶⁶

Tradition Two

During the last days of his life, the Holy Prophet (s), addressing his daughter, Fatima (a.s), said: *ما يبكيك يا فاطمه! اما علمت ان الله اطلع الى الارض اطلعه فاختر منها اباك فبعثه نبيا ثم اطلع ثانيه فاختر بعلك فاوحى الى فانكحته اياك و اتخذته وصيا اما علمت انك بكرامه الله اياك زوجك اعلمهم علما و اكثرهم حلما و اقدمهم سلما*

O Fatima! Why do you weep? Do you not know that when Allah looked at the inhabitants of earth for the first time He chose your father as prophet from among them and when He looked at them for the second time, He chose your husband? He told me through revelation to marry you to him and I chose him as my successor. Do you not know that Allah, in order to honor you, married you to someone who is the first Muslim, the most knowledgeable and forbearing?

Thereupon Fatima laughed and was happy. In order to make her happier, the Holy Prophet (s) said: *و منا مهدي الامه الذى يصلى عيسى خلفه* And from among us is the Mahdi of this community, after whom Jesus offers his prayer.

He then put his hand on Imam Husain's shoulder saying: *من هذا مهدي الامه* The Mahdi of this community will be from his offspring.

This tradition has been reported by Dar Qutni, Abu al-Muzaffar Sam'ani, Abu Abdullah Ganji and Ibn Sabbagh Maliki.⁶⁷

Tradition Three

The Holy Prophet (s) said: *يخرج المهدي من ولد الحسين من قبل المشرق لو استقبلته الجبال* Mahdi who is from the offspring of Husain will rise from the

⁶⁶ - *Al-Mu'ajam al-Kabir*, vol. 10, p. 166. This tradition has appeared with little difference in '*Aqd al-Durar fri Akhbar al-Muntazar*, p. 56, *Faraed al-Samtin*, vol. 2, p. 325 and *al-Sawaeq al-Muhriqa*, p. 249.

⁶⁷ - *Al-Bayan fi Akhbar Sahib al-Zaman* authored by Ganji Shaf'ei, p. 502, *al-Fusul al-Muhimma*, authored by Ibn Sabbagh Maliki, p. 296.

east. If mountains block his way he will destroy them making his way through them.

This tradition has been mentioned by Na'eem bin Hammad (in hi *al-Fitan*), Tabarani, Abu Na'eem Isfahani and Maqdisi, author of 'Aqd al-Durar fi Akhbar al-Muntazar.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ - *Al-Fitan*, vol. 1, p. 171, 'Aqd al-Durar fi Akhbar al-Muntazar, p. 282. For further information see, *al-Havi fi al-Fatawa*, vol. 2, p. 66. This source has narrated this tradition from Ibn Asakir.

Chapter Four

The Promised Mahdi is born

The fourth point is that Imam Mahdi (a.s) is born and he is the son of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s).

In the light of many successively reported traditions accepted by all Muslims, we have thus far reached the following conclusions.

1. This community has one Mahdi and it is a must to believe in him.
2. Mahdi is from the Holy Prophet's progeny whom we are required to follow and obey not surpassing them in any matter.
3. Mahdi (a.s) is among those twelve persons whom the Messenger of Allah (s) has introduced as his successors and the leaders of Muslims after his demise and whom we are supposed to obey and follow for they belong to the Holy Prophet's progeny.
4. Mahdi is from the offspring of Husain bin Ali, the martyr of Karbala. He is the son of Imam Hasan Askari, the son of Imam Hadi, the son of Imam Jawad, the son of Imam Reza, the son of Imam Kazim, the son of Imam Sadiq, the son of Imam Baqir, the son of Imam Sajjad, the son of Imam Husain and the son of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib.

The conclusions drawn show that the earth is never devoid of righteous leaders. These righteous leaders who are from the progeny of the Holy Prophet (s) are twelve persons. It is also clear that he is the twelfth Imam and that he is born and is alive now.

It is on the basis of these facts that most of Sunni scholars confess that Imam Mahdi (a.s) is born and is alive now. They think that he is the son of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s). Below are the names of some of these scholars.

- Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Hashim Balazari (d. 270 AH).
- Abu Bakr Umar Bayhaqi (d. 458 AH).
- Abu Muhammad Abdullah bin Khashshab (d. 567).
- Ibn Azraq, a historian (d. 590 AH).
- Fakhr Razi, (d. 606 AH).
- Ibn Athir (d. 630).
- Ibn Arabi Andulusi (d. 638).

- Kamal al-Din Ibn Talha (d. 652 AH).
- Sabt Ibn Jawzi (d. 654)
- Abu Abdullah Ganji Shafiee (d. 658 AH).
- Sadr al-Din Qunawi, (d. 672 AH).
- Shams al-Din Ibn Khallakan (d. 681 AH).
- Sadr al-Din Hamuee (d. 723 AH).
- Shams al-Din Dahabi (d. 748 AH).
- Umar bin Woordi (d. 749 AH).
- Salah al-Din Safdi, (d. 764 AH.)
- Shams al-Din ibn Jazari, (d. 833 AH).
- Ibn Sabbagh Maliki, (d. 855 AH).
- Jalal al-Din Suyuti, (d. 911 AH).
- Sheik Abd al-Wahhab Sha'arani, (d. 973 AH)
- Ibn Hajar Makki, (d. 974 AH).
- Sheikh Ali Qadiri, (d. 1013 AH).
- Sheikh Abd al-Haq Dehlavi (d. 1052 AH).
- Shah Waliullah Dehlawi, (d. 1176 AH).
- Sheikh Qunduzi Hanafi, (d. 1294 AH).

Part Two

Counter-traditions

Counter traditions

There are traditions in some Sunni books that run counter to previous traditions successively reported from the Holy Prophet (s). Relying on such traditions and claiming that they are opposed to previous traditions, some try to undermine the authority of the previous successively reported traditions.

We will devote this part of our book to assessing such traditions in order to further enrich our discussion and remove the doubts about the doctrine of Madaviyat (the belief in ultimate Savior), which is unanimously accepted by all Muslims. Let's now deal with these traditions.

1. Mahdi is the same as Jesus

In a tradition narrated by Sunnis, it is said that Mahdi is the same as Jesus Christ. This tradition is reported only by Ibn Maja. According to him, Yunus bin Abdulali narrates from Muhammad bin Idris Shafi'ai from Ibn Khalid Janadi from Aban bin Salih from Hasan from Anas bin Malik who quotes the Holy Prophet (s) as saying: "The more the world gets advanced the more will be the problems. The situation will turn adverse and men will become more miserly. Resurrection will happen at a time people are used to doing bad things and Mahdi is the same as Jesus Christ."⁶⁹

Unauthentic tradition and unreliable narrators

In our point of view, the traditions reported from Prophet's progeny and other traditions successively reported by Sunni narrators prove that this tradition is false. That is the reason why Hakim Nayshaburi, Bayhaqi and others have dealt with the said tradition as weak.⁷⁰

1. Muhammad bin Khalid Janadi

Moreover Sunni scholars have also criticized the narrators of the aforementioned tradition. According to them, Muhammad bin Khalid Janadi, is the only person who has narrated this tradition. That is why they have touched this tradition while dealing his biography. Mazzi says that Muhammad bin Khalid Janadi and San'ani Mu'azzin have narrated from Aban bin Salih from Hasan from Anas who has said that Mahdi is the same as Jesus Christ...

⁶⁹ - *Sunan Ibn Maja*, vol. 2, p. 1340.

⁷⁰ - *Al-Taj al-Taj al-Jami'a Lilusul*, vol. 5, p. 341.

This tradition is recorded by Ibn Maja... According to Abu Bakr bin Ziyad this tradition is queer. According to him, Hafiz Abu Bakr Bayhaqi says that this tradition is reported only by Muhammad bin Khalid Janadi. On the view of Abu Abdullah Hafiz Muhammad bin Khalid, Janadi is unknown and scholars differ on Muhammad bin Khalid Janadi who narrates this tradition from the Messenger of Allah (s).⁷¹

Commenting on this tradition, Zahabi says Shaf'ai narrates traditions from Muhammad bin Khalid Janadi who narrates traditions from Aban bin Salih. Based on what Azdi says his traditions are not acceptable. According to Abu Abdullah Hakim Nayshaburi he is unknown whereas on the view of Zahabi the tradition reported by Muhammad bin Khalid Janadi, according to which Mahdi is the same as Jesus Christ, is unknown and rejected.⁷²

According to Ibn Hajar, Muhammad bin Khalid Janadi Mu'azzin is unknown included among the seventh class of reporters. He is among the narrators relied on by Ibn Maja Qazvini.⁷³

2. Aban bin Salih

Though Sunni scholars are of the view that all their scholars hold that Aban bin Salih is reliable and trustworthy his is considered as weak by Ibn Abdulbarr and Hafiz bin Hazm.⁷⁴

Based on what Zahabi says according to Ibn Salih in his *Amali*, Aban bin Salih has reported no tradition from Hasan.

3. Hasan Basri

He is the same as the popular Hasan Basri, who is considered by some as one of the enemies of Ali (a.s). That is why some traditions (regarded as successively reported by some), reported from Prophet's progeny rebuke him.⁷⁵

Though Sunnis have narrated from him some traditions in their six hadith collections considering him among eight pious people, they have nevertheless

⁷¹- *Tahzib al-Kamal*, vol. 25, p. 151.

⁷²- *Mizan al-Itidal*, vol. 3, p. 535.

⁷³- *Taqrib al-Tahzib*, vol. 2, p. 157.

⁷⁴- *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 82.

⁷⁵- *Tanqih al-Maqal*, vol. 1, p. 269.

stress that many traditions he reported are mursal (broken) and that he used to do *tadlish*^{76, 77}.

4. Yunus bin Abduala

Though Sunni scholars have considered him as reliable he is accused of telling lies while reporting the above-mentioned tradition.

Commenting on him, Hafiz Mazzi says that Hafiz Abu al-Qasim in *Tarikh Madina Demishq*, using his own chain of transmitters, narrates from Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Rashdin from Abu al-Hasan Ali bin Ubaidullah Wasiti who says:

I saw Muhammad bin Idris Shafi'ai in a dream. He told me that Yunus in Janadi's tradition – a tradition reported by Hasan from Anas from the Holy Prophet (s) concerning Imam Mahdi – has attributed a false tradition to me.

According to Shafi'ai this tradition is not among his traditions and he has not narrated it. Yunus has wrongly attributed it to him.⁷⁸

Moreover, on Zahabi's point of view, this tradition suffers from another weakness as well which is ...⁷⁹

Jesus Christ in presence of Imam Mahdi

Contrary to this fabricated tradition, there are many authentic traditions that say that when Imam Mahdi (a.s) appears Jesus Christ descends from heaven and follows him in prayer. Let's now study some of these traditions.

Bukhar and Muslim, using their own chains of transmitters, quote the Holy Prophet (s) as saying: ⁸⁰كيف انتم اذا نزل ابن مريم فيكم و امامكم منكم؟

How do you feel when Jesus Christ lands among you and your imam is from among you?

⁷⁶ - Technically speaking, *tadlis* is on a general categorization of two kinds. a) *Talis* in *Isnad*. It means that the narrator narrates a tradition from someone whom he has not seen or from whom he has heard it. Or else, he omits the names of some reporters in order to make his tradition look acceptable or authentic. It is said that *tadlish* is similar to lie. b) *Tadlis* in reporter's attributes. It means that narrators describe a narrator with attributes that are not real.

⁷⁷ - *Taqrib al-Tahzib*, vol. 1, p. 165.

⁷⁸ - *Tahzib al-Kamal*, vol. 25, p. 149.

⁷⁹ - *Mizan al-Itidal*, vol. 3, 535.

⁸⁰ - *Sahih Bukhari*, vol. 4, p. 143.

Using his how chain of reporters, Ahmad bin Hanbal Shaybani also narrates a tradition that contains the name of 'Dajjal'. He quotes the Holy Prophet (s) as saying:

فاذا هم بعيسى بن مريم فتقام الصلاة فيقال له: تقدم يا روح الله! فيقول: ألتقدم امامكم فيصل بكم

Then they see Jesus Christ when it is the time of offering prayer. Jesus is told to lead the prayer but he refuses saying that their [Muslims'] Imam has to lead the prayer.⁸¹

According to Manawi, Christ (a.s) descends in the morning at a white minaret in eastern Damascus. He finds Imam Mahdi (a.s) making preparation for offering prayer. By now Imam senses that he is present over there. He gets back in order to allow Jesus to lead prayer, but Jesus asks him to lead prayer and he himself offers his prayer after him. This brings Muslim community a great deal of pride and dignity.⁸²

Commenting on Imam Mahdi (a.s) Abu al-Hasan Abri says: "Many narrators have narrated traditions that are successively reported from the Holy Prophet (s) regarding Imam Mahdi (a.s). According to these traditions, Mahdi is a member of Prophet's progeny. He rules for seven years and establishes justice and equity in the world. It is at this time that Jesus Christ appears. He joins Mahdi at Lad gate in Palestine in order to help him kill Dajjal. Mahdi is now a prayer leader of Muslim community and Jesus Christ offers his prayer after him."⁸³

Answering those who reject this issue, Jalal al-Din Suyuti says: "Their words are very strange and surprising. This is because many authentic prophetic traditions state that Jesus (a.s) offers his prayer after Mahdi (a.s). The Messenger of Allah is truthful and his truthfulness is accepted by all. Thus whatever he foresaid will come true."⁸⁴

Taftazani's opinion rejected

Based on what we quoted from different scholars, it becomes clear that what Sa'ad al-Din Taftazani says is wrong and unacceptable. Taftazani says that

⁸¹ - *Musnad Ahmad*, vol. 3, p. 367.

⁸² - *Fayz al-Qadir, Sharh Jami'a al-Saghir*, vol. 6, p. 17.

⁸³ - *Tahzib al-Kamal*, vol. 25, p. 149.

⁸⁴ - *Al-Hawi lil Fatawa*, vol. 2, p. 167.

it is not correct and reliable to say that Jesus offers his prayer after Mahdi or vice versa.⁸⁵

2. Mahdi is from the offspring of Hasan

Another fabricated tradition states that Mahdi (a.s) is from the offspring of Imam Hasan (a.s.). Abu Ishaq, author of *al-Mishkat*, maintains:

One day looking at his son, Hasan, Ali (a.s) said that he according to a saying of the Holy Prophet will be a leader and a man will come from his offspring who will be prophet's namesake and though his ethics will resemble prophet's his complexion will be different from that of him... He then relates that he will establish justice and equity in the world.

Abu Dawood has mentioned this tradition though he has not touched the said story.⁸⁶

Commenting on this tradition, in his *Sharh Mishkat al-Masabih*, Qari says:

This tradition clearly confirms our point of view maintaining that Mahdi is from the offspring of Hasan. To reconcile between this tradition and other traditions it has to be said that Mahdi is related to Imam Husain only via his mother. Thus Shias' opinion that Mahdi, Muhammad bin Hasan Askari is the awaited Imam, for according to all Mahdi is from the descendants of Husain, is not credible.

If it is said that Ali might have spoken about someone other than Mahdi (a.s), in reply, it has to be said that the phrase 'he will establish justice and equity in the world' falsifies this claim, for among Husaini and Hasani sayyids, it is only the promised Mahdi who is known for establishing justice and equity in the world.⁸⁷

An assessment of this opinion

In Sunnis' six hadith collections, there is no tradition other than the tradition mentioned, that says that Mahdi is from the descendants of Hasan. The said tradition has appeared only in *Sunan* Abi Dawood.

⁸⁵ - *Sharh al-Maqasid*, vol. 5, p. 313.

⁸⁶ - *Mishkat al-Mafatih*, vol. 3, p. 1503.

⁸⁷ - *Mirqat al-Mafatih fi Sharh Mishkat al-Masabih*, vol. 5, p. 168.

According to Ibn Athir, Abu Dawood Ishaq 'Amr bin Abdullah Subai'ai says: Ali (a.s) looked at his son, Hasan and said ... He then said that it is he who will establish justice and equity in the world. Abu Sawood has mentioned this tradition though not mentioning the said story.⁸⁸

Sheikh Mansur's opinion

He says: It is said that one day Ali (a.s) looking at his son Hasan (a.s) said: This son of mine is as the Holy Prophet (s) pointed out, a master and leader and a man will appear from his descendants, who is your Prophet's namesake. Though his ethics will resemble prophet's his complexion will be different from that of him.

In another tradition Imam Ali (a.s) quotes the Holy Prophet (s) as saying: A man will rise from Transoxiana...

These two traditions are narrated by Abu Dawood.⁸⁹

An evaluation of the chain of this tradition

In our point of view, this tradition is the only reason appealed to by those who regard Mahdi as a descendent of Imam Hasan (a.s). Thus it is inevitable to give a look at the chain and text of this tradition and evaluate them.

As to the chain of this tradition, it has to be said that in his *Sunan*, Abu Dawood mentions: حدثت عن هارون بن مغيره قال: حدثنا عمرو بن ابي قيس عن شعيب بن ⁹⁰ خالد عن ابي اسحاق قال: قال: علي (ع) ... ثم ذكر قصه يملاء الارض عدلا. I am told that Harun bin Mughayra narrated from 'Amr bin Abi Qays from Shu'ayb bin Khalid from Abu Ishaq who said: Ali (a.s) said ... Then he mentioned that he will establish justice and equity in the world.

To know that this tradition is weak it is enough to give a look at the starting and finishing points of the chain of this tradition. Abu Dawood says that he received a tradition from Harun. Now the question is: Who has narrated this tradition to Abu Dawood? In the end of the chain of this tradition we see the name Abu Ishaq Sabi'ai who has just once met Ali (a.s) without talking to him. Thus there is no doubt that Ibn Ishaq has heard this tradition from someone else, though he has not mentioned his name while mentioning the tradition.

⁸⁸ - *Al-Taj al-Jami'a*, vol. 11, p. 49.

⁸⁹ - *Ibid*, vol. 5, pp. 343 and 344.

⁹⁰ - *Sahih Abi Dawood*, vol. 2, p. 208.

Moreover, it is narrated from Hafiz Manzari in *Hashiya Jami'a al-Usul*, that this tradition is munqati'a⁹¹.

An evaluation of the text of this tradition

As to the text of this tradition, it has to be said that its starting and finishing parts are reported very differently, to the extent that its starting part contains sometimes the name of Hasan and sometimes the name of Husain.

Qunduzi Hanafi says that Ali (a.s) has reportedly looking at his son, Hasan, said: This son of mine is a master and a leader... Then he mentioned that he will establish justice and equity in the world. Abu Dawood has narrated this tradition but he has not mentioned the story in full.⁹²

Quoting from Abu Dawood, *Jami'a al-Usul* and *al-Mishkat* have mentioned the very same tradition. The only difference we observe here is that the name of Hasan is replaced by Husain.

Other traditions available in other sources concerning this issue face the same problem. For example, in his *'Aqd al-Durar fi Akhbar al-Muntazar*, Sullami Shafi'ai narrates Abu Ishaq's tradition from A'amash from Abu Wael, but versions of this book are different from each other. According to the original work as well as its copies Ali (a.s) looks at Husain whereas according to some other versions of this book Ali looks at Hasan.

Quoting from *Sifat al-Mahdi* authored by Hafiz Abu Na'eem Isfahani, Sullami Shafi' narrates Huzayfa's tradition which is taken from *Zakhaer al-U'qba*. The original work written by Sullami Shafi'ai as well as its copy, however contain that Ali (a.s) pated Husain's shoulder.

Other versions however contain the name of Hasan.⁹³

Is this difference the result of resemblance that exists between the words 'Hasan' and 'Husain' or is it the work of some self-interested people who purposely distorted it so as to deprive people from the realities explained by Prophet's progeny who were more than anyone else knowledgeable and were aware of Prophet's conduct?

⁹¹- A tradition is munqti'a whose chain does not include all its reporters. See: *Dirayat al-Hadith*, p. 113.

⁹²- *Yanabi'a al-Muwadda*, p. 518.

⁹³- *'Aqd al-Durar fi Akhbar al-Muntazar*, pp. 23 and 24.

Though the first possibility is not however improbable, the second possibility seems to be more correct, for there is a great deal of evidence in the conduct of Prophet's progeny that supports it.

In this particular case, there is solid evidence that shows some Sunni scholars tried their best to conceal this fact that Mahdi is from the offspring of Imam Husain (a.s). At least, they did not want to relate it correctly. As to the real motive of these scholars, it is Allah alone who knows better. For instance, Abu al-Husain Ahmad bin Ja'afar bin Munadi and Abu Abdullah bin Hammad both of whom are among Sunni leaders, narrate from Qatada who says: I told Sa'aeed bin Mussayyib as to whether Mahdi was right. He answered in the affirmative. "From which tribe?", said I. "From Quraish", he said. "From which family?" I asked. "From Bani Hashim", he replied. "From which one of Bani Hashim?" I said. "From the descendants of Abd al-Mutallib", he replied. "From which descendants of Abd al-Mutallib?" I questioned. "From the descendants of Fatima" he answered. "From which descendants of Fatima?" I asked. "Here it is enough", he answered.

Now it has to be asked as to why he says 'here it is enough'. Let's thus now assess the last part of this tradition. As mentioned before, Abu Dawood says: "Then he mentioned that he will establish justice and equity in the world". The question is: "Who mentioned that he will establish justice and equity in the world?" As pointed out by Ibn Athir, Khatib Tabrizi, author of *al-Mishkat* and others, it is not Abu Dawood who has mentioned this point (he will establish justice ...). What is the matter then?

Author of *al-Taj*, has however utterly omitted this part of tradition (that he will establish justice and equity in the world). This by itself shows that this part of tradition is not a part of this tradition.

To prove this point of view, it is enough to mention that in his *al-Ba'ath wa al-Nushur*, Bayhaqi narrates the said tradition from Abu Ishaq. Without mentioning the said point (that he will establish justice and equity in the world), he winds up the tradition with the saying that his ethics resemble that of the Holy Prophet (s), though his complexion is different from that of him.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ - 'Aqd al-Durar fi Akhbar al-Muntazar, p. 31.

An inquiry into the meaning of this tradition

Regarding the content of this tradition, it has to be said that it is not reliable and trustworthy. This is because as we learnt before, the text of this tradition does not have a unified form and structure. Thus it is pointless to pay heed to what Sheikh Ali Qari pointed out, saying that Shia's opinion is not acceptable.

Similarly his point that Ali might have mentioned the name of Hasan (instead of Husain) is not acceptable. This is because even if the word 'Hasan' is mentioned in this tradition, it is not clear that it is Ali (a.s) who said the last point (he will establish justice and equity in the world).

3. His father is the namesake of Prophet's father

The third tradition narrated from the Holy Prophet (a.s) states that his father is the namesake of Prophet's father.

We will study this tradition under the following:

1. The Holy Prophet said: "He is my namesake"; he did not say: "His father is the namesake of my father".
2. Who are the reporters of the tradition: his father is the namesake of my father. Can we rely on them?

Being Prophet's namesake

In his *Musnad*, Ahmad narrates from Abdullah bin Mas'ud, from Umar bin Ubaid from 'Asim bin Abi al-Nujud from Zarrin Habish from Abdullah who quotes the Holy Prophet as saying:

لا تنقضى الايام و لا يذهب الدهر حتى يملك رجل من اهل بيتى اسمه يواطىء اسمى⁹⁵

The world will not end unless a man appears, who belongs to my progeny and who is my namesake.

He goes on narrating from Yahya bin Sa'eed from Sufyan from 'Asim from Zar from Abdullah who quotes the Holy Prophet (s) as saying: لا تذهب الدنيا او قال: لا تنقضى الدنيا حتى يملك العرب رجل من اهل بيتى و يواطىء اسمه اسمى⁹⁶ The world will not end or perish unless a man rules Arabs, a man who belongs to my progeny and who is my namesake.

⁹⁵ - *Musnad Ahmad* vol. 1, p. 376.

⁹⁶ - *Ibid.*

Elsewhere he has mentioned this tradition with the same chain and wording.⁹⁷ Elsewhere in his *Musnad*, he relates this tradition with the firstly mentioned wording, from Umar bin Ubaid Tanafisi from 'Asim from Zar from Abdullah.⁹⁸

Tirmidhi narrates this tradition from Ubaid bin Asbat bin Muhammad Qarshi Kufi from his father from Sufyan Thawri from Asim bin Bahdala from Zar from Abdullah who quotes the Holy Prophet (s) as saying: لا تذهب الدنيا حتى يملك العرب: رجل من اهل بيتي و يواطىء اسمه اسمي⁹⁹ The world will not come to an end unless a man rules Arabs, a man who belongs to my progeny and who is my namesake.

According to Abu Isa there are traditions in this regard narrated from Ali, Abu Sa'eed, Um Salama and Abu Huraira. Thus the said tradition is hasan¹⁰⁰ and authentic.¹⁰¹

His name is the same as the name of my father

This tradition (that states that his name is the same as that of the Prophet's father) is narrated by Abu Dawood in the same way. In one of his narrations, it is stated that his father's name is the same as that of the Prophet's father. Here is what Abu Dawood, in his *Sunan* that is compiled by his son, says: Musaddid narrates from Umar bin Ubaid...

Muhammad bin Ala narrates from Abu Bakr –i.e. Ibn Ayyash-

Musaddid narrates from Yahya from Sufya ...

Ahmad bin Ibrahim narrates from Ubaidullah bin Musa from Zaeda ...

Ahmad bin Ibrahim narrates from Fatar from Zar from Abdullah who quotes the Holy Prophet (s) as saying: لو لم يبق من الدنيا الا يوم: If only one day is left for this world ... Zaeda adds: لطول الله ذلك اليوم حتى يبعث فيه رجل منى او اهل بيتي يواطىء اسم ابى الله will prolong that day until a man is sent from my family or my progeny whose name is the same as mine and whose father's name is the same as my father's name.

⁹⁷ - Ibid, vol. 1, p. 430.

⁹⁸ - Ibid, vol. 1, p. 448.

⁹⁹ - Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ - According to Sunnis, hasan is a type of tradition whose narrators are almost reliable.

¹⁰¹ - *Sahih Tirmidhi*, vol. 4, p. 438.

The narration quoted by Fatar, contains: *يملاء الارض قسطا و عدلا كما ملئت ظلما و جورا* He will fill in the world with justice and equity just as it was filled in with injustice and cruelty.

The narration quoted by Sufyan contains: *لا تذهب - لا تنقضي - الدنيا حتى يملك العرب رجل من اهل بيتي و يواطىء اسمه اسمي.* The world will not end or perish unless a man rules Arabs, a man who belongs to my progeny and who is my namesake.

According to Abu Dawood, the text of the tradition reported by Umar and Abu Bakr is the same as that of the tradition reported by Sufyan.¹⁰²

Thus it is clear that Ahmad, Tirmidhi and Abu Dawood have narrated the narration reported by Abdullah bin Mas'ud in a similar manner. This is something that agrees with what Shias hold.

On the other hand, many Sunni scholars have introduced Mahdi as 'Muhammad bin Hasan Askari', implying that his name is the same as that of his ancestor, the Holy Prophet (s).

From among the Sunni scholars, it is only Abu Dawood who has reported the said tradition on the basis of a chain that contains a reporter named 'Zaeda'. According to Abu Dawood's narration, the tradition contains the phrase 'that his father's name is the same as my father's name'.

Shia and Sunni scholars have equally criticized this part of Abu Dawood's narration, putting its chain to question.

Thus it is not necessary to further dwell on this issue, for it is a proven fact that queer traditions have to put aside and replaced by indisputable traditions.

¹⁰² - *Sunan Abu Dawood*, vol. 2, p. 207.

Part Three

Question of Mahadviyat and Doubts about it

Taftazani's strange opinion

A great Sunni theologian, Sa'ad al-Din Tatazani says: Imamite Shias are of the view that Muhammad bin Hasan Askari, being afraid of his enemies, has hidden himself from people's eyes. According to them, like Noah, Luqman and Khidr he also lives a long life. This is while other Islamic sects deny what Shias claim, for going into hiding for such a long time without being effective at all is something that is unbelievable.

Moreover, it is useless to appoint a person with such a long occultation as an imam. Had there been such an imam, he should have been present among people. Thus it is not true to say – as it is said by some – that Jesus Christ will follow Mahdi in prayer or vice versa.¹⁰³

An apt answer

If such questions are raised as intellectual concerns looking for answers, they are welcomed. I wish this was the case and we would observe moral values while holding our discussions.

Though some Sunni scholars have observed these moral rules others like Ibn Taymiyya in his *al-Minhaj* has violated them. In a chapter devoted to Mahdi, he has made use of foul language and impolite terms. To deal with his ill-treatment of Mahdi is of course in need of an independent study. To pay a glance at some instances of such an approach reference has to be made to the examples that were given in the beginning of this work.

Being under the influence of Ibn Taymiyya, some contemporary writers have also followed the same disgusting approach while dealing with the question of Mahdi. Instead of observing moral rules, they accuse Shias of telling lies.

It is even more regrettable that some people read these books and make efforts to spread their content.

The fact is that those who propagate against Mahdi are somewhat skeptic about the traditions on Mahdi. They are either skeptic about the tradition that specifies the 'twelve imams' or else are refusing to accept the tradition that

¹⁰³ - *Sharh al-Maqaqid*, vol. 5, p. 313.

says that he who does not know the imam of his time dies the death of ignorance.

This model of discussion is good as far as the rituals of debate are concerned. They insist on their opinions rejecting thus the traditions available in their books. To get involved in debates with such type of people is indeed useless (for they illogically insist on their own views and do not accept the traditions available even in their own books).

Despite all these, since the traditions on Mahdi have appeared in Sihah, Sunan, Masanid and other reliable sources that are accepted by all Muslims, therefore it is obligatory for every Muslim – whether a Shia or a Sunni – to believe in Mahdi as the twelfth Imam of Islamic community. If researchers, however, accept the traditions on Mahdi as acceptable, they need then to accept Mahdi as the twelfth imam, for this is the implication of the traditions accepted by them. Some Sunni scholars have followed this line of thought. We mentioned examples of such scholars on previous pages.

[The issue of Mahdaviyat and important questions](#)

Let's now deal with important questions concerning the issue of Mahdaviyat

[1. Imam Mahdi and his long life](#)

Among the important questions concerning the issue of Mahdaviyat is Imam Mahdi's long life. Some Sunni scholars like Sa'ad al-Din Taftazani are of the view that Mahdi cannot live such a long life saying that it cannot be easily accepted that someone may live such a long life in this world.

Taftazani does not deny that Mahdi, son of Imam Hasan Askari is born. What he terms as unacceptable is his extraordinary long life.

It is on the basis of such an opinion that some Sunni scholars based on existing evidence accept that Imam Mahdi is born but claim that now he is no longer alive. This is because they regard it as unlikely for a person to live an extraordinary long life. Their opinion is however in contradiction with a prophetic tradition saying: **من مات ولم يعرف امام زمانه مات ميتة جاهلية**: He who dies without knowing the imam of his time, dies the death of ignorance.

According to this tradition, there is no time without an imam. Given such traditions, some Sunni scholars, have, instead of speaking about the death of

Imam Mahdi, said that they know that he is born but they do not know what has happened to him. Since they cannot accept Imam Mahdi's long life, therefore they are not willing to confess to it.

On the hand, since they know that the rejection of Imam Mahdi's long life is in contradiction with traditions, they do not explicitly reject his long life. As a result, they accept his birth, though they say they do not know what has happened to him.

It seems as if they feel compelled to accept these traditions and thus they are required to accept his birth and long life as well.

Is long life something incredible?

Something might seem incredible before it happens, but once it happens it is no longer incredible. For example, you believe that something is impossible, but if it happens for once you can no longer be cocksure about its impossibility and your certainty will decrease. Now if the same phenomenon happens for twice and thrice, your certainty will also decrease correspondingly. If this process continues to happen your certainty will continue to decrease.

Now in response to what Taftazani has said, it must be pointed out that Allah has given long lives to (many including) Noah, Khidr and Jesus Christ. The belief in Jesus's long life is an essential belief among Muslims and no one can deny that Jesus is alive now.

Similarly based on Sunni traditions, Dajjal is alive now and they believe firmly that he is alive now.

Now that there have been many people in the world, who have lived long lives, no one can deny as improbable Imam Mahdi's long life.

The discoveries and inventions we observe everyday also make impossibles possible.

The belief cherished by Taftazani and his likes that long life is improbable gets increasingly weakened as history proceeds ahead.

[To explain it further], some of our scholars have said that it may look queer if someone claims that he is able to walk on the surface of water, but if he does it for once and people watch it, they will somewhat change their views

concerning walking on water's surface. If he does it for many times, it will become a natural act and everyone will easily accept it.

Ibn Taymiyya and denial of Khidr's being alive

He basically refuses to accept that Khidr is alive now saying that most scholars are of the view that he is dead by now.¹⁰⁴

He rejects the fact the Khidr is alive by now in order to be able to say that the point that Mahdi is alive by now is very unlikely.

Opponents of Ibn Taymiyya's opinion

Contrary to Ibn Taymiyya, in his *al-Isaba*, Ibn Hajar Asqalani considers Khidr as one of the companions of the Holy Prophet(s).¹⁰⁵

Likewise, in his *Tahdib al-Asma wa al-Lughat*, Hafiz Nawavi, a sixth or seventh century scholar openly says that according to most scholars Khidr is alive now.¹⁰⁶

This shows that Khidr was alive when Nawavi was living.

Other scholars like Qari (in his *Mirqat al-Mafatih fi Sharh Mishkat al-Masabih*¹⁰⁷) and the commentator of *al-Mawahib al-Ladunniya* who lived years after Nawavi's time, were also of the view that Mahdi was alive (at least) until their times. They have gone so far that they have mentioned in their books stories of people meeting Khidr and listening to his words.

Given all these issues, Ibn Taymiyya's refusal to accept that Khidr is alive is very meaningful! He knew if he accepted that Khidr was alive it would pave the ground for rejecting the theory that rejects Mahdi's long life as incredible.

Divine power and wisdom

Moreover, if Allah who is all-power, wills on certain grounds to keep someone alive for thousands of years He will do it. Thus it is not that much difficult to answer the question of Imam's long life in our present time.

¹⁰⁴ - *Minhaj al-Sunna*, vol. 4, p. 93.

¹⁰⁵ - *Al-Isaba*, vol. 1, p. 429.

¹⁰⁶ - *Tahdib al-Asma wa al-Lughat*, vol. 1, p. 176.

¹⁰⁷ - *Miqat al-Mafatih*, vol. 9, p. 962.

2. Why did the Imam disappear? How can we benefit from him, given he is not among us now?

Ibn Taymiyya and Sa'ad al-Din Taftazani are of the view that what is available now is only Mahdi's name and no one –even those who believe in him – can benefit from him.

In many places in his commentary, Fakhr Razi says it is not possible to know about Mahdi in whom Shias believe and it is no possible to benefit from him.

Imam Mahdi's occultation and traditions

We will answer the above-mentioned question in the following manner:

Firstly, it has to be kept in mind that the Holy Prophet (s) who being the most truthful one was appointed as prophet, reminded us of his occultation and that he was an imam decades before he was born.

There are many authentic traditions that deal with Mahdi's imamate and occultation. According to these traditions:

- Mahdi is appointed as an imam by Allah.
- He will disappear.
- His life and imamate are useful, for Allah does not do anything useless.

Let's now study some of these traditions. Based on a tradition, Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari says: When this verse was revealed: 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.

I said: O Messenger of Allah! We know Allah and His Messenger but we do not know 'those in authority' whose obedience is equal to your obedience. Who are they?

The Holy Prophet (s) said:

هُمْ خُلَفَائِي يَا جَابِرُ وَ أَيْمَةُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِي أَوْلَهُمْ عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ ثُمَّ الْحَسَنُ وَ الْحُسَيْنُ ثُمَّ عَلِيُّ بْنُ الْحُسَيْنِ ثُمَّ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ الْمَعْرُوفُ فِي التَّوْرَةِ بِالْبَاقِرِ وَ سُنْدْرُكُهُ يَا جَابِرُ فَإِذَا لَقَيْتَهُ فَأَقْرِنُهُ مِنِّي السَّلَامَ ثُمَّ الصَّادِقُ جَعْفَرُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ ثُمَّ مُوسَى بْنُ جَعْفَرٍ ثُمَّ عَلِيُّ بْنُ مُوسَى ثُمَّ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ ثُمَّ عَلِيُّ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ ثُمَّ الْحَسَنُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ ثُمَّ سَمِيُّ وَ كَنِيَّتِي حُجَّةُ اللَّهِ فِي أَرْضِهِ وَ بَقِيَّتُهُ فِي عِبَادِهِ ابْنُ الْحَسَنِ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ ذَلِكَ الَّذِي يَفْتَحُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى ذِكْرَهُ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ مَشَارِقَ الْأَرْضِ وَ مَغَارِبَهَا ذَلِكَ الَّذِي يَغِيبُ عَنْ شَيْعَتِهِ وَ أَوْلِيَائِهِ غَيْبَةً لَا يَنْبُتُ فِيهَا عَلَى الْقَوْلِ بِإِمَامَتِهِ إِلَّا مَنْ أَمْتَحَنَ اللَّهُ قَلْبَهُ لِلْإِيمَانِ.

O Jabir, they are my successors and leaders of Muslims after me. The first of them is `Ali ibn Abi-Talib, then Hasan and Husayn, then `Ali ibn Husayn, then Muhammad ibn `Ali, known as *Baqir* in the Torah. You will see him. When you see him, greet him on my behalf. Then comes Ja`far al-Sadiq and after him Musa ibn Ja`far and after him Muhammad ibn `Ali and finally one who has my name and will be Allah's Argument (*hujjat allah*) on the earth, the son of Hasan, the same Imam whom Allah has appointed to conquer east and west, the same Imam will be hidden from the eyes of the Shi`ites and his friends. At that time, no one will be firm in his belief in his Imamate unless those whom Allah has purified their hearts for faith.

Jabirs says: O Messenger of Allah! Can his Shias benefit from him during his occultation?

Prophet said:

إِي وَ الَّذِي بَعَثَنِي بِالنُّبُوَّةِ إِنَّهُمْ يَسْتَضِيئُونَ بِنُورِهِ وَ يَنْتَفِعُونَ بِوَلَايَتِهِ فِي غَيْبَتِهِ كَانْتِفَاعِ النَّاسِ بِالشَّمْسِ وَ إِنْ تَجَلَّلَهَا سَحَابٌ يَا جَابِرُ هَذَا مِنْ مَكْتُونِ سِرِّ اللَّهِ وَ مَخْرُونِ عِلْمِهِ فَالْكُتْمَةُ إِلَّا عَنْ أَهْلِهِ

Yes. By Allah who appointed me as a Messenger they will benefit from the rays of the light of his imamate during his occultation. [He will be useful during his occultation] just as the sun hidden behind the clouds is useful for people. O Jabir! This is one of the secrets of Allah and the remaining of His knowledge and therefore keep it secret from unworthy people.

In another tradition, Imam Sadiq (a.s) quotes the Holy Prophet (s) as saying: *لا بد للغلام من غيبه. فقيل له: و لم يا رسول الله؟ قال: يخاف القتل.* This young boy has to go into hiding. When the Holy Prophet (s) was asked as to why he had to go into hiding he said: He is afraid lest he is killed.

In yet another tradition, he narrates from his forefathers from the Holy Prophet (s) who says:

المهدى من ولدى اسمه اسمى و كنيته كنيته. اشبه الناس بى خلقا و خلقا تكون له غيبه و حيره حتى تضل الخلق عن اديانهم فعند ذلك يقبل كالشهاب الثاقب فيملؤها قسطا و عدلا كما ملئت ظلما و جورا¹⁰⁸

Mahdi is from my descendants. His name and title are the same as mine. He resembles me more than anyone else in terms of physical complexion and moral values. His occultation will last as long as people will become perplexed and as a result abandon their religion. It is under such circumstances that he will appear just like a meteor, eliminating all the darkness at once. He will fill in the earth with justice and equity just as it was filled with injustice and cruelty.

In another tradition, Imam Sadiq (a.s) quotes the Holy Prophet (s) as saying:

طوبى لمن ادرك قائم اهل بيتى و هو مقتد به قبل قيامه ياتم به و بالائمه الهدى من قبله و يبرأ الى الله عز و جل من عدوهم اولئك رفقاءى و اكرم امتى على¹⁰⁹

"Lucky is he who sees our Qaem (Mahdi) and before his uprising, he, however, follows him and his guided predecessors and hates their enemies. They are my friends and companions and the best of my community."

Imam Sadiq (a.s) quotes the Holy Prophet (s) as having also said:

طوبى لمن ادرك قائم اهل بيتى و هو ياتم به فى غيبته قبل قيامه و يتولى اوليائه و يعادى اعدائه ذلك من رفقاءى و ذوى مودتى و اكرم امتى الى يوم القيامة¹¹⁰

"Lucky is he who sees our Qaem while he follows him during his occultation before his uprising, befriends his friends and antagonizes his enemies. He is among my friends and sympathizers and the best of my community until the Day of Judgment."

¹⁰⁸ - *Kamal al-Din*, vol. 1, p. 287.

¹⁰⁹ - *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ - *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 286.

Imam Sadiq (a.s) similarly says that the Holy Prophet (s) said:

من انكر القائم من ولدى فى زمان عيبته فمات فقد مات ميتة جاهليه¹¹¹

He who denies Qaim (Mahdi) from my offspring in the period of his occultation dies the death of ignorance.

In another tradition, Imam Sadiq (a.s) narrates from his great forefathers who quote the Holy Prophet (a.s) as saying:

القائم من ولدى اسمه اسمى و كنيته كنيتى و شمائله شمائلى و سنته سنتى يقيم الناس على ملتى و شريعتى و يدعوهم الى كتاب ربي عز و جل من اطاعه فقد اطاعنى و من عصاه فقد عصانى و من انكره فى غيبته فقد انكرنى و من كذبه فقد كذبنى و من صدقه فقد صدقنى الى الله اشكو المكذبين لى فى امره و الجاحدين لقولى فى شأنه و المضلين لامتى عن طريقته (و سيعلم الذين ظلموا اى منقلب ينقلبون)^{112 113}.

Qaim (Mahdi) is from my descendants. His name and surname are the same as mine. His complexion is the same as mine. His tradition is the same as mine. He rules people on the basis of my tradition and asks people to act in accordance with my Lord's book (Quran). He who obeys him obeys me. He who denies him during his occultation denies me. He who refutes him refutes me. He who confirms him confirms me. I will complain before Allah against those who reject my words concerning him and prevents my people from following him. And those who act unjustly shall know to what final place of turning they shall turn back.

Imam Sadiq (a.s) says Imam Ali (a.s) said:

و ليعثن الله رجلا من ولدى فى آخر الزمان يطالب بدمائنا و ليغيبن عنهم تمييزا لاهل الضلالة حتى يقول الجاهل: ما لله فى آل محمد من حاجة.¹¹⁴

Allah shall send someone from my offspring at the end of the times. He will avenge our bloods. He will go into hiding in order to distinguish those who are misguided (from others). (His occultation will last so long that) ignorant people will say that there is no need for Prophet's household.

Imam Sadiq says:

¹¹¹ - Ibid, vol. 2, pp. 412 and 413.

¹¹² - *Quran*, Shu'ara, 227.

¹¹³ - *Kamal al-Din*, vol. 2, p. 411.

¹¹⁴ - *Nu'amani, Kitab al-Ghayba*, p. 140.

ان لصاحب هذا الامر غيبه لابد منها يرتاب فيها كل مبطل¹¹⁵

The one in authority (Imam Mahdi) shall go on an occultation which is inevitable. His occultation will take so long that all the people of falsehood will begin doubting.

The need to know the imam of the time

Secondly there are many successively reported Shia and Sunni traditions that state that it is necessary to know the imam of the time and that the imams are twelve people from Prophet's household. These traditions imply that Mahdi is the twelfth Imam and that he is born and is alive.

Now that Imam Mahdi is not present among us, he must be, on the basis of the traditions mentioned, somewhere hidden from our vision.

Harmony between occultation and imamate

Thirdly we need to know that there is no contradiction between imamate and occultation. Allah appoints someone as an imam in order to guide people through him and to make him an authority between Himself and them, but it is not Allah who has caused his occultation; it is rather people who have caused his occultation.

Imam Mahdi and divine grace

Fourthly Khaja Nasir al-Din Tusi, a celebrated scholar commenting on Imam Mahdi says: وجوده لطف و تصرفه لطف آخر و عدمه منا His existence is a divine grace, his action is another divine grace and his absence is due to us.

Commenting on Khaja's words, Allama Hilli says: It is said that an imam is a divine grace as long as he can take actions through issuing orders and is actively present in society, but when he is missing (as in the case of Imam Mahdi) he is no longer a divine grace. Shias (in other words) do not consider what is a divine grace as necessary (and what they consider as necessary is not an instance of divine grace).

In response to this objection it has to be said that it is necessary to have an imam because of the following:

¹¹⁵ - *Ilal al-Sharae'a*, vol. 1, p. 245.

1. He protects religion against any addition and subtraction (innovation).
2. Obviously, if all those under obligation in every circumstance believe in the existence of an imam and in the necessity of the implementation of his orders, they will shun evil deeds and will instead do good acts.
3. No doubt, Imam's participation is a divine grace and this will not happen except through his presence. Thus Imam's existence is a divine grace and so is his participation.

In other words, imamate is a divine grace in many ways:

1. It is incumbent upon Allah to create an Imam, make him eligible, by giving him knowledge and power and pronounce clearly his genealogical details. All this is done by Allah the Almighty.
2. It is incumbent upon the imam to accept imamate and to shoulder its responsibility.
3. It is incumbent upon people to help the imam and obey his commandments, but people however did not fulfill their responsibility. Thus Allah has not deprived people of this divine grace nor did the imam. It is hence the people themselves who have deprived themselves of this divine grace.¹¹⁶

Uses of an absent imam

Fifthly critics are not aware of the uses and advantages of the existence of an absent imam. They will not come to know about these things even if they want to do so.

There are some Shia scholars and even reliable Shia laymen who have met the Imam of the Time. Their stories are related by reliable people and are recorded in relevant books.

¹¹⁶ - *Kashf al-Murad fi Sharh Tajrid al-Itiqad*, pp. 491-492.

To solve many of their problems including their personal problems, (some) Shias have been able to meet the Imam and solve their problems through relying on his directives.

The hypocrites and the enemies of the imams do not naturally however accept such reports and thus we do not criticize them for that.

Moreover, Allah has appointed a prophet and an imam for every nation in order to guide them and set a divine authority among them. Many prophets were martyred during the very first days of doing their mission. Others were sent on exile. Can we say that sending such prophets was useless?

In short, the Imam is absent not because of Allah or his own observations, but because of the obstacles created by people. As soon as these obstacles are removed, he will appear, establishing a divine government and filling the world with justice and equity.

As to when the Imam appears, we do not know and it is Allah alone who knows about it.

3. Where does he live?

Before responding this question, we must ask as to where other great figures whom we consider alive because of reliable traditions, live.

As mentioned in some Shia books, Imam Mahdi lives in a place called Khadra Island. It seems that some great Shia scholars agree with this theory.

A baseless claim by Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Khaldun

As quoted before, Ibn Taymiyya is of the view that Shias believe that Mahdi has gone into hiding in abasement in Samirra (in Iraq). Ibn Khaldun repeats the same thing saying: "Shias think that their twelfth imam – Muhammad bin Hasan Askari called Mahdi – has gone into hiding in the basement of his father's house in Hilla, after he and his mother were arrested. (According to them) it is he who appears in the end of time establishing justice and equity in the world.

This Shiite belief is based on a tradition Timihdi has mentioned concerning Mahdi in his book. They are still waiting for his reappearance and that is why they call him 'awaited imam'.

After offering evening prayer, they stand every night at the door of this basement. They bring an animal for him to ride on and appeal to him by calling his name to appear. As darkness looms, they disperse. This is what they do in the coming nights as well. The aim is to show that they are, as they have pledged, waiting..."¹¹⁷

These are some of the lies they attribute to poor Shias. Some Shias' enemies have even expressed these lies in the form of poems saying: "Is it not the proper time for the basement to give birth to"

A response by Shiite scholars

I wish these people referred to a single Shiite tradition or a single word said by a Shiite scholar to prove their lies and accusations.

Great early and later Shiite scholars have decisively rejected such accusations. Below are some of their words:

Sheikh Arbili says: "Those who believe in Imam Mahdi do not claim that he lives in abasement. They instead believe that he is alive moving to and residing at different places in the world..."¹¹⁸

Sheikh Noori Tabarsi (another Shiite scholar) says: "Though we tried our best, we could not find any evidence to show the truthfulness of their words (that Mahdi lives in a basement). Above all, traditions have made no mention of this 'basement' either".¹¹⁹

Sayyid Sadr says: "The opinions expressed by some Shiite laymen are attributed to us by some Sunni scholars. I could not find any evidence to show these opinions are right".¹²⁰

Commenting on this issue, Allama Sheikh Abd al-Husain Amini says: "The accusation of 'basement' is more embarrassing than any other accusations. Though some other Sunni scholars have related this accusation as well, he (Ibn Tamiyya) has extremely exaggerated about it adding donkeys to horses.

¹¹⁷ - *Muqaddima Ibn Khaldun*, p. 352.

¹¹⁸ - *Kashf al-Ghumma fi M'arifat al-Aamma*, vol. 3, p. 283.

¹¹⁹ - *Kashf al-Astar an Wajh al-Imam al-Ghaeb an al-Absar*, p. 212.

¹²⁰ - *Al-Mahdi*, p. 155.

The Samirra basement as a holy place

Some Sunni scholars like Ibn Khallakan¹²⁴ and Hafiz Ganji have considered the issue of 'basement' as indisputable and thus they have defended it on certain grounds.¹²⁵

It is worth mentioning that the quotations we quoted from Shiite scholars (that according to Shia he does not live a basement) do not reject respecting and paying homage to the basement located in the neighborhood of the holy shrines of Imam Hadi and Imam Hasan Askari in Samirra (in Iraq). This basement is no doubt a holy place used by Prophet's household and that is why believers visit it.

4. When will Imam Mahdi reappear?

As mentioned before, the reappearance of Imam Mahdi depends on the fulfillment of certain conditions. (If these conditions are fulfilled he will appear.) Some Shiite traditions state that he will suddenly reappear.¹²⁶

How does Imam Mahdi judge?

Based on Shiite traditions, his judgments are similar to those of Prophet Dawood. The Holy Prophet (s) states: *انما اقضى بينكم بالبينات و الايمان و بعضكم الحن بحجته من بعض و ايما رجل قطعت له قطعه فانما اقطع له قطعه من نار*¹²⁷ He is abler than others in terms of presenting formal arguments....

To explain it, it has to be said that whenever two people disputed on something they would go before the Holy Prophet (s). The Holy Prophet (s) would ask the complainant to offer his evidence. If he offered reliable evidence the Holy Prophet would take that thing (on which they were disputing) from the accused and gave it to him.

In other words, the Holy Prophet's judgments were based on formal arguments and outward evidence. That is why the Holy Prophet himself says that his judgments are based exclusively on formal arguments and evidence. He adds that if the complainant's arguments are false he must make sure that what he earns through such arguments is Hell's fire.

¹²⁴ - *Wafayat al-Aayan*, vol. 1, p. 372.

¹²⁵ - *Al-Bayan fi Akhbar Sahib al-Zaman*.

¹²⁶ - *Sheik Mufid, Kitab al-Mazar*, p. 9 and *al-Ihtijaj*, vol. 2, p. 324.

¹²⁷ - *Al-Kafi*, vol. 7, p. 414. There are other versions of this tradition as well. See for example this one:

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Jawmi'a al-Kilam, p. 698.

In other words, the Holy Prophet wants to say that he is duty bound to judge on the basis of formal argument and evidence. (To judge on such basis is not immune from errors). Thus if the complainant knows that he is not right he must not proceed further.

Thus Islamic judgments whether at the time of the Holy Prophet or after him were passed on the basis of formal and conventional rules and regulations and these rules and regulations were nothing more than formal arguments and evidence.

After reappearing, Imam Mahdi will not however judge on the basis of such rules and regulations. He will instead judge on the basis realities on the ground (for Allah helps him know the realities sooner than others).

For example, if he observes that (a) belongs to (x) but (y) claims that he owes it, he will take (a) from (y) and give it (x) (without following the formal procedures). Similarly if he observes that (x) has unjustly occupied (a), he will order him to evacuate it and submit it to its owner, even though (x) has strong formal arguments acceptable at courts.

In other words, Imam acts in accordance with realities rather than conventional rules and regulations. (It is on the basis of such a procedure that) he can quickly return all rights back to their owners.

Waiting and those who wait

Now that we came to know that the Imam appears very suddenly and that he judges on the basis of realities rather than formal rules, we need to know about our duties (during the time of occultation) towards ourselves, Allah and others. We can better understand the importance of these duties if we pay attention to the following two points:

One: It is possible for the Imam to reappear at any moment.

Two: Once he reappears, he will judge (as mentioned before) on the basis of realities rather than formal rules.

Given all these, what are the responsibilities of each one of us?

In a tradition, it has been stated that the best deed is waiting for his reappearance.¹²⁸

Considering all these facts, we can come to know why the holy imams prevented their companions from making haste in asking for his reappearance and stressed that they only needed to follow their Lord and pray for his reappearance.

In other words, waiting for the Imam's reappearance and his righteous government is a good way for individual and social reform. If we are able to reform ourselves, we will be included among the Imam's companions and helpers.

Waiting and praying for Imam's reappearance

We are told to pray a lot for the infallibles' reappearance and wait for their arrival. Waiting is nothing but self-purification and compliances with the realities on the basis of which the Imam will rule. We need to give to others what we owe to them. In our societies, there might be people with properties they really do not owe. Once the Imam reappears, he will confiscate such properties and give them back to their real owners.

Thus we can pave the ground for his reappearance if we pay attention to the issue of self-purification and practically abide by religious rules on personal and social levels.

Commenting on the issue of reappearance, Imam Ali (a.s) says:

الزَمُوا الْأَرْضَ وَاصْبِرُوا عَلَى الْبَلَاءِ وَ لَا تُحَرِّكُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ وَ سَبُوفِكُمْ فِي هَوَى السِّنِّكُمْ وَ لَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوا بِمَا لَمْ يُعَجِّلْهُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ مَاتَ مِنْكُمْ عَلَى فِرَاشِهِ وَ هُوَ عَلَى مَعْرِفَةِ حَقِّ رَبِّهِ وَ حَقِّ رَسُولِهِ وَ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ مَاتَ شَهِيداً وَ وَقَعَ أَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَ اسْتَوْجِبَ ثَوَابَ مَا نَوَى مِنْ صَالِحِ عَمَلِهِ وَ قَامَتِ النَّيَّةُ مَقَامَ إِصْلَاتِهِ لِسَيِّفِهِ فَإِنَّ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُدَّةً وَ أَجَلاً¹²⁹

Stick to the earth, keep patient in trials, do not move your hands and swords after the liking of your tongues, and do not make haste in matters in which Allah has not asked for haste because any one of you who dies in his bed while he had knowledge of the rights of Allah and the rights of His Prophet and members of the Prophet's house, will die as martyr. His reward is incumbent

¹²⁸ - *Saduq, al-Khisal*, p. 616.

¹²⁹ - *Nahj al-Balagha*, Sermon 190.

on Allah. He is also eligible to the recompense of what good acts he has intended to do, since his intention takes the place of drawing his sword. Certainly, for everything there is a time and a limit.

Shiite traditions maintain that anyone who has the above-mentioned qualities and dies before the Imam appears his reward is similar to the rewards of those who really serve Mahdi and fight in his company.

In a tradition, Imam maintains:

فانه من مات منكم على فراشه و هو على معرفه حق ربه و حق رسوله و اهل بيته مات شهيدا و وقع اجره على الله و استوجب ثوب مانوى من صالح عمله و قامت النيه مقام اصلاته لسيفه فان لكل شىء مده و اجلا¹³⁰

Verily he who dies from among you in his bed while he recognizes the right of his Lord, the right of His Messenger and the right of Prophet's household dies as a martyr. His reward is upon Allah. He deserves the reward of the good deeds he has intended to perform. His intention to do good deeds will be considered as his actions.

Waiting and taking preparation for his reappearance

Though we are supposed to pray for his immediate reappearance, we must get fully ready to help him in case he appears. If every Shia acts in accordance with his duties and recognizes the rights of Allah, His Messenger and Prophet's household, the ground will be automatically paved for the Imam's reappearance. (Now if the Imam reappear, so much the better, if not) they have at least acted in accordance with their duties towards their Imam. Our main goal was also to explain this.

We ask Allah, the Glorious, to (further) acquaint us with His rights, His Messenger's rights, and the rights of Prophet's household and help us do our duties.

Peace and blessing be upon Muhammad and his pure progeny

¹³⁰ - *Ta'awil al-Ayat*, p. 642, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 52, p. 144.

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