

Al-Mahdi



Sayyid Sadruddin Sadr

**Translated by
Jalil Dorrani**

Al-Islam.org

Author(s):

Sayyid Sadruddin Sadr [3]

Publisher(s):

Naba Organization [4]

This book is a collection of a series of traditions, which have been narrated from the Holy Prophet (S), his progeny and companions – all taken from the sources of our Sunni brethren. It also contains sayings and writings of Sunni scholars about the Awaited Mahdi who is from the progeny of Muhammad (S).

Translator(s):

Jalil Dorrani [5]

Category:

Prophethood & Imamate [6]

Sunni & Shi'a [7]

Imam al-Mahdi [8]

Miscellaneous information:

Al-Mahdi By: Sayyid Sadruddin Sadr Translated by: Jalil Dorrani Publisehd by: Naba Cultural Organization

Featured Category:

Introducing the Ahlul Bayt [9]

Resources for Further Research [10]

Responses to Misconceptions [11]

Shi'a beliefs explained [12]

Person Tags:

Imam al-Mahdi [13]

In The Name of Allah

This book is dedicated to you O Abu al-Qasim Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-'Askari, O Baqi'atallah (Allah's reminder) on the earth and His proof over His servants. I hope to be graced with Your

acceptance. In reality, the value of presentation is tantamount to the capacity of its giver.

Sayyid Sadruddin al-Sadr

In His Exalted Name

This (book) is a collection of a series of traditions, which have been narrated from the Holy Prophet (S), his progeny and companions – all taken from the sources of our Sunni brethren. It also contains sayings and writings of Sunni scholars about the Awaited Mahdi who is from the progeny of Muhammad (S).

It is hoped that this book remains a means of my remembrance and a vision for others. I have arranged this book by bringing one preface, eight chapters and a conclusion. I ask Allah for its success and humbly request Him who is the best of the Helpers for His favor.

Sayyid Sadruddin al-Sadr

The reason for writing this book and the writer's style

Some of my learned friends joined me in a noble and scholarly gathering. Discussions followed concerning the authenticity of traditions until it took us to the subject of the Awaited Mahdi – a subject in which we (the twelve Imamiyah Shi'a) believe and which constitutes one of the principles of religion.

Then, some of those present asked: "What do our Sunni brethren say in this regard and have any tradition(s) has been narrated from their sources which are compatible with our traditions or not?"

I replied: "Yes. As per their own research, they possess diffused (*mustafidhah*) and authentic (*mutawatir*)¹ traditions and some among them have also written books in this regard. However, a few of them have spoken about this subject from the viewpoint of its originality, characteristics and other points, which we believe.

Yes, to them there exist controversies and (uncertainties) improbabilities which one generation usually inherits from the previous one and they speak about them and mention them in their books or writings with differences only in wordings but similar in meaning.

Thereafter one inquired: "Can you write an article with regard to this matter and restrain yourself in your writing to only those traditions which have also appeared in their references and then mention those difficulties and improbabilities (which they are disturbed with) and then give its reply?"

I replied: "Entering into such kind of affair will cause the lines of friendship to tear apart and I do not wish such a split to happen especially at present when we are in need of unity among the Muslims."

Then one of them said: "Discussions in matters pertaining to knowledge will not bring any harm if such a discussion proceeds through observing the rules of debate and if one's words do not go beyond the boundaries of courtesy and morals. In fact no one has any right to speak harshly or rebuke the others.

Indeed, man is free in his views and doctrines and it is his right to stand by them. However we see in this respect that some have harmed others through their words and hence should bear the responsibility."

Thereafter I replied: "I accept your reasoning and shall enter this field by depending on the Strength and Power of Allah and by observing the customary etiquettes. Indeed Allah guides to the right path whomever He wishes".

From among the books written by our Sunni brothers on this topic I had only a few in my possession. I examined the books from the beginning to the end as in most of them, the traditions on the Mahdi had not been mentioned in a specific chapter. I collected a sufficient number of the traditions needed to serve our objective and arranged them under specific headings.

I wrote every tradition under the specific headings, which were related to them and with regard to those traditions, which comprise of many points; I have brought each one of those points under the same related headings and then mentioned the severance of the traditions.

Let it not remain unsaid that I have narrated the afore-mentioned traditions from the very books which I had (those traditions) in my possession and with regard to those particular books which were not in my possession, I have narrated them by relying on their respective honorable scholars.

Furthermore, in narrating the traditions, I have confined myself only to those books, which have been printed in Sunni printing houses. Moreover I have avoided narrating from their books which have been printed in Iran such as *Al-Bayan fi Akhbar Sahib al-Zaman*, *Al-Fusul al-Muhimmah fi Ma'rifat al-A'immah* and *Tadhkirah al-Ummah fi Ahwal A'immah* – except in rare cases.

Similarly I have refrained from narrating traditions from our own great scholars and from what has been deposited in our own books and writings for the simple reason that perhaps it may become a cause of suspicion (i.e. they might think that the quoted tradition is false and fabricated). However I have used some references from the book *Al-Durar al-Musawiya fi Sharh al-'Aqa'id al-Ja'fariya* written by our master Ayatullah Abi Muhammad Sayyid Al-Hasan al-Sadr al-Kazimi who has a great right and to whom we owe a lot. I have used his references not with the intention of reasoning and argumentation but only as a means of supporting the subject at hand.

I bear witness to God that I have treated these traditions and the sayings of the past prior people from the viewpoint of justice only and avoided the path of injustice and deviation. I deemed it necessary upon myself to confirm my belief to reason and not adapt reason to whatever I believe. Anyone who reads and examines the contents of this book shall agree to what I have said.

Indeed, it is incumbent upon everyone, particularly in religious matters, to release oneself from following the track set by others and from delusions or assumptions. One should be on guard against prejudice and bigotry and only the truth should be kept in mind. What is advisable is the truth and if anyone finds it at any place, he shall embrace it.

A General View

A researcher who does research in the books of great scholars in matters such as *usul al-din* (fundamentals of religion) or *furu' al-din* (subsidiaries of religion), particularly the books of our Sunni brethren will seldom find an issue like Mahdaviyat which has been discussed from all aspects – credibility, reliability and innumerableness of its narrators who are the leading authorities in traditions irrespective of their differences in status and standards.

Indeed, there are many topics, which are a matter of consensus and rather unanimously accepted by both sects whether in *usul* (fundamentals) or *furu'* (subsidiaries). Among them the most widely written topic by Ahl al-Sunnah is the topic of the Mahdi. It is surprising to note that they have discussed and spoken about the matter of 'Mahdaviyat' for days and nights.

Indeed, as per their own research they have narrated traditions about the Mahdi from the Holy Prophet (S) himself, some from his noble companions and some from his wives with the differences in the length of the traditions.

They have taken out lengthy and brief traditions concerning the Mahdi from their leading traditionists such as al-Bukhari, Muslim, al-Nasa'i, Abu Dawud and Ibn Mājah.

And among the experts of traditions we may mention such names as Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Abu al-Qasim al-Tabarani, Abu Na'im al-Isfahani, Hammad ibn Yaqub al-Rawajani and al-Hakim, the author of *Mustadrak*.

Similarly names such as al-Kanji, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzi, Khwarizmi, Ibn Hajar, Mulla 'Ali Muttaqi, the author of *Kanz ul-'Ummal*, Shablanji and Qanduzi too cannot be overlooked.

Some of their books in this regard are: *Manaqib al-Mahdi*, *Na't al-Mahdi*, Forty traditions (*al-'Arba'in Hadith*) from Abu Na'im al-Isfahani, *al-Bayan fi Akhbar Sahib al-Zaman* from Abi Abdallah al-Kanji, *Al-Burhan fi ma Ja'a fi Sahib al-Zaman* from Mulla 'Ali Muttaqi the author of *Kanz al-'Ummal*, *Akhbar al-Mahdi* from Hammad ibn Ya'qub Rawajani, *al-'Urf al-Wardi fi Akhbar al-Mahdi* and *'Alamat al-Mahdi* both from Jalaluddin Suyuti and the book of *Al-qawl al-Mukhtasar fi 'Alamat al-Mahdi al-Muntazar* from Ibn Hajar 'Asqalani, etc.

Indeed traditions from the Holy Prophet about the awaited Mahdi and the Qa'im from the progeny of Muhammad (S) which have been narrated through the Sunni sources are numerous in number. Rather they are *mutawatir* (authentic) among them.

So says Ibn Hajar on Page 99 of *al-Sawa'iq*: Abu al-Husayn al-ʿIjiri says that the traditions which have come from the Holy Prophet (S) about the advent of the Mahdi and the fact that he is from Ahl al-Bayt have come from successive transmitters.

Shablanji, on Page 231 of *Nur al-Absar* says: "The tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) stating that the Mahdi is from my progeny and shall fill the earth with justice has come from successive transmitters."

In the second volume of *al-Futuh al-Islamiya* on Page No.322, Zayni Dahlan says: "The traditions which speak about the advent of the Mahdi are many in number and are *mutawatir* (authentic). Among them there may be traditions which are *sahih* (correct), *hasan* (favorable) or *da'if* (weak). However considering the numerousness of such traditions and the multiplicity of its narrators, one cannot but accept them to be authentic".

In the second volume of the same page he mentions that al-ʿAllama al-Sayyid Muhammad ibn Rasul Barzanji has specified in the end of his book *al-Isha'ah fi ashrat al-sa'ah*, that traditions about Mahdi are *mutawatir* (authentic). He also says: 'The fact that the matter of 'Mahdaviyat' is decisive and that he shall be from the progeny of Fatimah (a.s.) and he shall fill the earth with justice are all authentic".²

What we have said has been a part of specification of such scholars about the authenticity and reliability of the traditions concerning the Mahdi, the Awaited one. On this basis, as per the fixed principles in traditions, there remains no room for any doubt, leave aside denying them.

If we do away with those specifications and testimonies and examine the traditions of this chapter from the viewpoint of the chain of transmission and significance, we can divide them into three parts:

First Part: Those traditions whose chain of transmission and expression are evident and are devoid of any doubt. Moreover, as per the research undertaken by leaders of Ahl al-Sunnah and their leading authorities (in traditions) they have confessed to the authenticity and reliability of such traditions. Al-Hakim in his *al-Mustadrak* has acknowledged the authenticity of some of them, based on the views of al-Bukhari and Muslim³ and there is no doubt in the necessity of accepting such traditions and acting upon them.

Second Part: Those traditions where their chains of transmission are incorrect, although they are an indication of proof, and the established principles of traditions also necessitate their acceptance because they are supported and restored to soundness by the first part and their acceptance is well-known. In fact there is consensus regarding its contents.

Third Part: Those traditions which include both aspects – correctness as well as weakness. However, due to its incompatibility with all the other authentic traditions, they need to be rejected and not taken into account. In other words, if it is not possible to esoterically interpret them so that they come in agreement with all other traditions, like the ones which express the name of the Mahdi to be Ahmad or his father's name to be the same as the name of the Holy Prophet's father or that he will be from the

progeny of Abu Muhammad Hasan al-Zaki and not Abu Muhammad Hasan al-‘Askari, are all to be rejected. Moreover, as far as research shows, such traditions are few in number and what is generally known is that they have been turned aside.

It is possible to say that the first point (i.e. Mahdi’s name) may have sprung due to the traditions specifying that the name of Mahdi is the same as the Holy Prophet’s name. Then it was thought that by the Holy Prophet’s name is meant Ahmad; although what we derive from the diffused traditions is Muhammad. Similarly it is believed that the second and third points too have been forged and shortly you shall come to know of its details and facts.

The point, which we are compelled to mention in this regard is that a few traditions of the first and second parts (apparently one or two traditions) comprises such contents that it necessitates their rejection, and history as well as examination of such traditions will testify to their falseness.

The fixed principles in the code of fundamentals stipulates that whenever a tradition includes some sentences where each one possesses independence or conveys its own meaning and the general consensus rejects a part of them, the very sentence has to be discounted and the rest of the tradition is to be kept. Although al-Fazil Farid Wajdi Afandi, the author of *Da’iratul Ma’arif* (a Sunni scholar) has repudiated this principle and considers it incumbent to cast away the full tradition, we, too, shall agree with him (although our opinion differs) and disregard such traditions. The remaining traditions will be sufficient enough to prove our point.

1. A mutawatir tradition is a tradition where all chains of its narrators – right from the time of the Holy Prophet until now – are in such great number that one is bound to accept its authenticity. On the other hand a mustafīḥ tradition is a tradition which even though it does not possess the level of certainty and authenticity of a mutawatir tradition, yet it enjoys a high level of credibility.
2. The author of al-‘Urf al-wardi on page 85 narrates from Abu al-Hasan Muhammad ibn Husayn ibn Ibrahim ibn ‘Asim al-Sahri that he too has acknowledged the authenticity of the traditions about the Mahdi (a.s.).
3. Suyuti writes: According to al-Bukhari and Muslim a tradition can be considered to be a true tradition if its transmission leads to one of the famous companions where two people narrate from him. Thereafter he says: ‘This is the first measure of correctness and such kinds of traditions do not exceed even one thousand’. Al-Hawī li’l-Fatāwī, page 114.

The good news about the re-appearance of the awaited Mahdi (a.s.) mentioned in the Holy Verses of Qur’an, the Prophetic Traditions, the sermons of ‘Ali (a.s.) and related by the scholars in works of prose and poetry.

The holy verses of the Qur’an about the Mahdi

In the *Nahj al-Balagha*, in the Wise Sayings of Ali (a.s.), no 205, he (a.s.) says:

“The world would bend towards us after having been refractory just as the biting she-camel bends towards its young.”

[A metaphoric remark that just as during the time of the Holy Prophet (S) the apparent and esoteric *Wilayat* (Mastership) were both found in his household, in the same way and at the time of the reappearance of the Mahdi (a.s.), the apparent Government and esoteric *Wilayat* will be made ready for that leader].

Thereafter, he recited this verse:

وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضِعُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ

And We desired to bestow a favor upon those who were deemed weak in the land, and to make them the Imams, and to make them the heirs. (28:5)

Ibn Abi al-Hadid al-Mu'tazali in his commentary on *Nahj al-Balagha* says on page 329, vol. 4: "Our companions say that in this verse, Allah has promised an Imam and leader who will have possession of the land and gain control over all the nations".

In the seventh chapter of *'Iqd al-Durar*, Abu 'Abd Allah Na'im ibn Hammad narrates as such:

"Imam Abu Ishaq al-Tha'labi in the *tafsir* (interpretation) of the Divine saying of

حمسق (42:1)

has quoted Bakr b. 'Abd Allah al-Mazani as saying: 'The 'ha' (ح) (refers to the battle (*harb*) between the Quraysh and the slaves in which the Quraysh would be the victors; the 'mim' (م) (refers to the kingdom (*mulk*) and government of Bani Umayyah; the 'ayn' (ع) is the sign of exaltation (*'uluww*) and honor of Bani Abbas; the 'sin' (س) refers to the age (*sinn*) of Mahdi and the 'qaf' is a symbolic sign of the coming of 'Isa at the time of the emergence of the Mahdi.

The author says that some have interpreted the 'sin' as the exaltedness (*sana'*) of the Mahdi and the 'qaf' as the power (*quwwah*) of 'Isa ibn Maryam (i.e. Jesus Christ)

Ibn Hajar in his *al-Sawa'iq* (p. 16) interprets the Divine saying:

وَإِنَّهُ لَعِلْمٌ لِلْسَّاعَةِ

"... indeed he is the portent of the Hour..." (43:61)

as such:

“Among the exegetes, Maqatil ibn Sulayman and his followers have said that this verse has been revealed in favor of the Mahdi. *Is'af al-Raghibin* too has written the same on page 156.’¹

The author of *Nur al-Absar* on page 228 has narrated from Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Kanji as such: “About the interpretation of Allah’s words:

لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ

“... that He may make it prevail over all religions, though the polytheist should be averse.” (9:33)

Sa’id ibn Jubayr says: “It refers to the Mahdi from the progeny of Fatimah – the one who, by decree of this verse shall dominate over all other religions.”

In *Yanabi’al-Mawadda* page 443 it is narrated from *al-Manaqib* of al-Khawarizmi from Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Ansari a lengthy incident wherein a Jew approaches the Holy Prophet (S) and asks him various questions which results in his converting to Islam. One of the questions which the convert had asked was about the successors to the Holy Prophet himself and the Prophet’s reply that they were twelve in number. He counted each one of them by name until he got to the name of Imam Muhammad al-Hasan al-Askari.

Thereafter he said: “After him shall come his son Muhammad who will be known as the Mahdi, Qa’im and al-Hujjah.² He will disappear temporarily, reappear again and when he does so he shall fill the earth with equity and justice just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression. Blessed are those who are patient during the period of his occultation and blessed are those who are steadfast in their love towards him. They are those whom Allah has praised in His Book with such words:

هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ

...(the Qur’an is) a guide to those who guard (against evil), those who believe in the unseen (2:2-3) [i.e. Mahdi and his occultation.]

Also, Allah says:

أُولَئِكَ حِزْبُ اللَّهِ ۖ أَلَا إِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

... They are those who belong to the Party of Allah; Know that the Party of Allah are the victorious ones. (58:22) (Tradition ends)

In the afore-said book, on page 448, he quoted from the book *Fara'id al-Simtayn* a tradition which al-Hasan ibn Khalid has narrated from Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha (a.s.) about the Mahdi where he mentions that he would be the fourth from his descendants, until he said:

وَأَشْرَقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِنُورِ رَبِّهَا

(..when he reappears), **the earth will glow with the light of her Lord (39:69).**

Thereafter Imam continued as such: He is the one whose reappearance shall coincide with the call of a caller from the sky such that all the inhabitants of the land shall hear this cry: – “Know that the *Hujjah* (Proof) of Allah has appeared near the House of Allah. So follow him since the truth is in him and with him. The word of Allah too refers to the same:

إِنْ نَشَأْ نُنْزِلْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ آيَةً فَظَلَّتْ أَعْنَاقُهُمْ لَهَا خَاضِعِينَ

If We wish, We will send down to them a sign from the sky before which their heads will remain bowed in humility. (26:4)

Al-Nisaburi in his *Tafsir* (Vol. 1) in interpreting the verse of:

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ

says: Some of the Shias believe that the word **غَيْب** (i.e. unseen) in this verse refers to Mahdi, the Awaited one; the one who Allah has promised about him in His Book as such:

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ

Allah has promised to those of you who believe and do good deeds that He will most certainly make them successors in the earth... (24:55).

Moreover, about him the Holy Prophet (S) has said the following:

If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, God Almighty will set the day so long, until a person from my progeny who carries the same name as mine, shall appear and fill the earth with justice to the same extent that it had been filled with injustice and oppression.³

Al-Nisaburi further says that according to the Ahl al-Sunnah, the afore-said verse gives indication to the Imamate of *Khulafa' al-Rashidin* (rightly-guided caliphs) because the word of (**منكم** i.e. those of you) in the holy verse indicates 'part' (of) and it is necessary for this 'part' (of) to be present at the time of addressing. Also, it is well-known that those four caliphs (Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman and 'Ali) were men of faith and virtue and at that time were present. Consequently the matter of Caliphate and victory was certain for them. Therefore it becomes necessary to say that this verse refers to them.

Thereafter he says: A group has gone against them arguing why it is not permissible to say that the word (**من**) denotes exposition. They consider succession over the earth to mean possession and domination over it just as it was so in the case of Bani Isra'il.

Again he says: Let's accept that the term (**من**) denotes the meaning of 'part' but on what basis is it not permissible to consider that 'part' is to denote the caliphate of 'Ali and say that (**من**) has been used here in its plural form just to show the honor and great position of 'Ali or as a reference to him and his eleven offspring after him.⁴

The Sayings of the Holy Prophet about the Mahdi

Abu Dawud in his *Sahih* on page 87, Vol. 4 narrated from 'Abd Allah a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) as follows: "If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, God Almighty will set the day so long until He appoints a person from my progeny."

Thereafter he says: Similarly it has come in the hadith of Sufyan that the Holy Prophet has said: "This world shall not end until the Arabs will be ruled over by a man from my Ahl al-Bayt."⁵

The same book on the afore-said page and volume mentions a tradition from 'Ali (a.s.) who narrates from the Holy Prophet (S) as follows: "If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, surely God shall appoint a person from my progeny (Ahl al-Bayt)."

Tirmidhi in Vol. 2 of his *Sahih* on page 270 narrates a tradition from 'Abd Allah who narrates from the Holy Prophet (S) that he said: "The life of this world shall not cease to exist until the Arabs will be ruled by a man from my progeny."

Al-Tirmidhi says: This tradition is acceptable (**حسن**) and correct (**صحيح**) and the same has also been narrated from 'Ali, Abu Sa'id, Umm Salama and Abu Hurayra.

Also, in the afore-said book on the same page of the same volume, a tradition has been narrated by Abu Hurayra from the Holy Prophet (S) as follows:

“If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, God Almighty will prolong the day until a person from my progeny (Ahl al-Bayt) shall come and rule.”

Then he says: This ‘hadith’ is acceptable (حسن) and correct (صحيح) (6).

Ibn Hajar in his *al-Sawa’iq* on page 97 says: Ahmad, Abu Dawud, al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah have narrated from the Holy Prophet (SA.W.A.) as saying:

“If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, surely God shall appoint on that day a person from my progeny (‘itrati).” *Is’af al-Raghibin* too has narrated the same on page 147.7

Ibn Hajar in the afore-mentioned book on page 97 writes: Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi narrate from the Holy Prophet (S) as such:

“If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, surely God prolong that day until He makes a person appear from my progeny (*ahl bayti*).”

Is’af al-Raghibin too has narrated the same on page 148.

Ibn Hajar, in the afore-mentioned book on page 97 says: Ahmad, Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi have narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) as such:

“The life of this world shall not cease to exist until a person from my progeny (*ahl bayti*) shall come and rule.”

Is’af al-Raghibin too has narrated the same on Page 148.

Ibn Hajar in *al-Sawa’iq*, page 97 writes: Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi have narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) as such:

“If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, God will set the day so long, until He appoints a person from my progeny (*ahl bayti*).”

Is’af al-Raghibin too has narrated the same on Page 148.8

In *Nur al-Absar*, page 229 a tradition has been narrated from ‘Ali (a.s.) who narrates from the Holy Prophet (S) as such:

“If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, surely God will make a person from my progeny (*ahl-bayti*) to appear” (on that day).

Then the author continues: “This hadith has also been narrated by Abu Dawud in his *Sunan*.

In the same book on page 231, it is narrated from Abu Hurayra who narrates from the Holy Prophet (S) that:

“*Qiyamah* shall not be established until a person from my progeny (*ahl bayti*) comes and rules”.⁹

On Page 151 of *Is'af al-Raghibin* it is mentioned that Ahmad and Mawardi have narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) who said: “Glad tidings to you (all) about the Mahdi.” The same has come in *Nur al-Absar*, pg. 151.

The author of *Nur al-Absar* writes on page 230 as such: Ahmad narrates from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri that the Holy Prophet (S) has said: “I give you glad tidings about the Mahdi.”

In *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* (page 432) it is narrated from Qatada who said: “I asked Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib: “Is there any truth in the Mahdi?” He replied, ‘Yes, he is the truth and he is from the progeny of Fatimah.’”¹⁰

In the same book, on the afore-said page it is narrated from Ali (a.s.) who has narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) that: “If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, indeed God shall make a person from my progeny to appear.”

Thereafter he writes: “This hadith has also been narrated by Abu Dawud, Ahmad, Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah.”

Also, in the same book on pg. 432, a tradition is narrated from *Musnad* of Ahmad who has narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) as such:

“*Qiyamah* shall not be established until the earth is filled with cruelty and oppression. Then a person from my progeny (*itrati*) shall appear and fill it with equity and justice.”¹¹

Again, in the afore-mentioned book on page 440 he writes: Mufiq ibn Ahmad Akhtab narrates a sermon of Khawarazm who takes reference from Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Laili who narrates from his father who said: “In the battle of Khaybar, the Holy Prophet (S) handed over the banner to Ali (a.s.). Then Allah ordained victory by his hands. Later, at Ghadir Khumm he reminded the people that ‘Ali was the ‘*Mawla*’ (Master) of all believing men and women and continued until he expressed few sentences about the virtues of ‘Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn.

Thereafter he (S) said: “Gabriel has informed me that after my departure they shall be subject to injustice and oppression and this oppression shall continue until a movement is brought about by their *Qa'im* and at that time their creed will be raised high, people shall turn towards their friendship, ill-speaking towards them shall diminish, those having unpleasantness for them shall be degraded and those eulogizing them shall increase.

Such events will occur when cities shall collide with each other and people become weak and helpless of respite. At that time shall appear the *Qa'im* (Mahdi) from my progeny and God will manifest the truth through him and extinguish the falsehood by his sword.”

Thereafter he said: ‘O people, glad tidings to you of relief and respite. Surely the promise of Allah is true and He never breaks it and His decree never gets refuted. He is All-Aware and All-seeing and the victory of Allah is near.’¹²

In the same book on Page 447 he narrates from the book of *Fara'id al-Simtayn* from Shaykh Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Ya'qub who narrates from Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ansari that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“The one who denies the emergence of the Mahdi has surely disbelieved in whatever God has revealed upon Muhammad and the one who denies the coming of ‘Isa’ (Jesus) has surely become a disbeliever and the one who denies the revolt of Dajjal has surely become a disbeliever.”¹³

The sayings of ‘Ali (a.s.) about the Mahdi

Nahj al-Balagha – Sermon No.91 – At the end of one of the sermons he (a.s.) delivered, he mentioned the Bani Umayyya and their mischief towards the people until he reached to the point where he said: “Thereafter, Allah shall unpleasantly widen difficulties and other occurrences upon you and (only) when the skin is cut off and the flesh is peeled off, the calamities will be obviated.” Then he continued: ‘Allah shall bring this freedom and salvation through a person whose behaviour with that tribe will be harsh and severe and he shall make them suffer and he will quench them with bitter cups (of hardships) and not extend them anything but sword.’¹⁴

Al-Mu'tazili, in his commentary on the *Nahj al-Balagha*, in the second volume of his book (Page 178), under the afore-mentioned sermon says: ‘This sermon has been reported by a group of historians and it is common, recounted and has reached the level of superabundance (*mustafidah*).

‘Ali (a.s.) gave this sermon after the battle of Nahrawan. There are words in it which al-Razi, may Allah have mercy on him, did not mention, among them his statement: “No one except me had the courage for it” (i.e. to remain steadfast and withstand those seditions and turbulence. Perhaps steadfastness at that time is referred to the Khawarij because, when the companions of Mu'awiya by the tricks of Amr ibn al-'Aas fixed the Qur'an on top of spears and by this way wanted to save themselves from the blow of Hazrat's sword, the soldiers of Ali (a.s.) by witnessing such scene hesitated in obeying his commands and in fact opposed him stating: We should not dare draw our swords on these people. Or perhaps it refers to the battle against the people of Jamal where those participating in it were such personalities like 'Ayesha, Talha and Zubayr who enjoyed an esteemed status and position in the eyes of the Muslims. For this reason they did not have the courage to fight them except Ali (a.s.) who fought and defeated them.)

Then Ibn Abi al-Hadid says: A statement which al-Razi has not mentioned is an address which he delivered about Bani Umayya, the contents of which are as follows:

“Then surely Allah will liberate the people by the hands of a person from our chaste family. May my father be sacrificed for him, whose mother is the best amongst the ladies.” Thereafter he confesses to

this point that Ali (a.s.) in this statement is referring to Mahdi, the Awaited one.

Nahj al-Balagha – Sermon No. 148 – Amongst the statements which Hazrat has spoken about the news of the unseen is the following sentence: – “O people, this is the time for the occurrence of every promised event and the approach of things which you do not know. Know that whoever from among us (Ahl al-Bayt – the family of the Holy Prophet) in the future will continue in our way with a burning lamp and will tread on the footsteps of the virtuous, in order to unfasten knots, to free slaves and to unite the divided. He would be in concealment from the people such that a track-finder would not find his footprints even though he may pursue him.”

Al-Mu'tazili in the second volume of his book on Page 436 under this sermon says: “Hazrat here is referring to Mahdi, the Awaited one and his concealment.”

Nahj al-Balagha – Sermon No. 180: Amongst the sermons which Ali (a.s.) pointed out to the people of Kufa is the following sermon: – However, before narrating the sermon it is good to mention that Nawf al-Bakali relates that Ali (a.s.) delivered this sermon standing on a stone which Ja'dah ibn Hubayra al-Makhzumi had erected for him. Ali (a.s.) had a woolen apparel on his body, the belt of his sword was made of leaves and the sandals on his feet too were of palm leaves. His forehead had a hardened spot like the knees of a camel. He spoke as such: –

“He would be wearing the armor of wisdom, which he would have secured with all its conditions, such as full attention towards it, its (complete) knowledge and exclusive devotion to it. For him it is like a thing, which he had lost and which he was now seeking, or his need, which he was trying to meet. If Islam is in trouble he would feel forlorn like a traveler and like a (tired) camel beating the end of its tail and flattening its neck on the ground. He is the last of Allah's proofs and one of the vicegerents of His Prophets.”

Ibn Abi al-Hadid who has written a commentary on *Nahj al-Balagha* writes on Page 535 of his second volume as such:

“Each group has interpreted these sayings according to their own expedient beliefs and the twelve Imamiyah Shi'a reckon that the person who has been referred in his speech is none other than the Mahdi.”

Thereafter he writes: “As I see it, it does not appear difficult to believe that reference over here has been made to al-Qa'im from the progeny of Muhammad (S).”

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* on page 46 narrates from the book *al-Durr al-Munazzam* as such: Amongst the sayings of Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) about the Mahdi and/or Qa'im from the progeny of Muhammad is the following sermon: –

“The standard-bearer of Muhammad and the ruler of the government of Ahmad shall be manifested. He

is someone who will revolt with his sword, straighten the crooked, conquer the earth and revive the forsaken aspects of religious obligations and Sunnah...”

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* on Page 467 writes: Some of the men of intuition and vision have narrated from Amir al-Mu’minin as having said: “Soon God shall bring forth a group whom He loves and they too are His lovers and the one who is like a stranger amongst them shall take over the government. Verily, he shall be the Mahdi; his face rosy and hair golden in color. He will fill the earth with justice without any difficulty.

In his very childhood, he shall get separated from his mother and father and from the viewpoint of training he shall be rare and matchless. He shall rule over the Muslim countries with utmost calm and security and time shall be favorable and friendly towards him. His words will be accepted; the young and old shall humbly obey him.

He shall fill the earth with justice just as it had been filled with oppression. Then, at that moment his Imamate shall reach its perfection and vicegerency will be established for him. Moreover, Allah will make the dead to rise from their graves, those who had **‘become such that nothing could be seen except their dwellings’ (46:25)**. The land will flourish and by blessing of his (i.e. Mahdi’s) existence, it shall become fresh and fruitful. Seditions and disturbances shall vanish and blessings and welfare will increase manifold.¹⁵

The sayings of scholars about the Mahdi

Muhyi al-din al-‘Arabi, in the 3rd volume of his *al-Futuh al-Makkiya* (Chapter No. 366) says:

“Certainly Allah possesses a vicegerent who shall appear when the earth will be filled with cruelty and oppression and then he shall fill it with equity and justice. If there remains no more than a day from the life of the earth, Allah will prolong the day until this vicegerent from the progeny of the Holy Prophet (S) and offspring of Fatimah (a.s.) appears.”

Author of *‘Iqd al-Durar* in the preface of the afore-said book, after reproaching about the situation at that time and the excessiveness in seditions and disturbances says: Some reckon that these circumstances will always continue whereas such kind of people have followed the superficial or external aspect of (only) some of the traditions. So I said to them:

“These traditions are worthy of our acceptance and we are bound to accept and follow them. However, there is nothing in these traditions which give indication of the continuity of those circumstances until the Day of Qiyamah (the Last Day).

“It seems that the obviation of seditions and appearance of comforts will occur at the time when Imam Mahdi shall manifest himself because, many traditions which the *‘ulama’* and scholars have mentioned in their books have given glad tidings of his manifestation and the fact that God shall appoint a person who

will be provided for his kingdom such means which could shake the mountains and his kingdom will spread far and wide. So he shall rule the entire earth and fill it with equity and justice. At that time the hidden treasures will be revealed and the earth will be filled with wealth and bestowal (of that wealth)...“.

Author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* on page 410 writes: Shaykh Kamal al-din ibn Talha in his book *al-Durr al-Munazzam* says as such: ‘As per research, Allah has a vicegerent who shall appear at the end of time when the earth will become filled with cruelty and oppression and indeed he shall fill it with equity and justice. Even if there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, He shall make this vicegerent to appear and he will be from the offspring of Fatimah al-Zahra’. Men of disposition shall recognize him by his aquiline nose, black eyelashes and a mole on his right cheek. His name shall be Muhammad; his height above medium, his face handsome and his hair beautiful in appearance.

‘Through him, Allah shall soon destroy the innovations (in religion), revive every Prophetic practice (*sunnah*) and satiate his troops from the land of San’a and Aden. The most prosperous before him will be the people of Kufa. He shall distribute the booties equally and deal with people righteously and during his time altercations shall vanish. The clouds shall not allow but rains to descend and the land except to flourish. This Imam is the same Mahdi, the Upholder of the Commands of Allah to such extent that he will banish all the false religions. Then there shall remain no religion but the pure one...’.

Author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* on page 432 has narrated from al-Sharif al-‘Allamah al-Samhudi al-Misri from his book *Jawahir al-Aqdayn* the following:

‘As per research, blessing of the Holy Prophet’s prayers at the time of Ali’s marriage with Fatimah has been manifested in the offspring of al-Hasan and al-Husayn because, from their progeny were those who have passed away and are those who shall come (in future). And if nobody comes in the future except Imam Mahdi it will be sufficient (i.e. for fulfillment of the promises and bringing into order the chaotic conditions)’.

Ibn al-Athir al-Jazari in his book *al-Nihaya* while explaining the word *jala* (جلى) writes: “About the qualities of Mahdi it has been said that he is *ajla al-jibha* (clear and radiant forehead) and that is the delicate hair between the eyes and ears from above and he will be the one who shall put up his hair from his face.”

Also, in explaining the word of *huda* (guidance), he says: The Mahdi is the one who has been guided by Allah towards the truth. This quality has been utilized in names to such extent that it has become like the names which out of prevalence, have found nominal meaning and for this reason has been named as the Mahdi, the one whom the Holy Prophet has given glad tidings about his coming at the end of time. 16

In the second volume of *Futuh al-Islamiyah*, on page 322 the author after specifying this point that traditions about the Mahdi are to such extent that takes one to the level of certitude, says: “What is sure in this regard is that his manifestation is certain. Surely, he shall be from the offspring of Fatimah and he

will fill the earth with justice.” Thereafter he says: “Sayyid Muhammad ibn Rasul al-Barzanji has referred to this very matter in his book *al-Isha’at*.”

Ibn Abi al-Hadid in his commentary of *Nahj al-Balagha* in the second volume on Page 535, while mentioning some of ‘Ali’s (a.s.) speeches (which was previously narrated and we hinted in them the subject of the Mahdi) he says: As per research, all the Muslim sects are unanimous in their opinion that the world and obligation shall not end but after the advent of the Mahdi who shall come at the end of time.

Poetry and Prose about the Mahdi

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda’*, on page 438 has attributed a poem to Amir al-Mu’minin Ali (a.s.) where he says (to Imam Husayn):

“O Husayn! When you shall find yourself alien in some place, associate yourself with its habit and custom! As if I see my soul and my children in Karbala and its battle scene. Our beards will be dyed with blood just as the dress of a bride gets dyed. I see that calamity but not with my naked eye. The key of its worth has been given to me. May Allah grant a good reward to our Qa’im who is the upholder of justice.

O Husayn! Qa’im shall seek revenge for my blood. Rather he shall seek revenge for your blood too. So be patient upon your hardship and suffering!”

On page 439 of the same book, he narrates from ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) the following poem:

“May Allah shower his mercy and divine grace upon that valiant Imam who shall make the army divisions of the polytheists the object of his victorious sword! He shall manifest this religion on every part of land and will disgrace the polytheist oppressors. I have not spoken these words out of pride and vaunt. Rather it has been given to me by the chosen one of Al e-Hashim (i.e. Holy Prophet).”

Again, in the same book, on page 454 he narrates the famous ode from Di’bal al-Khuza’i who recited it before Imam Rida (a.s.). He quotes Di’bal as saying: I recited my ode till I came upon this part: “The emergence of the Imam who shall rise in the name of Allah and His blessings is inevitable. He shall distinguish the truth and falsehood for us and reward the virtuous and punish the evil.”

Imam Ridha (a.s.) shed tears and then said: ‘O Di’bal, the Trusted Spirit has spoken through your tongue...

In vol. 3, chapter 366 of *al-Futuh al-Makkiyah* we see the following poem: ‘Know that the last of the saints shall be martyred and the light of universe shall become extinguished. He is the Mahdi, ﷺ Muhammad. He is like the Hindi sword, a destroyer. He is the sun’s rays which brightens every cloud and the darkness. He is the first drop of rain, which bestows munificence and bounty.’

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* narrates on page 416 a poem from the book *Al-durr al-maknun* of Muhiy al-din al-'Arabi. It is as follows:

“When time shall move ahead by means of the letters of ‘*Bismillah*’, Mahdi shall emerge. After keeping fast, he shall emerge from the Ka’bah. Send greetings to him on my behalf.”

The author of *Iqd al-durar*, in Section 4, writes:

“We end this chapter with a few lines of the valuable ode recited by ‘Allamah al-Adab ‘Abd Allah ibn Bashar wherein he has mentioned about Al-i-Muhammad and the killing of al-Nafs al-Zakiah:

‘On the occasion of killing of al-Nafs al-Zakkiyah there are true signs for the one who remembers it. Another ‘Nafs’ which is at work and who shall be killed near Ka’aba, will emerge and invite (the people) towards Imam and he shall inform that at sun-rise when a part of the day has passed, a fire shall be kindled in Kufa along with a flow of blood. Consequently Kufa shall burn.

‘The people of Syria shall dispatch towards al-Bayda’ an army against them and they shall be swallowed in the land. Horsemen with valiant men (like the wind, which moves dust and smog) shall move forward. Shu’ayb ibn Saleh who is the herald and vanguard shall take them towards a Sayyid who shall emerge from amongst Al Hashim – that Sayyid who on the right of his face i.e. between eyes and ears, has a mole.’

Also, in the preface of the same book its author has mentioned a poem in praise of Mahdi but has not mentioned whether the poem belongs to himself or someone else. The poem is as follows:

“It is by blessings of Mahdi that the goodness of religions shall be put in order. It is by blessings of Mahdi that degradation of religions shall be put to an end.

It is through his help that the deserts too will become void (of cruelty and oppression).

It is through Mahdi’s goodness that the darkness of cruelty and oppression shall be obviated.

Greetings and salutations of Allah be upon Mahdi on each day.”

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* on page 466 writes: This poem is from Shaykh ‘Abd al-Karim al-Yamani:

“Its people are living in prosperity and tranquility and you shall see the light of guidance who is from the progeny of Haydar and Ahl al-Bayt appears by means of ‘*mā'im*’ (ميم). He shall be called Mahdi and will emerge for the truth. First and foremost, he shall give commands based on the Sunnah of the best of creatures, Hazrat Muhammad (S)”.

In the same book, on page 461 he narrates the following poem from Shaykh Abd al-Rahman Bisṣami, author of *Durrah al-Ma'arif*:

“The eminent ‘*mā'im*’ (ميم) and the great one from the progeny of Ahmad shall emerge.

First of all he shall manifest the divine justice amongst the people just as the same has been narrated by Hazrat Abu al-Al-Hasan Rida (a.s.) and has also been recorded in the Treasure of Knowledge.”

The following poem too has been narrated by Bisṭāmī on the afore-said page:

“The letter of ‘*mīm*’ (ميم) after its ‘*shīn*’ (شين) shall triumphantly emerge in Mecca from the Holy Ka’aba. This is the same Mahdi who shall emerge with truth and soon he shall be sent by Allah for the truth. He shall fill the entire earth with equity and justice. First of all, he shall erase and destroy the darkness of cruelty and oppression. His custodianship for the Divine affairs is from Allah’s side. He has been chosen by Allah to be the Caliph and the successor of the best Prophet.”

Again, in the afore-mentioned book, on page 468 he narrates the following poem in praise of the Mahdi from Shaykh Sadr al-din Qunawi:

“The Mahdi shall emerge and rise on the earth for the sake of Divine affair. Besides, he will destroy all the infidel satans. The destruction of all mean persons shall occur by his hands; by the mighty sword which if you would know its true worth it would make you fall sick. The reality of this sword and this Qa’im, who has been appointed for the establishment of religion on the true path, is a Divine affair.

Once again, in the book of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* on page 474, Qanduzi has narrated (قصيدة الدالية) [an ode in which each line ends with the letter ‘*dal*’ (دال)] from which is as follows:

“How often they ask me about love of the Ahl al-Bayt – should I now conceal or deny them? I swear by Allah that love of Ahl al-Bayt has been mingled with my flesh and blood. They are the torches of guidance. After Hazrat (i.e. Holy Prophet) came Haider and Hasnain. After them, came ‘Ali and his son Muhammad, then Ja’far al-Sadiq and ibn Ja’far Musa. After Musa came ‘Ali who is the place of refuge for the people i.e. Rida. After him came his son Muhammad and after him came his virtuous son ‘Ali and then al-Hasan and Muhammad ibn al-Hasan. They are my Imams and my masters although a group has rebuked and reproached me (for having this belief).

“They are the Imams whose names we often hear. They are the *hujaj* (proofs) of Allah upon His slaves. They are at the path of guidance towards Allah. They are Imams who keep fast during the day for the sake of Allah and pass their nights by bowing and prostrating before Allah. They are a group to whom belongs Mecca, Abtah, Khāf, Jama’ and the graveyard of Baqā’. They are a group to whom belongs Mina, the two sacred monuments, the two ‘Marwa’ and the mosque. They are a group who possesses a tomb in every place. Nay, rather they have a tomb situated in every heart.”

Muhammad ibn Talha al-Shafi’i says in *Maṭlib al-Su’l* as such: [In the twelfth Chapter while giving account of Abu al-Qasim Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn ‘Ali ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Ali ibn Musa ibn Ja’far ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib that he is the Mahdi, al-Hujjah (the proof), al-Khalaf al-Sālih (the righteous descendant) and al-Muntazar (the awaited one)]:

“He is the successor and *Hujjah* (proof) who has been approved by Allah. Moreover, Allah has guided him on the true path and given him His temperament and raised his status. Allah has bestowed upon him the ornament of His Grace and he too has put on the dress of virtue. The Holy Prophet (S) has said something, which has been narrated for us and the one who becomes aware of the Prophet's saying will comprehend its meaning.

“A learned person knows that news about the signs of Mahdi (a.s.) has come and the Holy Prophet (S) has revealed the same, lineage and qualities of Mahdi. Suffice it is to mention the saying of the Holy Prophet (S) who said: ‘The light on Mahdi’s face will be from my light. The one whose place of care is Zahra’ (a part of his own self), none shall receive a position similar to the position which I have bestowed upon Mahdi. Then, the one who says that he is the Mahdi has spoken the truth.”

Apart from what we have written, there are yet other poems in Persian and Arabic, which anyone investigating into them will become enlightened. The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* has narrated many such poems like the poems of Shaykh Ahmad al-Jam², Shaykh ‘Att² al-Nisaburi, Shaykh Jalal al-din al-Rumi and others. However what we have narrated is adequate.

1. Tafsir Ruh al-Ma’ani, vol.25, pg.95, interprets the aforesaid verse as follows: What is well-known is that he (‘Isa) will descend in Damascus when the people will be busy in their morning prayers. The Imam will hold back (from leading the prayer) and he is the Mahdi. Thereafter he (‘Isa) will give priority to him and will pray while standing behind him. He will say: ‘It is for you that the prayer has been called’. Tafsir al-Siraj al-Munir, vol. 3, pg. 462 too has interpreted the verse in this same manner but has not specified the name of the Mahdi. Nur al-Absar too (on page 146) has narrated from the book of Ganji the same as Ibn Hajar.
2. Hamawayni in Fara’id al-Simtayn, chapter 31 has mentioned in this regard a tradition narrated by Ibn ‘Abbas from the Holy Prophet. Nasa’ih al-Kafiya, pg.24.
3. In Tafsir al-Razi, vol.1, pg. 166 too, the verse of (الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ) has been interpreted in a similar manner.
4. It is narrated in ‘Arf al-Wardi, pg.57, from the Tafsir (exegesis) of Ibn Jarir from Sadi that in interpreting the verse:

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ مَنَعَ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ وَسَعَىٰ فِي خَرَابِهَا ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ أَنْ يَدْخُلُوهَا إِلَّا خَائِفِينَ ۚ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

Who is a greater wrongdoer than him who denies access to the mosques of Allah lest His Name be celebrated therein, and tries to ruin them? Such ones may not enter them, except in fear. There is disgrace for them in this world and there is for them a great punishment in the Hereafter. (2:114)

he says: By unjust people and those who disallowed the taking of the name of Allah in the mosques and those who strove to ruin them is meant the Romans. And by the decree of the verse, they are those who would not enter Bayt al-Maqdis but with fear and anxiety of being killed or paying the Jizya (tribute). Thereafter he says: However their disgrace (خزي) which is referred to in this verse will be at that time when the Mahdi shall reappear and gain victory over Constantinople. Then they will kill him and this very act will be their disgrace.

5. The same has been narrated in ‘Arf al-wardi, page 58, from Ahmad, Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi.
6. Suyuti in ‘Arf al-wardi, page 64, and Ja’mi’ al-Saghir, vol. 2, page 277, tradition No 7491, too has narrated the same and adds that this person (i.e. Mahdi) shall become a master of the hills of Daylam and Constantinople. The same can be found in Nur al-Absar, page 148. Thereafter he writes: “These are the words of Hafiz Abu Na’im and he says that the person mentioned in the tradition is none other than ‘Mahdi’.”
7. ‘Arf al-wardi, page 59 – narrated from Ibn Abu Shayba and the afore-said names and Ja’mi’ al-Saghir, vol. 2, page 377 – Tradition No. 1489.

8. The same has been narrated in 'Arf al-wardi, page 59. Also on page 62 it is narrated from Tabarani and Abu Na'im Isfahani and they from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri who said: 'I heard the Holy Prophet (S) saying: "There shall come a man from my progeny who will speak in accordance with my 'Sunnah'. God shall send rain for him and the earth will throw out its bounties. He will fill the earth with equity and justice just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression. Also, on page 63 it is narrated from Ahmad and Abu Na'im who narrate from Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri that the Holy Prophet (S) has said: 'The world shall not cease to exist until a person from my progeny shall come and rule and he will fill the earth with equity and justice just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression.
9. 'Arf al-wardi, pg.62.
10. 'Arf al-wardi, pg. 74.
11. On page 65 of 'Arf al-wardi it is narrated from Hakim who narrates from Abu Sa'id that the Holy Prophet (S) said: "A severe calamity shall befall my nation at the end of the Appointed Time, by the hands of the rulers of their time such that life shall become difficult for them. Then God Almighty shall manifest a person from my progeny who shall fill the earth with equity and Justice just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression.
12. Ibn Abi Shayba, Na'im ibn Hammad, Ibn Majah and Abu Na'im have narrated from Ibn Masood who said: I was in the presence of the Holy Prophet (S). Suddenly a group of youngsters from Bani Hashim appeared before us. When the Holy Prophet (S) saw them his eyes became full of tears and the colour of his face changed. I said: "O Prophet, I see that you are sad". He replied: "We are a family which God preferred for us the next world over this world. After me, my Ahl al-bayt shall be subjected to persecution by the people until a group from the East will appear with black flags. Then they shall wish to reign but others will stand in their way. Later, they will fight and win and will receive what they desired. But they will refuse to accept and entrust it to a person from my progeny who shall fill the earth with justice just as it had been filled with oppression. So any one who perceives the situation of that time should join them over though he may haul himself over ice".
13. In 'Arf al-wardi (page 83) a narration has come from Fawa'id al-Akhbar – Abi Bakr Is'aaf that the Holy Prophet has said: "The one who reckons Dajjal to be false has surely become a disbeliever and the one who thinks Mahdi to be false has surely become a disbeliever.
14. The author of 'Arf al-wardi on page 73 has also narrated almost the same contents.
15. Ibn Abi al-Hadid in the first volume on Page 93 writes: (At the end of his Sermon he said: – "It shall end in us, not you people" reference is made to the Mahdi, the Awaited one who shall appear at the end of time and most of the scholars of hadith are of the opinion that he is from the offspring of Fatimah (a.s.). Mu'tazilites do not deny his existence. They have mentioned him in their books and their shaykhs too have acknowledged him. Then, after a few more words he says – Qadi al-Qudat (supreme judge) narrates from Kafi al-Kufat, Abu al-Qasim Isma'il ibn 'Abbad whose reference is connected to Ali, that Hazrat himself said: He is from the offspring of Husayn. He shall possess a broad forehead, a protracted nose, a broad stomach and broad thighs. His front teeth will be separated from each other and on his right cheek will appear a spot. Ibn Abi al-Hadid continues: This tradition has also been narrated by 'Abd Allah ibn Qutaybah in his book al-Gharib.
16. al-Nihaya, vol.4 pg. 359. Also Taj al-'Urus, vol. 10, pg. 408 and Lisan al-'Arab, vol. 20, pg. 229, have narrated the same. Abu 'Umrani has narrated in his Sunan from Ibn Shudab as such: – The reason that he has been named as the Mahdi is that he is being guided. He shall bring out the pages of Torah from the hills of Syria and by means of that he shall argue with the Jews. Then a few amongst them will become Muslims. 'Arf al-wardi, pg. 81.

The Mahdi is from the Arabs

The author of '*Iqd al-Durar* in chapter one, section 4, narrates from Abu 'Abd Allah Na'im ibn Hammad (from his book *Al-Fitan*) who in turn narrates from 'Ali (a.s.) who said: –

"The kingdom of Bani 'Abbas is such that if the Turks, Daylamites, and the inhabitants of Indus valley

and India were to attack them they would fail to destroy them and Bani 'Abbas would continue to be successful until they become aggressive towards the slaves and the weak. Then God will make a cow ('ijl, the wicked one who will revolt against Bani 'Abbas and destroy them) to dominate over them which shall come out from a place where their kingdom began.

“He shall not pass any city but that he conquers it; no flag will be hoisted before him but that he destroys it and he will not come across any bounty but that he misuses it. Woe be to the one who takes his side. This shall continue until victory is achieved at the hands of an Arab who shall rise for the truth and act upon it.”

It is apparent that ‘an Arab’ in the above sentence refers to the Mahdi, the Awaited One who shall appear at the end of time and his signs are the very ones which have come in the same chapter of the aforesaid book which has been taken from the book of *al-Fitan*, where its author, Imam Abu 'Abd Allah Na'im ibn Hammad narrates from Abu Qabil as such: “People shall always be in comfort until the kingdom of Bani 'Abbas comes to an end. Then they will live in disturbed conditions until the advent of the Mahdi.”

The author says: History bears witness that right from the time of Hulagu's revolt the East has not enjoyed liberty. Disturbed conditions and discord among the rulers and kings has always continued to exist. Thus 'Ali's saying that: ‘Until he gains victory and hands it over to an Arab’ is perhaps referring to this point that that discord and disturbed conditions are all incidental to the coming of Hulagu and his subsequent revolt and it shall remain till the advent of the Mahdi. Thus, as one of the causes and means of the Mahdi's victory and his success in inviting the people (towards his mission) and his domination over the cities is the discord and disturbed conditions which shall follow the revolt of Hulagu. It is like this that Hulagu himself will surrender the affairs of Government to him (a.s.).

Another factor, which shows that the Mahdi is from an Arab line, is the diffused traditions which have come with regards to determination of his family and relatives. Raghib in his *al-Mufradat* says: “Al-'Arab (العرب) are the children of Isma'il (Ishmael) and al-A'rabi (الاعراب) its plural form. Later on the nomads were called by that name.”

The author of *Sab'ik al-Dhahab*, on page 4 says: “The city-dwellers are called “al-'Arab” and the desert-dwellers “al-A'rabi” and what is common is that the word al-A'rabi (الاعراب) is used for both groups.”

Al-Jawhari in his *Sihah* says: “Al-'Arab (العرب) are a tribe and they are the city-dwellers. They are known as 'Arabi and the al-A'rabi are known as A'rabi. But the word 'Arab' is commonly used at all levels. The same has been written in the dictionaries.”

The author of *al-'Ibar* says: The word al-'Arab (العرب) is derived from *al-i'rabi* (الاعراب), which is expression, and its meaning of expression (speech has been taken from those who say: أعرب الرجل عن حاجته) – At the time when a person expresses and describes his need and since they possess the

faculty of expression and eloquence in speech they have been called by this name. So know that every non-Arab – whether Iranians, Turks, Romans or Europeans are all ‘*Ajam* (عجم) – non-Arab, and it is not what the people commonly believe that the word ‘*ajam* is particular to the Persian-speaking nation. Rather, the people of North Africa (the Maghreb) until now use this word for the Europeans and those who fall in the same category. However the word of *a’jam* (أعجم) [with the addition of an ‘*alif*’] is used for the one who does not clarify his speech even though he may be an Arab.

The Mahdi is from this Ummah (Nation)

Al-Tirmidhi in his *al-Sahih*, on page 270 narrates from Abu Sa’^hd al-Khudri who said: ‘I feared that after the Holy Prophet, something bad might take place, so we asked the Prophet and he replied as such: “Indeed the Mahdi is from my Ummah and he shall emerge from amongst them.”’

The magazine *Huda al-Islam* in its 25th publication, line No. 3 has narrated the same tradition from Ibn Majah who in turn has narrated it from Abu Sa’^hd.

The author of ‘*lqd al-Durar*, in the first chapter narrates from Abu Muslim ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Auf from his father from the Holy Prophet (S) who said: –

“Surely God shall appoint a man from my Ummah (nation)”. He continued to the point of saying: “He shall fill the earth with justice.”

In the 3rd chapter of the same book, the author narrates from the book of *Sifat al-Mahdi* written by Hafiz Abu Na’^hm who in turn narrates from Abu Sa’^hd al-Khudri from the Holy Prophet (S) who said:

“The Mahdi is from us, the Ahl al-Bayt (i.e. People of the House). He is from my Ummah”.

The author of *al-Fusu1 al-Muhimma* narrates from Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi and these two from ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas’ud and he from the Holy Prophet (S) who said:

“If there remains not more than a day from the life the earth, God will prolong the day until He sends a person from my Ummah and my progeny (Ahl al-Bayt) who carries the same name as mine (and who fills the world with justice.)”

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* has narrated (on page 433 of his aforesaid book) a tradition from the book *Jawahir al-Aqdayn* from Abu Sa’^hd al-Khudri. In that tradition the Holy Prophet (S) says: “The Mahdi is in my Ummah”. Also the aforesaid author narrates from Abu ‘Abd Allah Na’^hm ibn Hamm^hd (from his book of *al-Fitan* and he from Hisham ibn Muhammad and he from the Holy Prophet (S) who said: “The Mahdi is from this Ummah and he is the one who shall lead ‘Isa ibn Maryam (in prayer).”¹

Al-Raghib in his *al-Mufrad^ht* says: ‘Ummah’ is any group of people which is formed through things like custom, time or place – making no difference whether that thing brings them together voluntarily or involuntarily and the plural of *ummah* (امة) is *umam* (امم).”

One group has said as such: ‘The Ummah of every Prophet are his followers and the one who does not follow his custom will not be included in his Ummah even though he may have lived during his time. Therefore, the Ummah of Islam are those people who follow the Islamic rules and all that the Holy Prophet (S) has brought, making no difference whether he has visited him or not or whether he has lived during his time or not. Moreover this applies to all, without any difference in families or tribes even though they may differ from each other from the view-point of language, time and place.

The author is of the opinion that: It is apparent that the definite article *al* (ال) in al-Mahdi (المهدي) is for covenant; meaning that the Mahdi – the one who has been remembered in the heavenly books and about whom the Prophets have given glad tidings to their nations – shall be from this same blessed Ummah and not from any other Ummah. So this Ummah deserves to rejoice and be happy for being honored by such a merit.

It is true that in some of the exceptional and less common traditions we find such contents like this one – “The Mahdi is not but ‘Isa ibn Maryam (a.s.)”.

Ibn Hajar has written (this tradition) in *al-Sawa’iq* on page 89:

Ibn Majah and al-Hakim have quoted a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) as such: –

“It will not be long when difficulties and problems will dominate the people and the world shall turn away from its inhabitants and the people will resort to greed. The Hour shall not be established but upon the wicked and the Mahdi is not but ‘Isa ibn Maryam”.

Ibn Hajar said: “Al-Hakim said: I have mentioned this tradition in astonishment, not as an argument (to prove it).

Bayhaqi says: Only Muhammad ibn Khalid has narrated this tradition.

Al-Hakim says: He (i.e. Muhammad ibn Khalid) is unknown and there exists differences in the chain of transmission of traditions narrated by him. Al-Nisā’ī too rejects such traditions.”

In the 10th Volume of *Da’irah al-Ma’arif* (page 475), the author after narrating the aforesaid tradition from Ibn Majah says: Imam al-Qurtubi says:

“This tradition is not inconsistent with what the previous traditions have mentioned about the Mahdi because; this tradition only aims to respect the dignity of ‘Isa ibn Maryam (a.s.) over the Mahdi. That is to say, there is no Mahdi but ‘Isa from the viewpoint of his position of immaculateness and perfection. So it does not contradict existence of the Mahdi. It is identical to this saying that there is no stalwart but ‘Ali. Moreover, this view can be supported with the tradition which says that the Mahdi is from my progeny; he shall fill the earth with justice and will emerge along with ‘Isa (a.s.) who shall help him in the killing of Dajjal at a place called Ludd in the land of Palestine. Indeed, he shall rule over this Ummah and ‘Isa ibn Maryam will pray behind him. And God Almighty knows best”.²

The author of *‘Iqd al-Durar* in the preface of his afore-mentioned book writes as such: ‘And amongst the people, there are those who reckon that the Mahdi is none other than ‘Isa ibn Maryam, the pure and

holy. So I told them: The one who denies the emergence of the Mahdi is not actually referring to Hazrat ‘Isa because there is no reason to believe that that reference is made to him and the one who thinks that the Mahdi is the same as ‘Isa ibn Maryam and insists on the authenticity of this tradition has indeed made the zeal of prejudice and error to bring him to the point of precipice’.

Thereafter he says: ‘Even though this tradition may be proverbial among the people yet, how can it be considered authentic when the traditionists have rejected it. After accurately examining its references and deliberating on its authorities if a person still relies on this tradition, it will be a matter of grave fallacy.

‘The proof of this statement is that Imam Abu ‘Abd al-Rahman has emphasized its denial and his view is worthy of acceptance because the tradition returns back to Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Jundi. Moreover, Imam Abu al-Faraj al-Jawzi narrates in his book *‘Ilal al-Mutan‘ihiya* the weakness of this tradition from the words of Hafiz Abi Bakr al-Bayhaqi who said:

“This tradition is connected to al-Jundi and he is an unknown person. Moreover, al-Jundi narrates from Abūn ibn Abi ‘Ayyūsh and he too is a rejected and unlaudable person. Abūn too narrates from Hasan and he from the Holy Prophet (S) and there is an interval in his transmission (i.e. all the sources have not been narrated). Anyhow, there is no reason to consider this tradition to be authentic”.

‘Al-Bayhaqi narrates from his master, al-Hākim al-Nisaburi (and how excellent is his knowledge of the science of tradition (*‘ilm al-hadith*) and the position of narrators of traditions) as follows:

“Al-Jundi is an unknown person and Ibn ‘Ayyūsh, a rejected one and with such transmitters this tradition is severed (*munqati’*). Almost all the scholars of traditions have brought traditions about Imam Mahdi and all have mentioned his name and remembered him and for those who are clear-sighted and are also aware, it is clear that a part of those traditions are a rectification for the other parts and this is the highest proof of those traditions being better than this rejected tradition”.

‘Also, Hafiz Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Hākim has mentioned this subject in his *al-Mustadrak* of the *Sahihayn* (*Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*) and this makes us needless of other discussion.

He points out that if a tradition has been narrated by a large number of people it has priority over those traditions which are not as such and while coming across this tradition he discusses its position from the view-point of credibility and un-credibility. Thereafter he writes:

“The reason I have brought this tradition is not to argue upon it but to express my surprise.” This statement of Hākim finally proves his opinion of the extreme weakness of this tradition.

He further says: “Better than this tradition is the tradition of Sufyan al-Thawri and his adherents.”

Thereafter, he mentions the tradition of the Holy Prophet (S) which says; “His name is the same as my name” and then writes as such: “Some eminent scholars are of the view that what he (S) intends to say by this statement is that the Mahdi’s name is similar to and resembles his name”.

It is clear for one who looks at this statement with fairness that the Mahdi is from the progeny of Fatimah and not the son of Maryam. However, even if we assume this tradition to be correct, we cannot take it in its apparent form. Rather, we should resort to its esoteric interpretation, since we have not found any reason for giving up those genuine traditions which are in opposition to this tradition. Perhaps its esoteric interpretation may be like the esoteric interpretation of:

لا صلاة لجار المسجد الا في المسجد

‘there is no *Salat* except in the mosque for one who is a neighbor to the mosque’,³ from this angle that a part of the wordings of the two traditions are near to each other. The number of such traditions are numerous.

This does not imply that the tradition is rejected, rather that this sentence has come in honor of the Mahdi and / or Isa or perhaps it might have some other interpretation’.

The author of *Yanabi’al-Mawadda* on page 434 says: Indeed the fabrication of this tradition from Ibn Khalid is apparent from various aspects:

‘Firstly, if this tradition was correct then the oppression and cruelty which was prevalent during the time of Yazid and Hajjaj should have increased manifold and until today there should have not remained any goodness in this world. However, after the afore-mentioned period, that is from the time of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz and the Abbasid Caliphs up to now, peace and goodness has been settled by the Grace of Allah.

Secondly, before the appointment of the Holy Prophet (S) to the position of Prophethood, the subject of Mahdaviyat was not prevalent among the Arabs so that it could possibly reject this saying (there is no Mahdi but ‘Isa ibn Maryam).

Thirdly, God has given indication of the Mahdi in many verses of His Book and as such the Holy Prophet too has given glad tidings about him to his followers just as the previous Prophets (a.s.) had given glad tidings to others about the coming of our Prophet and the circumstances concerning Mahdi. I have collected and mentioned these glad tidings in a book entitled *Mashriq al-Akwan*’. (End)

What we can derive from the sayings of these great men in reply to the afore-mentioned tradition is the following:

Firstly, it is a fabricated one; secondly it is null and void and hence weak; thirdly it is contradicting the widely transmitted tradition and fourthly its actual interpretation differs from its apparent meaning.

It is possible to conclude from this tradition that the advent of the Mahdi and the descending of ‘Isa from

the heavens are two related affairs connected to each other where none can be separated from the other. Therefore it is correct to say that reference to one applies to the other and it seems that both are one and the same or it can be said that something is missing from the tradition and in reality it was as such:

لا مهدي الا و عيسى بن مريم معه

(Mahdi is not but that 'Isa is with him)

Moreover, the extensive traditions prove this meaning to be correct. Thus 'Isa is one of the signs of authenticity of the subject of the Mahdi (a.s.).

The Mahdi is From Kinana

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* in his first chapter narrates from the *Sunan* of Imam Abu 'Amr 'Uthman ibn Sa'id al-Muqri who narrates from Qatadah who said:

I asked Sa'id ibn Musayyib whether the Mahdi is the truth and he replied: "Yes, he is the truth". I then asked: "To which tribe does he belong"? He replied: "To the Kinana". I again asked: "To which clan does he belong"? He replied: "To the Quraysh". I further asked: "To which family does he belong"? He replied: "To the Banu Hashim." Again I asked: "To which one of the families does he belong"? He replied: "To the progeny of Fatimah."

The author says: "By Kinana is meant Kinana the son of Khuzayma, who was the son of Mudrika, son of Ilyas, son of Mudhar, son of Nizar, son of Ma'ad, son of 'Adnan."

The author of *Saba'ik al-Dhahab* says: 'Banu Kinana is a family from Mudhar and Mudhar had a son who was in the ancestral line of the Holy Prophet (S) and he was called Nizār. Moreover Mudhar had children who were not in the Holy Prophet's lineage and they were: Mālik, Malkān, al-Hārīs, 'Amr, 'Āmir, Sa'ad, Ghanam, 'Awf, Mujraba, Jarwal, Jazāl and Ghurfān. Abu 'Ubayd says: 'They were all from the Yemen' and in the book called *'Ibar* it has been mentioned that their place of stay was in the outskirts of Mecca.'

The Mahdi is from the Quraysh

In the first chapter of *'Iqd al-Durar*, the author narrates from Imam Abu 'Abd Allah Na'im ibn Hammad who narrates from Ibn Wa'il who narrates from Imam Abu al-Husayn Ahmad ibn Ja'far al-Manadi who narrates from Qatadah who said: 'I asked Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib whether the Mahdi was on the truth and he replied: "Yes". I asked: "To which tribe does he belong?" He replied: "Quraysh". I asked: "To which

clan does he belong?” He replied: “Banu Hashim”. I asked: “To which family does he belong:” He replied: “He is from the offspring of Abd al- Muttalib.” I asked: “Which one of the families?” He replied: “From the progeny of Fatimah.” I asked: “Which one of her sons?” He replied: “That is enough now.”

Also, the afore-mentioned book narrates (in the seventh chapter) from the book *Al-Fitan* of Hafiz Abu ‘Abd Allah Na’im ibn Hammad which in turn narrates from Ishaq ibn Yahya ibn Talha who narrates from Tawus who said:

‘Umar ibn al-Khattab was on his death-bed and bidding farewell to his family members. He then said: ‘I do not know of any treasure, which I can bestow. The house and all that it contains from wealth and weapons should be spent in the way of Allah’.

Then ‘Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “O Amir al-Mu’minin, leave aside this matter because you are not the owner of (this) wealth. Rather its owner is a young man from the tribe of Quraysh who shall, at the end of time, distribute it in the way of Allah.”⁴

Ibn Hajar writes on page 99 of his book *al-Sawa’iq* as such: –

Ahmad and al-Mawardi have brought a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) who said: Glad tidings be to you about the Mahdi. He is from the Quraysh; from my progeny.⁵

The same is narrated in page 151 of *Is’af al-Raghibin*.

The author believes: ‘Quraysh is the same al-Nadhr ibn Kinana. In *al-Jami’ al-Latif* we read as such: “Know that there exist differences in Quraysh as to why they were called by this name. So it is said: They were named after a beast living in the sea called al-Qirsh – a beast which eats and is not eaten; conquers and is not conquered (a metaphoric remark signifying power and magnificence) and this tribe too is similar to that beast due to their power and strength.”

In *al-Madrik* we read: “Quraysh is a mighty beast which plays with the ships and except for fire it cannot be repulsed by any other thing. Its diminutive form is due to reverence.”

Some others say: The reason they were called Quraysh was that the leader of their tribe Ibn Yakhlid bin Ghalib ibn Fihr was named as Quraysh. Thus it was said: The tribe of Quraysh came; the tribe of Quraysh went and in this way they became famous by this name.

Still some others have said: Qusayy (قصى) who was a person belonging to their tribe gathered them together (*qarasha*) and brought them to Mecca and ‘*qarasha*’ (قرش) means “to gather together”. Thus, as he gathered them together he was named ‘*mujammi*’ (مجمع) (gathering) just as mentioned in the poem of Fadhl ibn ‘Abbas ibn ‘Utba and also in his following poem:⁶

نحن كنا سكانا من قریش و بنا سمیت قریش قریشا

It is also said that Quraysh was the name of Qusayy and it was because of this reason that his tribe was named as Quraysh. What is more common however is that his name was Zayd, as previously mentioned.

Yet others have said: The word of 'Quraysh' (قريش) is derived from 'taqrish' (تقريش) which means 'to earn' and because they were carrying on business and earning they were called Quraysh.

It is also said that since al-Nadhr was called Qurashi, his family too became famous by this name.

Some say: They were called as Quraysh because they were doing 'taqrish' of goods of the pilgrims going for Haj and 'taqrish' means 'to inspect'. Thus they erected inspection points in their way and prevented them from moving ahead unchecked. The proof that this statement is correct is the saying of al-Harith ibn Hillizah al-Yashkari who says:7

أيها الناطق المقرش عنا عند عمرو فهل لنا إيفاء

The Mahdi is from the Banu Hashim

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* in the first chapter of his book, narrates from Imam Abu al-Husayn Ahmad ibn Ja'far al-Manadi and Imam Abu Abd Allah Na'im ibn Hammad and these two from Qatadah who said:

I asked Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib: "Is Mahdi the truth?" He replied: "Yes."

I asked: "To which tribe does he belong?" He replied: "To the Quraysh."

I asked: "To which clan does he belong?" He replied: "To the clan of Bani Hashim."

I asked: "From which of its families?"

He replied: "From the offspring of Abdul-Muttalib." I asked: "From which one of them?"

He replied: "From the offspring of Fatimah." I asked: "From which one of her offspring?" He replied: "That is enough now."

The author says: Hashim was the same son of Abd Munaf who was the son of Quṣayy, son of Kilab, son Murra, son of Ka'ab, son of Lu'ay, son of Ghalib, son of Fihri, son of Malik, son of al-Nadhr, son of Kinana.

In *al-Jāmi' al-Latif* it is said: Hashim's name was 'Amr al-'Ulā and the reason he was called Hashim was that during the period of drought and famine he used to break up bread in broth (*yahshim al-tharīd*) for his tribe.

In generosity and beneficence he had reached to such a high level that he used to provide food to the beasts and birds and slaughter camels for them on mountain tops. Whenever a famine would occur in

Mecca, he would feed its people by his own doing and persuaded the rich men of Mecca to donate their wealth to the poor and indigent up to the time when God caused rain to descend.

Thereafter, he traveled to Syria, went to Caesar (king) and took from him an order vouching the safety of Quraysh. He also sent his brother al-Muttalib towards Yemen and in this way took a letter of trust from the king of that place. Thereafter he instructed the traders and merchants of Quraysh to move out in the winter and summer seasons for the purpose of trading. Thus, they would go towards Syria in summer and proceed for Yemen in winter. As such, from then on their subsistence and means of livelihood increased through such trading and by blessings of Hashim ibn ‘Abd Manaf, God delivered them from fear of (loss of) life and hunger.

‘Abd Manaf was named the Qamar al-Ba^ḥar (moon of al-Ba^ḥar) because of his good-looking face and beneficence. He was the one who took the place of his father ^ḥ in leadership and giving water to the pilgrims. ‘Abd Manaf was called Mughira and his agnomen was Abu ‘Abd Shams b. Qu^ṣayy.

The name of Qusayy was Zayd, and, it is said, Yazid. The reason he was called as Qu^ṣayy was that he, along with his mother Fatimah daughter of Sa’ad, left the tribe of Banu ‘Udhra and started living with his maternal uncles and distanced himself from Mecca. Thus, for this reason he was named as Qusayy which is derived from ‘q^ṣayy’, which means ‘distant. He was also called Mujammi’ because, when he grew up and returned back to Mecca he gathered the Quraysh who had been scattered in the deserts and got them back to Mecca and then expelled the tribe of Khuza’ah. Fazl ibn ‘Abbas ibn Abu Lahab says:8

أبوكم قصي كان يدعى بمجمعا به جمع الله القبائل من فھر

The Mahdi is from the progeny of ‘Abd al-Muttalib

The author of *‘Iqd al-Durar*, in the seventh chapter narrates from the books of a group of traditionists such as Imam Abu Abd Allah ibn M^ḥjah in his *Sunan*, Hafiz Abu al-Qasim al-Tabarani in his *Mu’jam* and Hafiz Abu Na’im al-Isfahani and others, like Anas ibn Malik who said: The Holy Prophet (S) said: “We seven of the sons of ‘Abd al-Muttalib are the leaders of Paradise: I, my brother ‘Ali, my paternal uncle Hamza, Ja’far, al-Hasan, al-Husayn and al-Mahdi.”

The author says: This denotes the subject which had previously been mentioned in the tradition of Qatadah narrated from Sa’id ibn Musayyib in al-J^ḥmi’ al-Latif:

‘Abd al-Muttalib’s name was Shaybah al-Hamd; and sometimes he was also called by the name of ‘^ḥmir. He was called Shaybah al-Hamd because of the appearance of signs of whiteness on his hair. Abu al-H^ḥrith was his agnomen since he had a son by the name of H^ḥrith and he was called ‘Abd al-

Muttalib because, when his father Hashim who was living in Mecca was about to die, he told his brother al-Muttalib: "Take care of your 'abd (servant) in Yathrib." So from then on he was called 'Abd al-Muttalib.

Some say that when his uncle al-Muttalib took him to Mecca, riding behind him on his camel, he had an unseemly appearance. For this reason when al-Muttalib was asked who he was he felt ashamed to say that he was his nephew and instead said: He is my 'abd (slave or servant). Later on when they entered Mecca itself and he had put on a decent look Muttalib revealed that he was his nephew. In this way he became famous by the name of 'Abd al-Muttalib.

It is also said that he was brown-skinned and so when he went to Mecca with al-Muttalib, people were under impression that he was his 'abd (slave) and said: Al-Muttalib has come with an 'abd (slave). In this way, he became known by the name of 'Abd al-Muttalib.

The Mahdi is from the progeny of Abu Talib

The author of *Iqd al-Durar*, in the fourth chapter of section No.3 narrates from Sayf ibn 'Umayra who said: 'I was near Abu Ja'far al-Mansur. He addressed me as such: –

'O Saif! It is inevitable that a caller from the heavens shall call out in the name of a man from the offspring of Abu Talib.' I said: 'May I be sacrificed for you O Amir al-Mu'minin. Are you narrating what you just said?' He replied: 'Yes, I swear by the One in whose Hand is my life. I am narrating exactly what my ears have heard'. I said: 'But until now I had not heard such a tradition.'

He said: 'O Sayf, indeed he is the truth and at the time when this affair takes place we will be more worthy than others in answering (his call). However the Mahdi will be someone from our cousins.' I said: 'Someone from the offspring of Fatimah!' He replied: 'O Sayf, if I had not heard it from Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali (al-Baqir) but from the most excellent person on earth, I would have not narrated it for you, but it is Muhammad b. 'Ali (who told me this)'.

In *Saba'ik al-Dhahab* we read as such: Ibn Ishaq says: 'Abu Talib's name was 'Abd Manaf while Hakim Abu 'Abd Allah says: 'Abu Talib's name and agnomen is one and the same.'

The author of *Tadhkirah al-Khaw* writes: 'With regards to his lineage we have mentioned that he is the son of 'Abd al-Muttalib and when the latter was about to die, he entrusted the Holy Prophet (S) to Abu Talib.

In the book of *al-Tabaqat* Muhammad ibn Sa'd narrates from a group of 'ulama' (scholars) such as Ibn 'Abbas, Mujahid, 'A', al-Zuhri and the like of them that 'Abd al-Muttalib passed away in the second year of the Year of the Elephant (*'im al-fil*) and the Holy Prophet (S) at that time was eight years old. 'Abd al-Muttalib passed away at the age of one hundred and twenty and was buried in Hajun. Umm Aiman says: I saw the Holy Prophet (S) walking and crying under the coffin of 'Abd al-Muttalib,

while it was being carried away.

According to another report, ‘Abd al-Muttalib was eighty years when he left this world. However the first report appears to be more correct.

Mujahid has narrated from Ibn ‘Abbas that when a group of people from the tribe of Qaṣfah from Bani Muzhak saw the footsteps of the Holy Prophet they told ‘Abd al-Muttalib: “O Aba al-Baṣṣaṣ, take care of this child, for we have not seen any footsteps which are similar to the holy prophet’s footsteps resembling those in position”.

Then ‘Abd al-Muttalib turned towards Abu Talib and said: “Listen to whatever they have said. Indeed there shall be a kingdom for this son of mine.”

From then on, Abu Talib stood up, in the best possible manner, to help the Messenger of Allah and made himself responsible for assisting him in his affairs so much so that he would never get separated from him. He was so much attracted towards him that he would give more preference to him than his own sons and would sleep only when the Prophet (S) was beside him. He would tell him: “You have a blessed soul and your future is bright.”

In the book of *al-Tabaqat*, Ibn Sa’d writes: Once Abu Talib went to Dhil Mujāz along with the Messenger of Allah. When the latter felt thirsty, Abu Talib said: “O nephew, you have become thirsty and there is no water.” Then the Holy Prophet (S) came down and struck the ground with his heels. Very soon, water gushed out and the Prophet (S) drank from it.

Historians have written that as Abu Talib arose to support the Prophet (S) and would often drive off the enemies from him, the Quraysh once approached him and said: “Your nephew has insulted our gods, called our great men as insane and reckoned our fathers to be deviated. Therefore, you surrender him to us or else, there shall occur a war between us.” Abu Talib replied: “May your mouths be shut forever. I swear by Allah that I shall never surrender him to you.”

They said: “Amara ibn al-Walid ibn al-Mughira is the most handsome and noble young man among the Quraysh. You may keep him as your son instead of Muhammad and surrender Muhammad to us so that we can kill him. Let us exchange our man with your man.”

Abu Talib replied: “Woe be upon you people. May Allah turn your face dark and gloomy! I swear by Allah that you have indeed spoken the evil. Do you mean that I should hand over my son to you so that you can kill him and will give me your son in exchange so that I take care of him! I swear by Allah that if I do so, I would be but an evil man.”

Thereafter he said: “I would like you to separate the baby-camels from their mother. If the mother camel gets attracted towards the other baby-camels (and not her own ones) then, I shall hand over Muhammad to you”. He then recited a poem.

Then, from the eighth year of his birth until the tenth year of his appointment, which totally amounts to

forty-two years, Abu Talib stood up in support of the Prophet (S) and prevented the enemies from harming him. He spared no effort in taking care of him till the end of his life.’

In the *Nur al-Absar*, the author mentions the date of demise of Abu Talib to be the first of Dhi al-Qa’dah, 8 months and 21 days after the removal of economic sanctions.

In *al-Mawahib al-Ladunniya*, the age of Abu Talib at the time of his demise is mentioned to be eighty-seven.

The author says; It was in the same year that Umm al-Mu’minin, Khadija, passed away and the Holy Prophet (S) named that year as the year of sorrow (*ʿam al-Huzn*).

For knowing more about Abu Talib please refer to historical books like *Sirah ibn Hisham* and *Tarikh al-Tabari* and recent writings, especially the book of *Bughyah al-Talib fi Ahwal Abi Talib* by Zayni Dahlan who is also the author of *Al-Futuh al-Islamiya*. Also refer to the book *Shaykh al-Abtah* written by our esteemed cousin Sayyid Muhammad ‘Ali Sharaf al-din al-‘Iraqi which is the best book written on this subject.

The Mahdi is from the descendant (ﷺ) of Muhammad

Abu Dawud in the fourth volume of his *Sahih* (page 87) narrates from Abd Allah ibn Mas’ud that the Holy Prophet (S) said: “If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, God will prolong the day until He appoints a person from my descendant.”

In the afore-mentioned book on page 81, he narrates from Abu Sa’id al-Khudri that the Holy Prophet (S) said: “The Mahdi is from me.”

The author of *Nur al-Absar* on page 230 narrates from al-Tirmidhi who narrates from Abi Sa’id al-Khudri who in turn narrates from the Holy Prophet (S) one such similar tradition. Thereafter, he writes that al-Tirmidhi has reckoned this tradition to be firm and genuine and that al-Tabarani and others too have narrated this tradition.

Ibn Hajar in his *al-Sawa’iq* on page 98 has written that al-Ru’yani, al-Tabarani and others have brought a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) as such: “The Mahdi is from my progeny.”

In *Is’raf al-Raghibin* (page 149) and *Nur al-Absar* (page 230) the same tradition of the Holy Prophet (S) has been narrated from Ibn Shayrawayh who in turn has narrated from Hudhayfa ibn al-Yamani.⁹

Also, the author of *Nur al-Absar* on page 231 has narrated from Ali ibn Abi Talib as such: ‘I asked the Holy Prophet whether Mahdi would be from us, the descendants (ﷺ, ﷺ) of Muhammad or from others, and he replied: “He is from us”.’¹⁰

The author of *Matalib al-Su’l* writes: ‘I have reviewed the views of the people about the exegesis of (the

word) ‘descendants’ (أهل) and found out that a group believes that by آل is meant his family-members.

Another group says: The آل of the Holy Prophet are those upon whom Zakat (alms-tax) is forbidden and instead Khums (one-fifth levy) is permissible.

Yet another group says: The آل of a person refers to those personalities who follow his religion and adhere to his manners.

Thereafter he says: “These are the three views, which are more well-known than all other views in this regard.

However the reason that the first view is correct is a tradition which Qadhi Husayn ibn Mas’ud al-Baghawi has mentioned in his book *Sharh Sunnah al-Rasul* (Commentary on the Sunnah of the Messenger), which is a collection of all those traditions the authenticity of which are agreed upon, He quotes its reference from ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Layla who said: Ka’b ibn ‘Ajza met me and said: ‘Should I present you with something which I heard from the Messenger of Allah?’ I replied: ‘Yes give it to me.’

He said: ‘I asked the Holy Prophet as to how one should send salutations upon them – the Ahl al-Bayt. The Holy Prophet (S) replied:

اللهم صل على محمد و على آل محمد كما صليت على إبراهيم و آل إبراهيم و
بارك على محمد و على آل محمد كما باركت على إبراهيم و آل إبراهيم انك
حميد مجيد

“O Allah, send salutations upon Muhammad and his descendants just as You send salutations upon Ibrahim and his descendants and send blessings upon Muhammad and his descendants just as You send blessings upon Ibrahim and his descendants. Surely You are All-Praiseworthy and All-Glorious”.

Thereafter he says: ‘Thus the Holy Prophet interpreted his Ahl al-Bayt as his آل (آل). Thus both are similar as far as their meaning is concerned and he (S) interchanged one word for the other in a manner that his آل (آل) are his Ahl al-Bayt and his Ahl al-Bayt are his آل (آل). Therefore, on this basis, آل (آل) and Ahl (اهل) are similar in meaning.

‘The reality of this affair can be discovered from here that the root of آل (آل) had been Ahl (اهل) and the letter *ha*’ (هـ) was changed to *hamza* (ء) for this reason that the letter *ha* (هـ) becomes the diminutive form (*tasghir*)¹¹ and the diminutive form of آل (آل) becomes *uhayl* (أهيل) as per this rule which states that *tasghir* returns back every noun to its original form.

The reason that the second view is correct is a tradition, which the traditionists have brought in their books. Moreover, Imam Muslim ibn Hajjaj, Abu Dawud and al-Nasā’ī are unanimous in the authenticity

of this tradition and each one of them have, in their respective *Sahih* books narrated from ‘Abd al-Muttalib ibn Rabi’a ibn al-Harith as such:

‘I heard the Holy Prophet (S) saying:

“This alms is only uncleanness and it is not permissible for Muhammad and for the descendants (ﷺ, آل) of Muhammad”.

Moreover, they have supported their view by a tradition which Malik ibn Anas has narrated in his *a/-Muwatta* referring to the Holy Prophet (S) as saying:

“Alms are not permissible for descendants (ﷺ, آل) of Muhammad; it is only the dirt and uncleanness of people.” Thus, he made the impermissibility of alms a distinctive feature of his ﷺ (آل). Those upon whom alms are forbidden are the Banu Hashim and the Banu ‘Abd al-Muttalib.

It was asked from Zayd ibn Arqam as to who are the descendants (ﷺ, آل) (descendants) of the Messenger of Allah upon whom alms are forbidden and he replied: ‘The ﷺ (آل) of ‘Ali, the ﷺ (آل) of Ja’far, the ﷺ (آل), of ‘Abbas and the ﷺ (آل) of ‘Aqil.’ This second view is nearer to the first view.

However the reason which the supporters of the third view give is the saying of Exalted Allah:

إِلَّا آلَ لُوطٍ إِنَّا لَمُنَجُّوهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

Except the ﷺ (آل) of Lot; We will most surely deliver them all (15:59).

The exegetes are agreed that the word ﷺ in this verse refers to those who have turned towards him and followed his path.

Thereafter he says: Now, keeping in view all that has been said about the word ﷺ, it becomes apparent that its meaning comprehensively fits them because they are his Ahl al-Bayt. Zakat (alms-tax) is forbidden for them and they have followed his religion and adhered to his path. Thus the application of the word ﷺ (آل) to them is a reality agreed upon by them.

The Mahdi is from the progeny (‘itrah) of the Holy Prophet

Abu Dawud, in the fourth volume of his *Sahih* on page 87 has written a tradition which has been narrated by Umm Salama from the Holy Prophet as such:

“The Mahdi is from my progeny (‘itrah).”

In *‘Is’af al-Raghibin*, page 147, a similar tradition from the Holy Prophet has been narrated by al-Nasa’i, Ibn Majah, al-Bayhaqi and others.¹²

Ibn Hajar in *al-Sawa'iq* on page 98 writes: Abu Na'im has mentioned a tradition from the Holy Prophet as such: "Indeed, God will send a man from my progeny (*'itrah*)." Thereafter he said: "He shall fill the earth with justice."

The same has also come in *'Isa'f al-Raghibin*, page 149.13

In the afore-mentioned book on page 97, the author writes: Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi and Ibn Maja have brought a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) as such: "If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, indeed God will make a man to appear from my progeny (*'itrah*)."

In another tradition the Holy Prophet (S) says: "...from my progeny (Ahl al-Bayt), who shall fill the earth with justice just as it had been filled with oppression."

The same is mentioned in *'Isa'f al-Raghibin* on page 147.14

The author of *Matalib al-Su'l* writes: 'It is said that meaning of *'itrah*, (عترة) is *'ashirah* (عشيرة , family) ; and it is said that *'itrah* are the *dhurriyah* (offspring, ذُرِّيَّة).

Thereafter he says: – "Both the meanings can be found in them because they are his family as well as his offspring. The *'ashirah* (family) are the near kinsmen and they too are as such; and the *dhurriyah* are the daughter's children as indicated by the statement of Allah, the Exalted, about Ibrahim:

وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُودَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسَى وَهَارُونَ ۚ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي
الْمُحْسِنِينَ وَزَكَرِيَّا وَيَحْيَى وَعِيسَى وَإِلْيَاسَ ۚ كُلٌّ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

Thus Allah, the Exalted placed all the afore-mentioned personalities among the offspring (*dhurriyah*) of Ibrahim, and among them is included Prophet 'Isa who is not linked to Ibrahim except through his mother Maryam.

Thereafter he writes: – 'It has been narrated that al-Shu'bi who was one of the Sunni 'ulama' living at the time of Hajjaj ibn Yusuf al-Thaqafi was among the lovers of al-Hasan and al-Husayn such that whenever he would remember them he would say: "Those two are the children and offspring (*dhurriyah*) of the Messenger of Allah." Later some of the people informed Hajjaj about this matter as a result of which he became angry and started to imprecate him.

Once Hajjaj called him in one of his gatherings where the aristocrats and 'ulama' (scholars) of Basra and Kufa and the Quraysh were present. Al-Shu'bi entered and greeted but Hajjaj did not pay any heed and did not reply his greetings which was indeed the right of al-Shu'bi. When he sat down, Hajjaj said: "O Shu'bi, do you know what I have heard about you which indeed proves your foolishness"?

Al-Shu'bi replied: "What is it"? Hajjaj said: "Don't you know that sons of men are those who are allied to

him and kinship is only through fathers. Thus, on what basis do you say that the sons of ‘Ali are the children and offspring of the Holy Prophet! Except for their mother Fatimah, do they have any other connection with the Holy Prophet considering that kinship is not through daughters but rather from the fathers’ side”?

Al-Shu’bi put down his head for some time until Hajjaj exceeded the limits in his disavowal and all who were present in the gathering heard it. Al-Shu’bi continued his silence and the more Hajjaj witnessed his silence the more he rebuked him. Thereafter, al-Shu’bi raised his head and said: “O Amīr, I do not see you but a speaker who is ignorant of the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet and one who turns away from them”. Then the anger of Hajjaj intensified and he addressed al-Shu’bi as such: “Woe be upon you, how dare you speak to me in these words!”

Al-Shu’bi replied: “Yes, those present in your gathering – the reciters (of Qur’an) from Egypt and the bearers of knowledge of the Noble Book – are all aware of what I say. Is it not that when Allah wishes to address His slaves (i.e. servants) He says: – ‘**O Bani (sons of) Adam**’ or ‘**O Bani Isra’il**’; He says of Ibrahim, ‘.... **and from his offspring (dhurriyah)**...’, until He says: ‘**And Yahya and ‘Isa**’. Therefore, O Hajjaj how do you see the relationship of ‘Isa with Adam, Isra’il and Ibrahim? Is it through his father or any of his forefathers? Is it not that he is connected to them only through his mother Maryam! Moreover, as per the genuine narrators, the Holy Prophet (S) with regard to al-Hasan has said: Indeed this son of mine (and he pointed out to al-Hasan) is a *Sayyid* (Chief)”.

When Hajjaj heard such reasoning he lowered his head in shame. Later he showed kindness and politeness towards al-Shu’bi and felt ashamed of those present in the gathering.

Now that the matter has become clear, it is the pure progeny (*‘itrah*) that are the very offspring (*dhurriyah*), the children and the family of the Holy Prophet and in reality, all the meanings are applied to them’.

The Mahdi is from the Ahl al-Bayt (family of the Holy Prophet)

Abu Dawud, in volume four, page 87, of his *Sahih* has quoted a tradition which has been narrated by Ali (a.s.) from the Holy Prophet (S) as such:

“If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, indeed God will make a man from my family (Ahl al-Bayt) to appear”.¹⁵

Al-Tirmidhi, in volume four, page 270 of his *Sahih* has quoted a tradition which has been narrated by Abu Hurayra from the Holy Prophet (S) as follows: –

“If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, God will set the day so long until a person from my family (Ahl al-bayt) shall appear”.

Thereafter he says: ‘This is a good and authentic tradition.’

Moreover, a similar tradition from the Holy Prophet with a slight variation has been narrated by Ibn Hajar (on page 97 of his *al-Sawa'iq*) and Shaykh ʿAbban (on page 148 of *Is'raf al-Raghibin*) from Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi.¹⁶

The magazine “Huda-Islam” No. 2, in the third of its weekly publication No. 25 mentions: Ibn Mʿjah has brought a tradition narrated by Ali (a.s.) from the Holy Prophet (S) as such:

“The Mahdi is from my family (Ahl al-Bayt)”.¹⁷

Shaykh ʿAbban on page 148 of *Is'raf al-Raghibin* and Ibn Hajar on page 99 of *al-Sawa'iq* have written that Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi and Ibn Mʿjah have quoted a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) as such:

“If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, God shall indeed make a person from my progeny (‘itrah) to appear”.

In some other traditions, we find the words ‘my family (*ahl bayti*)’.¹⁸

Ibn Hajar on page 97 of *al-Sawa'iq* and Shaykh ʿAbban on page 148 of *Is'raf al-Raghibin* have written that Ahmad, Abu Dawud, and Tirmidhi have mentioned a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) as follows:

“The world shall not pass”, or perhaps he said: “The world shall not cease to exist until a person from my family comes and rule.”¹⁹

The author of *Nur al-Absar* on page 231 has brought a tradition narrated by Abu Dawud who in turn has narrated from Dharr ibn ‘Abd Allah that the Holy Prophet (S) has said:

“The world shall not pass until a person from my family comes and rules among the Arabs”. Thereafter he said: – “He shall fill the earth with justice.”²⁰

In the afore-mentioned book, the author writes on page 229 as such:

Abu Dawud has narrated from ‘Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) who in turn has narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) who said: “If there remains not more than a day from the life of earth, God will indeed make a person from my family to appear on that day and fill the earth with Justice just as it had been filled with oppression.”²¹

The author of *Matalib al-Su'l* in the chapter of “Asking one’s wish from Ahl al-Bayt” writes: Some have said that Ahl al-Bayt refers to those people who are nearer in relation to a person in ancestry. Some others have said that Ahl al-Bayt are those who are from one womb. Still others have said: Ahl al-Bayt are those who are attached to one by lineage and relationship.

All of these meanings can be found in them because, their lineage returns back to the Holy Prophet’s grandfather, ‘Abd al-Muttalib.

Also they are with him (i.e. the Holy Prophet) from one womb and they are connected to him through lineage as well as relationship (son-in-law).

Thus they are in fact his family (Ahl al-Bayt) and the word **أهل** (**أهل**) and Ahl al-Bayt are one and the same whether they differ in meaning or not. Thus the meanings of these two terms are fixed for them.

Muslim in his *Sahih* narrates from Zaid ibn Hassān who said: ‘I went with Huṣayn ibn Sabra and ‘Umar ibn Muslim to visit Zayd ibn Arqam. When we sat down, Huṣayn began to speak and said: “O Zayd, verily, now that you have numerous good actions in your record, have seen the Holy Prophet, have heard traditions from him, have fought beside him and prayed behind him, so narrate for us what you have heard from the Messenger of Allah (S)”.

Zaid replied: “O brother, surely I have turned old and my memory has become worn out. As a result, a part of what I have acquired from the Holy Prophet has been forgotten by me. So accept whatever I narrate to you and do not bother me about what I do not narrate to you.”

Thereafter he said: “Once the Holy Prophet (S) stood near a pond called Khumm situated between Mecca and Medina and delivered a sermon. After praising and extolling God Almighty and then exhorting the people, he said:

‘O people, I am a human being and it seems that my Lord’s emissary (i.e. Izra’**عليه**) is going to come and take away my soul. I am leaving amongst you, two precious things. The first of them is the Book of Allah wherein you will find guidance and light. So take hold of the Book of Allah’. In this regard, he incited and exhorted the people toward the Book of Allah. Thereafter he said: ‘The other is my Ahl al-Bayt. I remind you of Allah with regards to my Ahl al-Bayt. I remind you of Allah about my Ahl al-Bayt’.

Then Huṣayn asked Zayd ibn Arqam: “O Zayd, who are his Ahl al-Bayt? Are his wives his Ahl al-Bayt”? He replied: “No, his Ahl al-Bayt are those upon whom alms is forbidden after him”.²²

The Mahdi is from the kinsfolk (dhawi al-qurba)

When it is proved that Mahdi (a.s.) is from the family (**أهل**) of the Holy Prophet (S), from his pure progeny (*‘itrah*) and from his Ahl al-Bayt, and from the offspring of Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn then it is automatically proved that he is from kinsfolk (*dhawi al-qurba* – ذوي القربى) whose friendship has been made obligatory upon all mankind.

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* narrating from al-Bukhari and Muslim writes on page 106 of his book: Ibn ‘Abbas was asked about this verse (of *al-qurba*) and to whom it referred. Sa’id ibn Jubayr said: “They are the near ones of the progeny (**أهل**) of Muhammad (S)”.

The author of *Matalib al-Su’l* narrates from the *tafsir* of Imam Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Ahmad al-Wahidi (the chain of transmission which ends with Ibn ‘Abbas): When the verse:

قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ

...Say: I do not ask of you any reward for it but love for my near relatives... (42:23)

was revealed, it was asked: ‘O Messenger of Allah! Who are these people whom Allah has commanded us to love? The Holy Prophet (S) replied: “Ali, Fatimah and their children.”

Ibn Hajar in his *al-Sawa’iq* (page 101) and al-Qunduzi in *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* (page 106) have quoted a tradition similar to the aforesaid tradition, narrating from the *Mu’jam al-Kabir* of al-Tabarani, *Tafsir* of Ibn Abi Hatim, *al-Manaqib* of Hakim, *al-Wasā’iq* of al-Wahidi, *Hilyah al-Awliya’* of Abu Na’im, *Tafsir* of al-Tha’labi and the *Fara’id al-Simtayn* of al-Hamawayni.

Ibn Hajar in *al-Sa’wa’iq* (page 101) narrates from Zayn al-‘Abidin at the time when he was taken as captive after his father al-Husayn was killed, and on the way to Syria, some of the foul-mouthed people of al-Shām said: “All praise be to Allah for having caused the killing of you all, annihilating you and severing the root of sedition”.

He replied: Haven’t you read (the Book) where Allah says:

قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ ۚ

...Say: I do not ask of you any reward for it but love for my near relatives....

They said: “Do they (*dhawi al-qurba*) refer to you?” He replied: “Yes.”

The author of *Matalib al-Su’l* writes: ‘Know that those in the verse who have been asked to be loved are indeed the *dhawi al-qurba*. Therefore anyone who is bestowed with the attribute of *qurba* deserves love as per specification of the afore-mentioned verse because if there is a decree for any particular case and at any other occasion, that case stipulates that the same decree too will be applicable and with regards to love towards those who have been mentioned in the verse even though they themselves are associates to each other (from the view-point of their similarity in a case which is expedient for love) yet, love possesses different levels. Therefore, anyone who is nearer to the Holy Prophet (S), that case will become more firm in him.

‘The consensus of *‘ulama* is firm in this regard that the matter of the degree of (closeness) in relationship through birth does indeed carry priority over all other degrees such that in their writings and compositions they have specified that:

‘If a person endows or makes a will to the person most nearest to Zayd and if Zayd does not have a

father, the most preferable person with regards to the endowment and will are his children as compared to his other near ones. If he has a father, then there exists a difference as to whether the children have priority over father or are equal to him. Through this reasoning it becomes clear and obvious that Fatimah possesses the highest level in the matter of love (*mawaddah*) and being the *qurba* (near relative).

‘When it becomes apparent to what has been written about the pleasing expressions and attractive statements about Fatimah (a.s.), (especially her purity) and the fact that the lofty virtues and elevated position which the Imams behold is through her means, then we are helpless in being loyal to her right in such affairs just as we are bound to do so in the subsequent chapters about the circumstances of Imam and the days of their birth and death.’

The Mahdi is from the offspring of the Holy Prophet (al-dhurriyah)

It is narrated in *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* on page 234 from *Dhakha’ir al-Uqba* from the author of *al-Firdaws* who narrates from Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Ansari who said:

The Holy Prophet (S) said: “Indeed Allah, the Exalted placed the offspring (*dhurriyah*) of every Prophet in their loins and placed my offspring in the loins of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib”.

The author says: The explicitness of this valuable tradition is that the children of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.) from Fatimah (a.s.) are indeed the offspring of the Holy Prophet (S) and there is no difference between the children of al-Hasan and al-Husayn. Verily, as Mahdi, the Awaited one, is from this particular house and this pure offspring, he is therefore counted to be from the offspring of Muhammad (S) (as per research and previous explanation of the meaning of offspring).

The author of *Tuhuf al-Uqul* has brought a lengthy tradition in this regard from Musa ibn Ja’far’s conversation with Harun al-Rashid and we shall produce here only that portion which serves our discussion. He writes:

He (Imam Musa ibn Ja’far) went to Harun when the latter had intended to seize the Imam for certain false matters that people had ascribed to him. He (Harun) took out a lengthy scroll which contained accusations about his Shi’ah and read it out.

The Imam said: “O Amir al-Mu’minin, we are a family which have been afflicted with such accusations and Allah is All-Forgiving and the One Who veils sins. He refrains from lifting the veil from the deeds of His servants except when He will take their account and that will be the Day when wealth and children shall be of no avail and only the one who comes in the presence of Allah with a pure heart shall benefit”.

Thereafter he said: “My father narrated (for me) from his father from ‘Ali who in turn narrated from the

Holy Prophet (S) as such: ‘Whenever the womb touches the womb there occurs some movement and excitement and then it calms down’. If Amir al-Mu’minin (i.e. Harun) deems it advisable to maintain relationship and shake hands with me, he can do so”.

Then Harun came down from his throne and stretched out his right hand to the Imam who took hold of his hand. The he (Harun) embraced him and made him sit beside him and said:

“I bear witness that you are truthful and your father and grandfather too were truthful. When you entered I was the most severe of people in hatred and anger towards you because of what had reached me about you. Since you spoke to me in the manner which you did and so shook hands with me, the feeling of hatred and anger has disappeared from my heart and I have become satisfied with you”.

Thereafter, he felt silent for some moment and then said: “I wish to ask you something about ‘Abbas and ‘Ali. On what basis was ‘Ali more worthy of inheritance (from the Holy Prophet) than ‘Abbas, the uncle of the Holy Prophet”?

(Imam) Musa replied: “Excuse me from this matter.” He said: “I swear by Allah that I shall not excuse you until you answer me.”

He (the Imam) replied: “if you do not excuse me then grant me safety.” He said: “I guarantee your safety.”

He (the Imam) said: “Surely, the Holy Prophet did not nominate as heir one who was able to migrate but did not migrate. Indeed, ‘Abbas your father was amongst those who believed but did not migrate and Ali believed and migrated too. Allah says:

...and those who believed and did not migrate, not yours is their guardianship until they migrate.. (8:72)

Harun turned pale and then said: “On what basis do you relate yourself to the Holy Prophet and not ‘Ali notwithstanding the fact that ‘Ali was your father and the Holy Prophet your grandfather”?

He (the Imam) replied: “Surely Allah traced the ancestry of ‘Isa ibn Maryam to His friend (*khalil*) Ibrahim through his mother Maryam who was a virgin, untouched by evil. As Allah says:

وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُودَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسَى وَهَارُونَ ﴿٩﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي
الْمُحْسِنِينَ * وَزَكَرِيَّا وَيَحْيَى وَعِيسَى وَإِلْيَاسَ ﴿٩﴾ كُلٌّ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

“..and of his descendants, Dawud and Sulayman and Ayyub and Yusuf and Harun; and thus do We reward those who do good (to others). And Zakariya and Yahya and ‘Isa and Ilyas; every one was of the good” (6:84–85)

Thus His tracing the ancestry of ‘Isa to Ibrahim only through his mother Mary, just as He traced the ancestry of Sulayman, Ayyub, Yusuf, Musa and Harun through their fathers and mothers is a merit for ‘Isa and lofty station for his mother herself. This has been mentioned by Him, the Exalted, in the story of Maryam in the holy Quran:

يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفَاكِ عَلَى نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ

“...O Maryam! Surely Allah has chosen you and purified you and He has chosen you above the women of the world” (3:42) through the Messiah.

In the same manner, Allah chose Fatimah and purified her and made her superior to all the women of the world through al-Hasan and al-Husayn, the two Chiefs of the youth of Paradise”.

The Mahdi is from the progeny of ‘Ali

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* on page 494 narrates from *al-Manaqib* of Khwarizmi (the chain of transmission which ends in Thabit ibn Dinar) who narrates from Sa’id ibn Jubayr and he from Ibn ‘Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them) who said: ‘The Messenger of Allah (S) said: “Indeed ‘Ali is the Imam of my ‘Ummah’ (nation) after me and it is from his children that the ‘*Qa’im*’ will come and when he emerges, he shall fill the earth with justice and equity just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression.”

The author of *‘Iqd al-Durar* in the first chapter, narrates from *Sunan* of Abu Dawud, *al-Jāmi’* of al-Tirmidhi and the *Sunan* of Nisā’i from Ibn Isha: ‘Ali (may Allah’s blessings be upon him) looked at his son, al-Husayn and said: “Surely my son is a *Sayyid* (chief) just as the Holy Prophet named him. Very soon there shall come from his progeny a man whose name will be the same as your Prophet’s name. He will resemble him in character but will not resemble him in appearance. He shall fill the earth with justice”.²³

In the second chapter of the afore-mentioned book, the author narrates from the book of *al-Ba’th wa al-nushur* of al-Bayhaqi a similar tradition up to ‘Ali’s statement: “...but will not resemble him in creation.”

Moreover, in the second chapter of the afore-mentioned book, the author writes: Abu Wa’il says: ‘Ali looked at al-Husayn and then said: “Indeed this son of mine is a *Sayyid* (chief) just as the Messenger of Allah (S) named him. Very soon a person, whose name shall be the same as your Prophet’s name will come from his progeny. He shall emerge at the time when people will be negligent and unaware. A time when the truth will be dead and oppression will be in force. The inhabitants of the heavens and earth will rejoice at his emergence. He will have a broad forehead, protracted nose, broad stomach, broad thighs, a spot on his right cheek and his front teeth separated from each other. He shall fill the earth with justice

just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression”.²⁴

The Mahdi is from the progeny of Fatimah

Abu Dawud in the fourth volume of his *Sahih*, page 87, writes: Umm Salama says: ‘I heard the Holy Prophet (S) saying: “The Mahdi is from my progeny (*itrati*); from the children of Fatimah”. ²⁵

Ibn Hajar in his *al-Sawa’iq*, page 97, and Shaykh Saban in *‘Is’af al-Raghibin*, page 148, have mentioned the same tradition from Muslim, Abu Dawud, al-Nisa’i, Ibn M^ujah and al-Bayhaqi.

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* on page 430 narrates from *Mishkat al-Masabih* from Abu Dawud from Umm Salama who said: ‘I heard the Holy Prophet (S) saying: “The Mahdi is from my progeny (*itrati*), from the children of Fatimah”’.

Again, the same author on page 223 of his afore-said book narrates from ‘Ali ibn Hilal who narrates from his father who said: ‘I was honored by visiting the Holy Prophet (S) at the time when he was feeling unwell and Fatimah was crying besides him. Then the Holy Prophet (S) said: “O my daughter, what causes you to cry”? She replied: “I fear that after you, harm shall befall me”’.

The Holy Prophet (S) replied: “O my beloved one, Allah looked down at the inhabitants of the earth and chose from them your father and then bestowed upon him the messengership. Thereafter, He looked down and chose from them your husband (‘Ali) and revealed to me that I should give your hand in marriage to him. O Fatimah, Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, has bestowed seven qualities on us, the Ahl al-Bayt, that He has not bestowed on those before us nor will He bestow on those after us.

I am the last of the Prophets and the most honorable of them before Allah, the Exalted, and your father; and my *wasī* (legatee) is the best of the legatees and the most beloved amongst them before Allah, and your husband. Our martyr Hamza is the best of martyrs and the most loved amongst them before Allah, and he is the uncle of your father as well as your husband, From among us is the one who possesses two wings with which he flies in Paradise along with the angels to whichever place he wishes, and he is your father’s cousin and your husband’s brother.

From us are the two *sibt* (offspring) of this Ummah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, the two chiefs of the youth of Paradise, and they are your sons. I swear by Him Who sent me with the truth as a Prophet, the Mahdi is from your sons. He shall fill the earth with justice just as it had been filled with oppression.”

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* says that Hafiz Abu al-Al^u’ al-Hamdani quoted this tradition in the “Forty traditions” (which has been written about Mahdi).

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* on page 434 narrates from *al-Awsat* of al-Tabarani who narrates from Abaya ibn Raba’i who in turn narrates from Abu Ayyub al-Ansari who said:

The Holy Prophet (S) told Fatimah (may Allah's peace be upon her):

“From us is the best of the Prophets and he is your father. From us is the best of the *awsiya*’ (legatees) and he is your husband. From us is the best of the martyrs and he is Hamza, your father’s uncle. From us is the one who possesses two wings with which he flies to whichever place he wishes in Paradise and he is your father’s cousin, Ja’far. From us are the two *sibt* (offspring) of this Ummah, the two chiefs of the youth of Paradise, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and they are your two sons. Moreover, Mahdi is from us and he shall be from your children”.

In the afore-mentioned book, the author on page 490 narrates from the book *Fadhḥ al-Sahabah* of Abu al-Muzaffar al-Sam’ani who in turn narrates from Abu Sa’id al-Khudri a tradition almost similar to the one which was just mentioned.

The author says: Traditions in this regard (which you came across in the preface of this book) are *mustafidhah* traditions. Rather they are widely transmitted traditions and what we have written shall be adequate.²⁶

The Mahdi is from the progeny of al-Sibtayn (i.e. al-Hasan and al-Husayn)

The author of *‘Iqd al-Durar* in the third chapter of section No.3 narrates from the book *Kitab al-fitan* of al-Hafiz Abu ‘Abd Allah Na’im ibn Hammad who in turn narrates from ‘Ali ibn ‘Ali al-Hilali who narrates from his father:

I received the honor of visiting the Messenger of Allah (S) at the time when his soul was about to depart and Fatimah was crying beside him. He recited the afore-said lengthy tradition and in the end of it he said: “O Fatimah, I swear by the One Who rightly appointed me that the Mahdi of this Ummah will be from those two (i.e. al-Hasan and al-Husayn).

“The world will become such that chaos and disturbances will be intensified, all paths (of solution) will be severed and people will fiercely fall upon one another such that neither the elders will show mercy upon the young nor the children will honor the old. When this happens, Allah will appoint someone (i.e. the Mahdi) who shall conquer the fortresses of misguidance and open out the sheathed hearts (a metaphoric remarks that the Mahdi will dominate over the false religions and tame the deviated hearts towards Islam). Indeed he shall rise up at the end of time just as I rose up at my time. He shall fill the earth with justice just as it had been filled with oppression”.

The author says: This tradition has been narrated by al-Kanji in his book *Al-Bayan*, from the book *Na’ṭ al-Mahdi* of Abu Na’im al-Isbahani and *Mu’jam al-Kabir* of Abu al-Qasim al-Tabarani. Most of the experts of tradition too have narrated this tradition in their respective books with slight differences in wordings. In some of them, it is said: “..the Mahdi of this Ummah will be from us..” instead of “..from those two”.²⁷

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* on page 432 writes: 'The author of *Jawahir al-'Aqdayn* says; 'As per research, the blessings of the Holy Prophet's *du'a* (invocation) at the time of marriage of Ali and Fatimah (peace be upon them) became apparent in the progeny of al-Hasan and al-Husayn, as from their offspring are those who have passed away and those who are still to come. If there will not come anyone in the future except the Mahdi, it will be sufficient for the invocation of the Holy Prophet to have come into effect.

In this regard, the author says: 'Just as we saw in the tradition of 'Ali ibn Hilal, the Prophet's (S) taking an oath, in spite of his being truthful and trustworthy, was only to emphasize the matter. From amongst the seven-fold characteristics, he has set apart the Mahdi and swore an oath for him only, showing the importance of this matter.

The Mahdi (a.s.) is from the sons of al-Hasan and al-Husayn as Imam al-Baqir's mother (i.e. Fatemah), the wife of Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Zayn al-'Abidin (a.s.), was the daughter of Imam Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-Mujtaba (a.s.). About this noble lady, her son Imam al-Baqir has said that she was a righteous woman (*siddiqah*).

Thus Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Baqir is from the sons of al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and he and his honorable sons are amongst those who have attained this honor. The Mahdi, the Awaited one, too is from this blessed family tree because, he is Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Musa ibn Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Baqir ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib Amir al-Mu'minin, peace be upon them all.

The Mahdi is from the offspring of al-Husayn

In the first chapter of *'Iqd al-Durar* its author narrates from Hafiz Abu Na'im from his book *Sifah al-Mahdi* who narrates from Hudhayfa ibn al-Yaman who said: 'The Messenger of Allah (S) delivered a sermon and disclosed for us all that was sure to take place till the Day of Judgment. Thereafter he said:

"If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, God Almighty will prolong the day until a person from my progeny who carries the same name as me shall appear". Then Salman stood up and said: "O Messenger of Allah, from which of your progeny shall he come"? The Holy Prophet (S) replied: "He shall be from this son (and he put his hand on al-Husayn's head) of mine".

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* on page 49 says: In the commentary on *Nahj al-Balagha* (most probably he is referring to commentary of Ibn Abi al-Hadid) Qadhi al-Qudhāt narrates from Kafi al-Kufah, Abu al-Qasim Isma'il ibn 'Abbad, a tradition where the chain of transmission is linked to 'Ali (a.s.) who mentioned the Mahdi and then said:

"Verily he is from the children of al-Husayn". 28

The author says: Traditions in this regard are *mustafidhah* traditions. Rather, the consensus amongst us

the Shi'a Imamiyah is the same and what is well-known among the scholars of our brethren Sunnis too is the same. However we find some rare traditions which are opposite to this meaning.

Among them, Abu Dawud in his *Sahih* (vol. 4, pg. 89) narrates from Abu Ishaq who said:

'Ali (may Allah's peace and blessing be upon him) looked at al-Hasan and said: "Surely my son is a *sayyid* (chief) just as the Holy Prophet called him. Soon a person will emerge from his progeny. His name shall be the same as your Prophet's name. He will resemble him in character but will not resemble him in appearance. He shall fill the earth with justice."

Some of Sunni '*ulama*' have reckoned the Mahdi to be from the children of Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-Mujtaba (a.s.)

Amongst them, Ibn Hajar in his *al-Sawa'iq* on page 99 writes: "Abu Dawud in his *Sunan* has narrated a tradition that the Mahdi is from the children of al-Hasan and its secret lies in this that al-Hasan waived his Caliphate for the sake of Allah and his affection for his people. Thus Allah placed the *Qa'im* (who shall emerge at the time of dire straits) amongst his children so that he fills the earth with justice. The traditions which say that he is from the children of al-Husayn are weak."

The author says: 'As per the prescribed rules in *usul al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence) relying on the afore-said tradition is not correct for the following reasons:

Firstly, there exists a discrepancy in the narration of Abu Dawud as the author of '*lqd al-Durar* narrates from the *Sunan* of Abu Dawud that 'Ali looked towards al-Husayn.

Secondly, as mentioned in '*lqd al-Durar*, a group traditionists, such as al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasa'i and al-Bayhaqi have narrated the same tradition in its exact form except that 'Ali looked at al-Husayn.

Thirdly, there is the possibility of an error because the words al-Hasan and al-Husayn are very similar in writing, particularly in the Kufic script.

Fourth, the tradition is contrary to what is well-known among the Sunni '*ulama*'.

Fifth, the said tradition contradicts most of the other traditions, which are more authentic in their chain of transmission and more evident in expression. Some of these traditions have already been mentioned and Allah – willing, the rest too will be mentioned later on.

And sixth, there is a possibility that this tradition is a fabricated one for this reason that they wanted to get near to Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah known as Nafs al-Zakiyah. Thus they resorted to fabrication merely to please him.

The Mahdi is from the ninth descendant of al-Husayn

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* on page 492 narrates from *al-Manaqib* of Muwaffaq ibn Ahmad al-

Khwarizmi who narrates from Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilali who narrates from Salman al-Farsi who said: 'I got the honor of visiting the Messenger of Allah (S). What I saw was al-Husayn ibn 'Ali sitting on his lap and the Holy Prophet kissing his eyes and his lips and saying:

"You are a chief (*sayyid*), son of a chief and brother of a chief. You are an Imam, son of an Imam and brother of an Imam. You are a divine proof (*hujjah*), son of a divine proof and brother of a divine proof. You are the father of nine divine proofs, the ninth of them being the *Qa'im*".

The same too can be seen in *'Iqd al-Durar*.

In the afore-mentioned book on page 258, the author narrates from the tenth chapter of *Mawaddat al-Qurba* as such:

It has come from Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilali that Salman al-Farsi said: When I went to meet the Holy Prophet (S) I saw al-Husayn sitting on his lap. The Prophet (S) was kissing his eyes and his lips and saying: "You are a chief (*sayyid*) and the son of a chief. You are an Imam and the son of an Imam. You are a divine proof and the son of a divine proof and the father of nine Divine Proofs, the ninth of them shall be the *Qa'im*".

There are numerous other traditions besides these, and Allah willing, we shall soon narrate them.

The author says: It does not seem likely that anyone amongst the Muslims is ignorant of these nine personalities and does not know them by name. However, there is no harm in mentioning their names for blessing and remembrance. The first of them is Abu al-Hasan Zayn al-'Abidin, the second of them, his son Abu Ja'far Muhammad al-Baqir, the third, his son Abu 'Abd Allah Ja'far al-Sadiq, the fourth, his son Abu al-Hasan Musa al-Kazim, the fifth, his son Abu al-Hasan 'Ali al-Ridha, the sixth, his son Abu Ja'far Muhammad al-Jawad, the seventh, his son Abu al-Hasan 'Ali al-Hadi, the eighth, his son Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-'Askari, and the ninth, his son Abu al-Qasim Muhammad al-Mahdi who is the ninth of them and their *Qa'im*.

The Mahdi is from the offspring of al-Sadiq

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* on page 499 has narrated from the *Arba'in* of Hafiz Abu Na'im al-Isbahani (which is a collection of forty traditions about Mahdi). Amongst them is a tradition, which he has narrated from the lexicographer better known as Ibn Khashsbab.

He said: Abu al-Qasim al-Tahir ibn Harun ibn Musa al-Kazim narrated for me a tradition from his father from his grandfather who said: My master, Ja'far ibn Muhammad said: "The pious successor shall be from my progeny and he is the Mahdi. His name is Muhammad and his agnomen is Abu al-Qasim. He shall emerge at the end of time. His mother is named as Narjis and above his head is a cloud, which shall provide a shadow for him from the sun. It shall accompany him wherever he goes and will call out in an eloquent voice: This is the Mahdi, so follow him."

Besides this, there are some other traditions which Allah willing we shall acquaint you with very soon.

Ibn Hajar in *al-Sawa'iq*, page 120, says: 'Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Baqir left behind six sons, the most learned and perfect amongst whom was Ja'far al-Sadiq. It was for this reason that he was made as his father's successor and legatee and people have narrated so much knowledge from him that his fame (of excellence) has spread far and wide.

Great Sunni scholars like Yahya ibn Sa'id, Ibn Jurayh, Malik, Sufyanin, Abu Hanifa, Shu'ba and Ayyub al-Bakhtiyani have narrated traditions from him...'

In the commentary of the verse:

إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ

Surely We have given you Kawthar (108:1)

Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi says: 'Among the meanings of *Kawthar* (river in Paradise) one meaning can be that of 'offspring' because, this Surah was revealed in refutation of those who were rebuking the Holy Prophet (S) for not having a son. Thus it means that Allah will give him descendants who will continue through the ages. See for yourself then how many an offspring of the Holy Prophet have been killed and yet the world is full of them whereas not even one has remained from Bani Umayya. Once again, you may see for yourself how many from his Ahl al-Bayt are great scholars, like al-Baqir, al-Sadiq, al-Kazim, al-Ridha (a.s.), Nafs al-Zakiyah and their likes'.

The Mahdi is from the offspring of al-Ridha

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* on page 448 narrates from the book *Fara'id al-Simayn* from al-Hasan ibn Khalid: 'Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha (peace be upon him) said: "The one who does not have *wara'* (ورع (i.e. piety), does not have faith and the most honorable of you before Allah is the one who is the most pious". Thereafter he said: "Verily the fourth from my descendant is the son of the princess of slave-maids who shall cleanse the earth from every cruelty and oppression".

In the afore-mentioned book on page 489, the author narrates from al-Hasan ibn Khalid who said: 'Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha (a.s.) said: "The appointed time (in Qur'an) refers to the day of emergence of our *Qa'im*". Then it was asked from the Imam as to who is the *Qa'im* and he replied: "He is the fourth of my descendants, the son of the princess of slave-maids who shall purify the earth from every cruelty and oppression".

Once again, in the same book on page 454 the author narrates from *Fara'id al-Simayn* as such:

Ahmad ibn Ziyad has narrated from Di'bal al-Khuza'i who said: 'I read out my elegy which began with:

مدارس آيات خلت من تلاوة

before my master, Imam al-Ridha (a.s.) until I reached to this part of the poem:29

خروج الامام لا محالة واقع يقوم على اسم الله بالبركات

يميز فينا كل حق و باطل و يجزي على النعماء و النقمات

Al-Ridha cried bitterly and then said: "O Di'bal, the Holy Spirit has spoken through your tongue. Do you know who this Imam is"?

I replied: "No, I do not know him. But, I have heard that an Imam shall emerge from your household, one who shall fill the earth with equity and justice".

He said: "The Imam after me shall be my son Muhammad and after Muhammad will be his son 'Ali and after 'Ali will be his son al-Hasan and after al-Hasan will be his son Hujjat al-Qa'im and he is the Awaited one".30

Ibn Hajar in his *Sawa'iq*, page 122, says:

'When Musa ibn Ja'far passed away, he left behind thirty-seven sons and daughters. Amongst them was Ali al-Ridha who was more renowned in name and more manifest in merit than the others. For this reason Ma'mun gave him a place in his heart and gave his daughter's hand in marriage to him. He also placed him as his partner in his kingdom and entrusted the affairs of Caliphate to him.

'In 201 A.H. he wrote by his own hand the "testament of guardianship" for the Imam i.e. that 'Ali al-Ridha was the heir apparent; and he made a large number of people witness it. However the Imam passed away from this world before him as a result of which Ma'mun became very depressed and sad. Before dying, the Imam had foretold that he would die because of the poisonous effect of grapes and pomegranates and that Ma'mun would wish to bury him near his father, Rashid's grave, but would not succeed. Thus, all that the Imam had foretold did occur.

'Once the Imam told a person "O 'Abd Allah! Be satisfied with what Allah wishes and be prepared for that which is inevitable for you to occur". Then on the third day 'Abd Allah died. This incident has been

narrated by Hakim.

‘Hakim has also narrated from Muhammad ibn ‘Isa who narrates from Abu Habib who said: I saw in my dreams that I had visited the Holy Prophet and greeted him. At that very moment, I saw a tray of Sayhani dates next to him and he offered eighteen of those dates to me. Then I woke up and interpreted my dream in this manner that I would live for another eighteen days. However, after the twentieth day, Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali al-Ridha arrived from Medina and came to the same mosque where I had seen the Holy Prophet in my dream. People hastened towards him in order to offer their greetings.

‘I too went close to him and saw him sitting in the very place which the Holy Prophet had sat and besides him was a tray of Sayhani dates, the same tray of dates which I had seen in my dream. Later, I greeted him and he called me close to himself and offered me a handful of those dates. When I counted them, I realized that they were exactly the same number of dates the Holy Prophet had offered me in my dream. I asked for more but he said: “If the Holy Prophet had offered you more than this amount, I too would offer you more”.

‘When the Imam arrived in Nishabur he was mounted on a mule and on top of the mule-litter was a cover, through which nothing was visible. Then two persons from the traditionists, i.e. Abu Zar’a al-Rāzi and Muhammad ibn Aslam al-Tusi went in his presence along with a large number of scholars. They asked him to disclose his blessed face and narrate for them traditions, which he had received from his forefathers. Then, as per his commands the mule-litter came to a standstill and his slaves drew back the cover.

‘When the people’s eyes fell on his blessed face they began to rejoice. A group was jubilating while another group was crying out of excessive happiness. Yet others threw themselves on the ground and those who were near were seen kissing the hooves of his mule. Then the scholars cried out: “O people, be quiet and listen to what the Imam says.” The people prepared themselves to listen and the two traditionists wrote down what he said.

‘The Imam said: “My father Musa al-Kazim narrated to me from his father Ja’far al-Sadiq, who narrated from his father Muhammad al-Baqir, who narrated from his father Zayn al-‘Abidin, who narrated from his father al-Husayn, who narrated from his father ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) who said:

My dear and beloved Messenger of Allah (S) said:

Jibra’il (Gabriel) related to me: I heard the Exalted Lord saying: The words *la ilaha illa’llah* (لا اله الا الله) is My castle. So anyone who recites it shall enter My fortress and the one who enters My fortress will be safe from My chastisement”.

Thereafter, he lowered the cover on the mule-litter and moved ahead.

‘About twenty thousand writers have narrated this tradition.

‘According to another report, the tradition narrated by the Imam was: “Faith (*iman*) is recognition by the heart, confession by the tongue and action by the limbs”.

Perhaps he said both of them.

‘Ahmad says: “If this chain of transmitters is read over an insane person he shall be cured of his madness.”’

The Mahdi is from the offspring of al-Hasan al-Askari

When you follow what we have said and understand the traditions that we have quoted, there should not be any reason for you to doubt its conclusion (i.e. Mahdi, the Awaited one is the very son of Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-Askari). However to elucidate the conclusion, we have written them under the above title in addition to the clear statements made by of some great scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah.

We say: The afore-mentioned traditions which indicated that the Mahdi is the ninth descendant of al-Husayn and fourth descendant of Abu al-Hasan al-Ridha proves this matter (i.e. that he is the son of al-Hasan al-Askari) especially the tradition which we narrated from *Fara'id al-Simayn* where Imam al-Ridha tells Di'bal al-Khuza'i:

“Indeed the Imam after me will be my son Muhammad al-Jawad al-Taqi, and the Imam after him will be his son, ‘Ali al-Hadi al-Naqi and the Imam after him will be his son al-Hasan al-Askari and the Imam after him will be his son Muhammad al-Hujjah al-Mahdi al-Muntadhar.”

Moreover, that which we shall narrate later on (the fact that Mahdi, the Awaited one, is the twelfth from the Caliphs, Imams, legatees and divine proofs) also proves this matter.

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* on page 491 has narrated from the *Arba'in* of Hafiz Abu Na'im who in turn has narrated from Ibn Khashshab who said:

Sadaqa ibn Musa narrated to me from his father who narrated from ‘Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha who said: “The virtuous successor shall be from children of al-Hasan ibn ‘Ali al-Askari. He is the Mahdi, the master of time.’

The author of *Is'af al-Raghibin* on page 157 has narrated from the book *Al-Yawaqit wa al-Jawahir* of Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha'rani who in turn has narrated from the book of *Al-Futuh al-Makkiyah* as follows: –

‘Know that the emergence of Mahdi is inevitable. However he shall not emerge until the earth has been filled with cruelty and oppression. Then he shall fill it with equity and justice. He shall be from the progeny of the Holy Prophet (S) and from the descendants of Fatimah (peace be upon them).

‘His forefather is al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib and his father is al-Hasan al-Askari, the son of Imam ‘Ali al-Naqi, the son of Imam Muhammad al-Taqi, the son of Imam ‘Ali al-Ridha, the son of Imam Musa

al-Kazim, the son of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, the son of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, the son of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, the son of Imam al-Husayn, the son of Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon them all).

'His name is the same as the Holy Prophet's name and the Muslims will give allegiance to him between the '*Rukn*' and '*Maqam*' (station of Ibrahim)'.

The author says: Many of our (Shi'a) scholars as well as the scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah have narrated these invaluable and precious sentences or expressions from the book of *Al-Yawaqit wa al-Jawahir* where its author in turn has narrated from the book of *Al-Futuh al-Makkiyah*. However in the recent edition of that book I have not seen the above expressions. So please ponder (a metaphoric remark that perhaps the afore-mentioned tradition has been dropped).

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* on page 451 has narrated from the book *Fasl al-Khitab*:

"Among the Imams of the pure Ahl al-Bayt is Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-'Askari...." until he says: "And he did not leave any son except Abu al-Qasim Muhammad al-Muntadhar who is known by the titles of al-Qa'im, al-Hujjah, al-Mahdi, Sahib al-Zaman, and Khutim al-A'immah al-Ithna 'Ashar among the Imamiyah".

The author says: The words "among the Imamiyah" is related to the last title of the Imam, 'Khutim al-A'immah al-Ithna 'Ashar' (and does not refer to the other afore-mentioned titles).

The same scholar in the afore-said book, on page 470 says: Sayyid Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha'rani in the chapter 65 of his book *Al-Yawaqit wa al-Jawahir* writes:

"The Mahdi is the son of Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari."

Once again, the same scholar on page 471 of his book narrates from *Matalib al-Su'l* and *al-Durr al-Munadhdham* of Kamal al-din ibn Talha who has written:

"The Mahdi is the son of Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-'Askari."

Also, in the same book on page 471 the author narrates from the last chapter of the book of *Al-Bayan fi Akhbar Sahib al-Zaman*, whose author al-Ganji says: "Surely the Mahdi is the son of al-Hasan al-'Askari."

In the same book, the author on page 471 writes:

The author of *Al-Fusul al-Muhimma fi Ma'rifah al-A'immah* says: "Verily the promised Mahdi is the son of Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-'Askari, the son of 'Ali al-Naqi (may Allah be pleased with them)".

The author of *al-Durar al-Musawiya* writes: 'Those whom I found to be having the same belief as we Shi'a in the matter of the Mahdi are Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Ganji in *Al-Bayan*', Muhammad ibn Talha al-Shafi'i in *Matalib al-Su'l*, Sibte ibn al-Jawzi in *Tadhkirat Khuwas al-A'immah* and al-Sha'rani in *Al-*

Yawaqit wa al-Jawahir who have said:

‘The Mahdi is the son of Imam al-Hasan al-‘Askari. He was born in the night of the fifteenth of Sha’ban 255 A.H and is still living until he and ‘Isa ibn Maryam meet each other’.

The same matter has also come in *al-Yawaqit* and *al-Tabaqat* where its authors have narrated from Shaykh Hasan al-‘Araqi, the one who has met the Mahdi as per the detailed account which has come in the book of *al-Tabaqat* in the biography of the afore-said Shaykh Hasan. This account is agreed to by the Shi’a as well and by Shaykh Muhyi al-Din (in his book of *al-Futuhāt*, chapter 366).

Al-Sha’rani has reported it from him in *Lawaqih al-Anwār al-Qudsiya* (which is a selection from *al-Futuhāt al-Makkiyah*), and Ibn ‘Abban al-Misri in *Is’af al-Raghibin* and his exact words are reported in *Al-Yawaqit* which are both Egyptian prints; Shaykh Salah al-Din al-Safadi has reported it in *Sharh al-D‘īrah* as has been mentioned by al-Qunduzi al-Hanafi in *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda*, and it has been reported by Shaykh ‘Ali ibn Muhammad al-Maliki in his book *Fusul al-Muhimma* and the same has been mentioned by Shaykh al-Hamawayni al-Shafi’i in *Fara’id al-Sim‘ayn* :

“Verily the promised Mahdi is the son of Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-‘Askari, son of ‘Ali al-Naqi, may Allah be pleased with them”.³¹

1. A similar tradition to this effect has come in ‘Arf al-wardi, page 65, narrated from Ibn Sīrīn.

2. The author of ‘Arf al-Wardi too has narrated the views of al-Qurtubi on page 86 of his aforesaid book. Thereafter he has mentioned the identical view of Ibn Kathir in explanation of the afore-mentioned tradition. He then writes as such: Al-Qurtubi says: ‘The chain of transmitters of this tradition is weak and the traditions which have come from the Holy Prophet (S) about Mahdi and (the fact) that he is from the progeny of the Holy Prophet and Fatimah are more firm and sound than this tradition. Thus one has to judge in accordance with them and not others’. He further writes: ‘Abu al-Hasan Muhammad ibn Husayn ibn Ibrahim ibn ‘Alī Sihri says:

With respect to the overwhelming number of transmitters with regard to the tradition of the Holy Prophet we have to admit that it is on a wide scale. The tradition is as follows: “The Mahdi shall come and he is from my progeny ... He is someone other than ‘Isa ibn Maryam. Rather ‘Isa will pray along with him and assist him in the killing of Dajjal.”

3. “For the one who is a neighbor to the mosque there is no Salat except in the mosque’. Its esoteric interpretation will be as such: If a person does not perform his Salat in the mosque, his Salat will not be a perfect one and not that there is no Salat for him at all.

4. A tradition similar to this has been narrated in ‘Arf al-Wardi on page 78 but in this version, ‘Umar entered the Public Treasury and said: “I swear by God that I do not know whether I should leave aside the public treasury and all the arms and wealth that it contains or that I should distribute them in the way of God....” And on page 73 it is mentioned that ‘Ali said: – “Mahdi is from me, from the Quraysh”.

5. In *Kanz al-‘Ummāl*, vol. 7, page 186, and ‘Arf al-wardi, page 58, the same has been narrated from Ahmad, al-Muwārdi and Abu Na‘īm. Also, Suyuti in ‘Arf al-wardi, page 79, writes: “Ka’ab says: The Mahdi is not but from the tribe of Quraysh and caliphate is not but in them.”

6. We were the residents of Mecca from Quraysh and it was due to us that the tribe of Quraysh was called by this name.

7. O speaker who investigates us in front of ‘Amr; Is there for us any affair to be faithful upon?

8. Your father Qusayy was named mujammi’ (gatherer) because God gathered the tribe of Fihri through him.

9. The author of *Kanz al-‘Ummāl*, vol 7, p. 186, and ‘Arf al-wardi, pg. 66, apart from mentioning two other traditions from al-Ru’yani and Abu Na‘īm, have mentioned the aforesaid tradition from Na‘īm ibn Hammad and Ibn ‘Asakir.

10. ‘Arf al-wardi, pg. 61, narrated from al-Tabarani, Na‘īm ibn Hammad and Abu Na‘īm.

11. Tasghir (تصغير) in the dictionary means 'to reduce the meaning of a word by adding the signs of tasghir'.
 12. Kanz al-'Ummal, vol.7, pg. 186; Jami' al-Saghir, vol.2, pg.579, tradition no.9241.
 13. The author of Kanz al 'Ummal (vol. 2, pg. 188) narrates a tradition from the Holy Prophet where in the end, he (S) says: "... until Mahdi appears from my progeny". He also writes that the Holy Prophet said: "The hour shall not be established until the earth is filled with cruelty and oppression. Then, the Mahdi shall emerge from my progeny and he shall fill the earth with equity and justice just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression".
 14. The author of 'Arf al-wardi on page 74, narrates from 'Ali who in turn narrates from the Holy Prophet (S) as saying: "The Mahdi is from my progeny. He shall fight for my Sunnah just as I fought in the path of revelation."
 15. The same has been mentioned in Kanz al-'Ummal, vol.7, pg. 187, and in Jami' al-Saghir, vol.2, pg.377, tradition no. 7489. The aforesaid books also mentioned that the tradition is an acceptable one
 16. Kanz al-'Ummal, vol. 7, pg 186 narrated from Ibn Mas'ud.
 17. Kanz al-'Ummal vol. 7, pg 186.
 18. 'Arf al-wardi, pg. 64.
 19. 'Arf al-wardi, pg. 63 narrated from Ahmad and Abu Na'im who in turn have narrated from Abu Sa'id. Kanz al-'Ummal, pg. 186.
 20. The same has come in 'Arf al-wardi pg. 58 – narrated from Ahmad, Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi who in turn have narrated from Ibn Mas'ud, who has narrated from the Holy Prophet. Al-Tirmidhi reckons this tradition to be good and authentic.
 21. 'Arf al-wardi, narrated from Ahmad, Abu Dawud and Ibn Abi Shayba.
 22. Apart from what has been written, Suyuti on page 58 of 'Arf al-wardi has narrated two traditions from Ali (a.s.) and Abu Sa'id; on page 59 he has narrated two traditions from Ibn Mas'ud; on page 62 he has narrated two traditions from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri and Abu Hurayra; on page 63 he has narrated two traditions from Abu Sa'id and Ibn Mas'ud and on page 64 he has narrated one tradition from Hudhayfa where the Holy Prophet (S) has said: "The Mahdi is a man from my family and his name is the same as mine. He shall fill the earth with justice and equity just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression."
 23. The same has come in 'Arf al-wardi, pg. 54, narrated from Abu Dawud and Na'im ibn Hammad.
 24. The author of 'Arf al-wardi writes in page 62: 'Al-Tabarani in al-Awsat narrates from Ibn 'Umar that the Holy Prophet caught hold of 'Ali's hand and said: "Soon a youth shall emerge from the progeny of this man. He shall fill the earth with justice and equity. When you witness this, it is upon you to support the Tamimi youth. Verily, he shall come from the East and he will be the standard-bearer of Mahdi".
 25. Kanz al-'Ummal, vol. 7, pg. 186; 'Arf al-wardi, page 58, narrated from Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, al-Tabarani and Hakim.
 26. The author of 'Arf al-wardi on page 66 narrates from Abu Na'im who narrates from Husayn who narrates from the Holy Prophet (S) as such: "O Fatimah, the Mahdi is from your children." The author of Maqatil al-Talibiyyin (vol. 1, pg. 143) has narrated the same from Zuhri who has narrated from 'Ali ibn al-Husayn who has narrated from his father who in turn has narrated from Fatimah.
- Moreover, Suyuti in 'Arf al-wardi has narrated from Ibn 'Asakir who has narrated from al-Husayn who in turn has narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) as such: "Glad tidings be to you O Fatimah. The Mahdi is from you."
- Also, on page 71 he reluctantly writes: 'Zuhri says: "The Mahdi from the sons of Fatimah shall emerge from Mecca. Then he shall be given allegiance"'. On page 74, he writes: 'Qatada says: I asked Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib whether the Mahdi was on the truth and he replied in the affirmative. I asked: "Who shall he be from"? He replied: "From the children of Fatimah."'
- On page 78, he writes: 'It has come from Zuhri that the Mahdi is from the children of Fatimah'. On the same page, he writes that: 'It has come from 'Ali who said: "The Mahdi is from our family, from the children of Fatimah"'. The author of Sirah al-Halabiya in vol. 1, pg. 185, writes: 'As per research, it has come in traditions that the Mahdi is from the progeny of the Holy Prophet and from the children of Fatimah'.
27. The author of 'Arf al-wardi too has narrated the same on page 66 from Abu Na'im and al-Tabarani.
 28. The author of Yanabi' al-Mawadda on page 372 narrates from 'Ali who narrates from the Holy Prophet (S): "The world shall not cease to exist until a person from the progeny of al-Husayn shall emerge in my Ummah. He shall fill the earth with justice just as it had been filled with oppression".

29. That is to say the emergence of Imam and his leadership is a certainty. He shall rise in the name of Allah and will be a blessing. He shall separate the truth from falsehood and recompense as per good and evil actions.

30. Al-Ithaf, al-Shabrawi, pg. 165.

31. Apart from those which the author has mentioned, the personalities mentioned below too have reckoned Imam Mahdi (a.s.) to be the son of Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.):

Ibn Khallikan in *Wafayāt al-A'yan* vol. 1, pg. 451; Muhammad Amin al-Suwaydi in *Saba'ik al-Dhahab*, pg. 78; al-Shabrawi in *Al-Ithaf*, pg. 179; Muhammad ibn S in *Rawḍat al-Manadhir* (in the margin of *Muruj al-Dhahab*) vol. 1 pg. 294; Ahmad ibn Yusuf al-Qarmani in *Akhbar al-Duwal* pg. 117; Muhammad ibn Khawand Shah in *Rawḍat al-Safa*, vol. 3, pg. 18; Isma'il Abu al-Fida in *Al-Mukhtasar fi Tarikh*, vol. 2; pg. 45; Abu al-Fallah Hanbali in *Shadharat al-Dhahab*, vol. 2, pg. 141 and 150; Shablanji, *Nur al-Absar*, pg. 146, and Ibn Wardi in his *Tarikh*.

The Mahdi and his attributes

Abu Dawud in his *Sahih*, vol.4, pg.88, has narrated from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri as such: – The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“The Mahdi is from me, he will have a wide and clear forehead and an aquiline nose”.¹

On page 98 of *al-Sawa'iq*, Ibn Hajar has narrated from Abu Na'im a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) as such: –

“Verily Allah shall make a person to appear from my progeny. His front teeth are spaced a little and his forehead wide and clear.”

The author of *Is'af al-Raghibin* too has narrated the same tradition of the Holy Prophet (S) from Abu Na'im.

In the afore-mentioned book, Ibn Hajar narrates (on page 98) from al-Ruyani and al-Tabarani and they two from the Holy Prophet (S):

“The Mahdi is from my progeny. His face is like a glittering star; his color is that of Arabs, and his figure that of an Israelite”. (Speaking allusively of his wheatish complexion, tall height and stoutness).

The same tradition can be seen in *Is'af al-Raghibin*, pg149.

Author of *Is'af al-Raghibin* on page 140 narrates from *Hilyah al-Awliya'* of Abu Na'im al-Isbahani as such: “It is said that the Mahdi is a youth with black eyes, arched eye-brows, aquiline nose and thick beard; he has a mole on his right cheek and on his right hand...”

Author of *Nur al-Absar* narrates on page 229 from Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi and they from Abu Sa'id who said: – ‘I heard that the Holy Prophet (S) saying:

“The Mahdi is from me, he will have a wide and clear forehead and an aquiline nose”.

In the afore-said book, the author on page 230 narrates from Ibn Shayrawayh, from Hudhayfah ibn al-

Yaman, from the Holy Prophet (S) who said:

“The Mahdi is my son. His face is like the shining moon. His color is that of the Arabs (wheatish complexion) and his figure is that of an Israelite”.²

Author of *‘Iqd al-Durar* narrates in the third chapter from ‘Ali (a.s.) in describing the Mahdi:

“He is a man with a wide and clear forehead, aquiline nose and broad thighs. He has a mole on his right cheek and sparkling teeth.”³

In the same chapter of the afore-said book, the author narrates from Abu Ja’far Muhammad ibn ‘Ali al-Baqir (a.s.) who said:

“Amir al-Mu’minin ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib was asked for a description of the Mahdi and he replied: He is a youth with an average stature and a handsome face, with his hair falling over his shoulders and light gleaming from his face.”⁴

The Mahdi and His Character

Ibn Hajar in *al-Sawa’iq* (page 98) has narrated from al-Ruyani and al-Tabarani and they from the Holy Prophet (S) as such: “The Mahdi is from my progeny.” Thereafter he said: “The inhabitants of the heavens and the inhabitants of the earth are happy with his reign (*khilafah*)”.⁵ Tabarani adds: “..and the birds of the sky”.

The same tradition can be found in *Is’af al-Raghibin* on page 149.⁶

Author of *Is’af al-Raghibin* on page 151 has narrated from Ahmad and al-Mawardi that the Holy Prophet (S) said: –

“Glad tidings be to you about Mahdi.” Thereafter he said: “The inhabitants of the heavens and the inhabitants of the earth will be pleased with him. He shall distribute the wealth equally, free Muhammad’s Ummah from need and want and encompass them with his justice.”

The author of *‘Iqd al-Durar* in the eighth chapter of his book narrates from Tawus as such: “The sign of the Mahdi is that he shall be harsh with rulers, generous with wealth and merciful to the poor.”

Thereafter he writes: Abu ‘Abd Allah Na’im ibn Hammad has mentioned this tradition in the book *al-Fitan*.⁷

In the third chapter and the ninth section of the afore-mentioned book, the author narrates from the book of *al-Fitan* of Hafiz Abu ‘Abd Allah Na’im ibn Hammad who narrates from Abu Ru’yah as follows: “The Mahdi shall feed the helpless.”

Author of *Nur al-Absar* narrates (on page 230) from *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad who narrates from Abu Sa’id al-Khudri who said: The Messenger of Allah (S) said: “I give you glad tidings about the Mahdi.”

Thereafter he said: “The inhabitants of the heavens and the inhabitants of the earth will be pleased with him. He shall distribute wealth equally amongst the people and will fill the hearts of Muhammad’s

Ummah with needlessness (a metaphoric remark of making the people wealthy). His justice will encompass them”.⁸

Furthermore, in the afore-mentioned book the author on the same page, narrates once again from *al-Fitan* from Hudhayfa ibn al-Yaman that the Holy Prophet (S) said: “The Mahdi is my son.” Thereafter he said: “The inhabitants of the heavens, the inhabitants of the earth and the birds of the sky are happy with his reign (*khilafah*).”

The Mahdi resembles the Messenger of Allah

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* on page 493 narrates from *al-Manaqib* of al-Khawarizmi who in turn narrates from Ja’far ibn Muhammad ibn Masrur who narrates from al-Husayn ibn Muhammad ibn ‘⁹mir who narrates from his uncle, ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘⁹mir who narrates from Muhammad ibn Abu ‘Umayr who narrates from Abu Jumaila Mufadhhal ibn Saleh who narrates from Jabir ibn Yazid who narrates from Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Ansari who said:

‘The Messenger of Allah (S) said: – “The Mahdi is my son. His name as well as his agnomen shall be the same as mine. Amongst all the people, he shall resemble me the most in appearance and in character.”⁹

In the afore-mentioned book, the same tradition of the Holy Prophet (S) has been narrated from Abu Basir who has narrated from Imam al-Sadiq Ja’far ibn Muhammad who in turn has narrated from his father Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.).

The author of *Al-Futuh al-Makkiyah* in the 366th chapter writes about the characteristics of Mahdi as such: – ‘He resembles the Holy Prophet (S) in appearance. However in character, he resembles the Holy Prophet (S) to a lesser degree because none can be like the Prophet (S) in character, as Allah says:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

“You are of an exalted standard of character” (68:4)

The author says: ‘Two persons being alike from any viewpoint (whether appearance or character) is usually impossible. However such remarks are meant to indicate the nearness of one to the other, as conveyed in the first tradition which says that amongst all the people, he resembles the Holy Prophet (S) the most. That is to say, if at all the appearance and character of the people is to be compared with the appearance and character of the Holy Prophet (S) then amongst all, Mahdi (a.s.) is the one who resembles the Holy Prophet (S) the most and he is the one who is nearest to him. This matter is not

incompatible with the matter of the Holy Prophet (S) being “..**of an exalted standard of character**” (خلق عظيم) for no character is similar to his.

The Mahdi and His Conduct

Abu Dawud narrates on page 88 of his *Sahih* a tradition from Umm Salama, the wife of the Holy Prophet (S), from the Holy Prophet (S) in a tradition in which he mentioned the Mahdi and the allegiance given to him between ‘*Rukn*’ and ‘*Maqam*’ and said:

“He will act among the people according to the practice of their Prophet (S) and will establish Islam and spread its precepts all over the earth.”

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* narrates on page 437, from ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, Amir al- Mu’minin (a.s.) who said about Mahdi’s characteristics as such:

“He will incline (people’s) desires towards the path of guidance at a time when they have inclined guidance to follow (their) desires. He will turn (people’s) opinions to the direction of the Qur’an at a time when they have turned the Qur’an to follow their opinions. Mahdi shall demonstrate to you fairness in conduct. Mahdi shall enliven the commandments of the Qur’an and the Sunnah, which were until then, dead and lifeless”.

On page 98 of *al-Sawa’iq*, Ibn Hajar says:

Ibn Hammad narrates a tradition, whose chain of transmission culminates in the Holy Prophet (S) who said: “The Mahdi is from my progeny (*’itrah*). He shall fight for my Sunnah just as I fought for the revelation of Allah.”¹⁰

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* narrates on page 445 from al-Hamawayni who narrates from Ibn ‘Abbas: The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“Verily Allah granted victory to this religion through ‘Ali. When he is killed, the religion will be corrupted and will not be set right until the Mahdi comes.”

The author says: Traditions about the Mahdi that he shall fill the earth with equity and justice after it has been filled with cruelty and oppression come to the level of *mustafidah*. Allah – willing, you shall soon come across these and other traditions.¹¹

The Mahdi and his Knowledge

In the third chapter of *’Iqd al-Durar* its author narrates from Harith ibn Mughira al-Nadhari that he asked Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali: By what sign should we recognize Mahdi?

He replied: “By (his) calmness and (his) dignity”. Once again I asked: “By what sign”?

He replied: “By the knowledge of the permissible (*halal*) and forbidden (*haram*) affairs, and by people’s need of him and his freedom of need from others”.

On page 401, the author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* narrates from the book of *Durrah al-Ma'arif* as follows:

'The Mahdi shall bring out books from the cave in the city of Antioch, and shall bring out the al-Zabur from Lake Tiberias; in it will be:

"..the relics left behind by the House of Moses and the House of Aaron, borne by angels..."
(2:248);

in it will be the Tablets and the staff of Musa (a.s.)

The Mahdi is superior to all the people in knowledge and clemency.'¹²

In the afore-mentioned book, the author narrates from Khawrazmi where the chain of transmission leads to Abu Ja'far al-Baqir (a.s.) who, while speaking, about the Mahdi and his resemblance to the Holy Prophet (S) said: "And he shall bring out the relics of the Prophets".

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* narrates (in chapter 3, Section 9) from 'Abd Allah ibn 'A' (r) who said: 'I asked Imam Abu Ja'far (al-Baqir) to inform me about the Q'im and he replied: "I am not that Q'im and neither the one whom you have perambulated around". I asked him about the Mahdi's behaviour and he replied: "Just as the Holy Prophet (S) used to behave."

The Mahdi and his Judgments

In the third chapter of *'Iqd al-Durar* its author narrates from Ka'ab al-Ahbar who said: 'I have found in the Books of Prophets about the characteristic of the Mahdi and that his ruling is neither unjust nor tyrannical in nature.'

Thereafter he writes: 'Imam Abu 'Amr and al-Muqri in their *Sunan* and Hafiz Abu Na'im 'Abd Allah ibn Hammad has also narrated this tradition.'¹³

About the characteristic of the Mahdi, the author of *al-Futuh al-Makkiyah* writes in chapter No. 363 as such:

"He shall distribute wealth equally, will execute justice among the people and bring to a halt the altercations."

The author of *Is'af al-Raghibin* narrates on page 161 of his afore-said book from *al-Futuh al-Makkiyah* as follows:

'As research goes, Imam Mahdi will judge according to the Shari'ah that the Angel of inspiration will reveal to him, and that will be the Shari'ah of Muhammad. This can be seen in one of the traditions where the Holy Prophet (S) says:

"The Mahdi shall follow my footsteps and he is free from every error."

Thus the Holy Prophet made us realize and recognize Imam Mahdi in this regard that his commands are the very commands of the Holy Prophet and are not innovations. Moreover it shows that he is infallible and will not issue any order but that which the truth is.

Thereafter he says: Notwithstanding that Allah inspires him to the truth, his comparison is forbidden. Rather, some of the researchers have forbidden comparison for all men of conscience and men of God for this reason that the Holy Prophet (S) is present in their sight. Thus, if they should occasionally doubt the authenticity of a tradition or decree, they ought to refer to him and he in turn shall inform them about the true and manifest affairs. The one who possesses such a status is not in need of following any leaders save the Holy Prophet (S)'.

The Mahdi and his Generosity

The magazine *Huda al-Islam* in its 25th weekly publication in its third year narrates from Ibn M^ujah who narrates from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri that the Holy Prophet (S) said: –

“Verily the Mahdi shall be from my Ummah.” Thereafter he said: – “A person shall approach him and say: ‘Mahdi grant me something’. Then he shall pour wealth unto him to the extent which he can carry”.¹⁴

The author of *Is'af al-Raghibin* on page 149 has narrated from Abu Dawud, Abu 'Abd Allah Hakim al-Nisaburi and the author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* on page 431 from al-Tirmidhi, and all three from Abu Sa'id the same tradition of the Holy Prophet in its exact form.

Ibn Hajar in his *al-Sawa'iq* on page 98 narrates from Abu Na'im that the Holy Prophet (S) said: “Allah shall appoint a person from my progeny.” Thereafter he said: “He shall bestow wealth abundantly.”

The same has been narrated in *Is'af al-Raghibin* on page 149.

Also, Ibn Hajar on page 98 of his *al-Sawa'iq* writes that Ahmad and Muslim have brought a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) stating: – “In the end of time, there shall be a Caliph who will bestow wealth abundantly and unlimitedly.”

The same tradition has been narrated on page 149 of *Is'af al-Raghibin*.¹⁵

The Mahdi and his Rule

The author of *Iqd al-Durar* narrates from the *Tarikh* of Abu 'Abd Allah ibn Jawzi and he from 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas and he from the Holy Prophet (S) as saying: – ‘The rulers of the earth are four – two of them believers and two unbelievers. The two believers are Dhu al-Qarnayn and Sulayman, while the two unbelievers are Bakht al-Nasr (Nebuchadnezzar) and Nimrod. Soon a person from my progeny shall

gain control over it (i.e. the earth).¹⁶

The author of *Is'af-al-Raghibin* on page 152 says: "It has come in traditions that the Mahdi will become the Master of the earth from East to West."

The author says: In some of the traditions it is mentioned that his rule will envelop the East and West.

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* narrates from the author *Jawahir al-Aqdayn* and he from 'Ali who said: – "When the Qa'im from the progeny of Muhammad (S) emerges Allah will gather for him the inhabitants of the East and West."

The Mahdi and his Reforms

In vol. 4, pg. 87 of *Sahih* Abu Dawud narrates from 'Ali (peace be upon him) that the Holy Prophet (S) said: "If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, Allah will appoint a person from my progeny. He shall fill the earth with equity and justice just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression".¹⁷

The author of *Nur-al-Absar* has narrated (on page 231) from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) who said: 'I said: "O Messenger of Allah (S), will the Mahdi be from us, the family (ﷺ) of Muhammad, or will he be from other than us"?

He replied: "No, he shall be from us. Allah shall bring the religion to completion through his hands just as he expanded it through us. By our blessings they (i.e. the people) shall be released from dissension (*fitna*) just as they were released from polytheism. By our blessings Allah will unite their hearts after the animosity of dissension just as He united their hearts after the animosity of polytheism. By our blessings, they shall turn into brothers in faith after animosity of dissension".

Some of the scholars reckon this tradition to be *hasan* (acceptable) and superior in the chain of transmitters and the experts in traditions have written them in their respective books. Al-Tabarani has narrated it in his *Mu'jam al-Awsat*, Abu Na'im has reported it in his *Hilyah al-Awliya'* and 'Abd al-Rahman has mentioned it in his *'Aw'ali*.¹⁸

The Mahdi and Allegiance

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* in chapter 1, section 4, narrates from Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali who said:

"The Mahdi shall emerge on the day of 'Ashura', and that is the day when al-Husayn ibn 'Ali was martyred. It is as if (I see him) on Saturday, the tenth of Muharram, between the '*Rukn*' and the '*Maqam*'; and on his right will be Jibra'il and on his left Mikail. Allah will gather his Shi'a around him from everywhere and the earth shall roll up for them".¹⁹

In Chapter 2, Section 4 of the afore-mentioned book, the author narrates from *al-Mustadrak* of Abu ‘Abd Allah Hakim who narrates from Umm Salama (peace be upon her) who said: ‘The Messenger of Allah (S) said: “People shall give allegiance between *Rukn* and *Maqam* to the person who is amongst my followers and their number shall match the number of people of Badr”’.

Again, in Chapter 7 of the same book, its author narrates from the book *Al-Fitan* of Na’im ibn Hammad who narrates from Abu Hurayra: ‘Allegiance will be given to Mahdi between the *Rukn* and the *Maqam* without a person being awakened from his sleep or a drop of blood being shed’.

The author of *Al-Futuh al-Makkiyah* after mentioning (in the 366th Chapter) about the Mahdi and the fact that he is from the offspring of Fatimah and is similar in name to the Holy Prophet and his forefather is al-Hasan ibn ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib says: –‘People shall give him allegiance between the *Rukn* and the *Maqam*.

The Awaited Mahdi is One

In the first chapter of this book, while mentioning the statements of scholars (regarding Mahdi) we had produced the following statement of Ibn Hajar from his book *Al-Qawl al-Mukhtasar fi ‘Alamat al-Mahdi al-Muntadhar*: “The awaited Mahdi is one and not several.” The statement of Ibn Hajar is one of great value. Indeed it has achieved the purpose and informed of the realities.

Verily, the awaited Mahdi and the *Qa’im* from the progeny of Muhammad (S) is the very same person whom Allah has mentioned in His Glorious Book. His honorable Prophet has given glad tidings of his coming and the Prophet’s Ahl al-Bayt, companions and followers and scholars, have informed that he (i.e. Mahdi) is a single and a unique person. He is not several although his name and title are many.

The traditions, which we had mentioned before and those which we shall mention in the coming chapters are clear indications and proofs to this matter. Indeed, these traditions will obviate every kind of misgiving such that there shall remain no doubt in the mind of any skeptic that the awaited Mahdi is one.

The traditions give indication to the characteristics and those things, which introduce, verify and distinguish the awaited Mahdi. As such, it is not rational to consider multiplicity and number for him. Now, we may mention those characteristics and distinguishing features as follows: –

First, the specification of his house and family.

Second, the specification of his fathers and forefathers.

Third, the identification of his father and mother by name.

Fourth, the specification of his name, agnomen and title.

Fifth, the specification of his characteristics and signs.

Sixth, the specification of his character and qualities.

Seventh, his occultation and its lengthy period.

Eighth, his emergence at the end of time.

Ninth, the occurrences at the time of his reappearance.

Tenth, the coming of Dajjal and Sufyani at the time of his reappearance.

Eleventh, allegiance to him between the *Rukn* and the *Maqam*.

Twelfth, the coming down of 'Isa (Jesus) and his ('Isa's) prayers behind him.

Thirteenth, his reform programs

Fourteenth, the blessings of his emergence.

Fifteenth, his adjudication between people.

Sixteenth, his battles and victories.

Seventeenth, the range of his dominion and his authority.

Eighteenth, the period of his Caliphate and Imamate.

Nineteenth, the circumstances of his death or his assassination.

Twentieth, the return (*al-raj'ah*) to life of some of the dead after his emergence.

The same lineage and familial dignity, truthfulness and rectitude, characteristics and signs, favors and munificence, occurrences and calamities, hardships and adversities, and such affairs cannot reasonably be supposed to be combined even in two people, let alone more than that. Maybe it is applicable after the end of this world and its lapse and then its coming into existence once again from the start.

However, even though this interpretation is acceptable from the viewpoint of Power of Allah, yet the traditions are apparently inconsistent with the occurrence of such an affair because what they evidently reveal is that the time of the Mahdi will come to an end at the Day of Judgment.

Indeed, the statement that there are various Mahdis and that there is a possibility of there being multiple Mahdis all with the afore-said characteristics, such that we will have several Mahdis, each possessing those characteristics – such a statement is contrary to common sense.

In the two testaments (old and new) of Torah and Bible (*Injil*), some of the characteristics of the Holy Prophet (S) have been stated. Amongst the characteristics mentioned are his ways, behaviour, insight, lineage and family and none from the East or West have reckoned these insights and specifications to be referring to a variety of Muhammads. So what is the difference between these characteristics and definitions of the Prophet and those of the Mahdi, so that it can be considered possible for the Mahdi but not for the Holy Prophet?

The author says: My assumption – although assumption is of no use before the truth – is that the origin of claiming Mahdis of various kinds is one of the following three: –

Firstly, those who love leadership and power, and are desirous of kingdom and Caliphate, have propagated this ideology as a prelude to their claims and uprising in the name of the Mahdi.

Secondly, it may have appeared in some of Sufi sect because when they became helpless in claiming the position of special deputyship, they differed about the claim of Mahdawiya of various kinds.

Thirdly, as some of the adherents of Bani Umayya came across traditions wherein the name of the Mahdi was mentioned and concluded that if they were to believe in the Mahdi as being a distinct person, they would be compelled to profess that he is from the progeny of the Holy Prophet (S), and offspring of Fatimah and al-Husayn, and in fact, the son of Imam al-Hasan al-‘Askari. This was something unpleasing for them and irreconcilable with their aims. As a result, they started professing a variety of Mahdis.

In this regard, other sayings can be found which, from the viewpoint of logic are worthless such as the saying that; the Mahdi is from the offspring of ‘Abbas or from the children of al-Hasan al-Mujtaba (a.s.) or that he shall be born later. The root cause of all these and such other talks about Mahdi is one of the afore-said three points.

In *Matalib al-Su’l*, Muhammad ibn Talha writes: ‘If a person objecting to this says that although these traditions of the Holy Prophet, are many in number and clearly expressed, and there is a consensus of opinion in the correctness of its chain of transmission as well as in its narration from the Holy Prophet (S), with correct and explicit proof that the Mahdi is from the progeny of Fatimah and from the lineage of the Holy Prophet, that his name is the same as the Prophet's name, that he shall fill the earth with justice and equity, that he is from the descendants of ‘Abd al-Muttalib and amongst the leaders of Paradise, however this does not indicate the fact that the Mahdi whom the Holy Prophet depicted is this same Abu al-Qasim Muhammad ibn al-Hasan, the virtuous *Hujjah* (Definitive Proof).

This is because the children of Fatimah are many and till the Day of Judgment anyone who is her descendant will be considered to be from the pure progeny of Fatimah and the Holy Prophet. Therefore, along with such traditions, we need more proof which indicates that that the Mahdi is the same Hujjah ibn al-Hasan’.

We reply: The Holy Prophet (S) depicted the Mahdi (a.s.) with numerous qualities like mentioning his name, lineage and his ancestry to Fatimah (a.s.) and ‘Abd al-Muttalib, that he has a wide and clear forehead and an aquiline nose, and many other qualities which have been mentioned in the afore-mentioned authentic traditions. All of these reveal that anyone possessing those characteristics and signs will be the same person called Mahdi and he will have authority over us as per what we have previously mentioned (like the necessity of following and obeying him).

We found those afore-said characteristics only in Abu al-Qasim Muhammad, the virtuous successor. Thus it is essential to substantiate these decrees for him, and he becomes the possessor of those characteristics. Otherwise, how is it possible that sign and reasoning exist but not their purport! If the Holy Prophet (S) introduces something as the sign and proof of something else but does not consider the result as the desired goal, there has occurred a contradiction in his sayings (i.e. he mentions some signs for something but rejects the result which is according to his own pre-stipulated criterion).

If someone objects and says: Signs alone are not sufficient, we should ascertain the one who possesses

those signs and characteristics and attribute those characteristics exclusively to him. However, until the exclusiveness and uniqueness of that person to those characteristics is not known, we cannot say that those signs are applicable to him and it is certain that right from the time of the Holy Prophet (S) until the time of the birth of the virtuous successor al-Hujjah Muhammad (a.s.), none (other than him) from the progeny of Fatimah has been found to be exhaustive of those characteristics.

However, the time of his movement and sovereignty will be at the end of time, when Dajjal shall appear and 'Isa (Jesus) shall descend from the heaven. These shall occur after a lapse of a lengthy period and till then, there are new and novel times in between and in the pure generation of Fatimah many will be born, one after the other. Therefore it is possible that from now onwards, a person from the pure offspring and generation of the Holy Prophet (S) shall be born who is exhaustive of these characteristics and he will be the same Mahdi whom you talk about and who is referred to in the afore-said traditions. In spite of this possibility how is it that your reasoning can be exclusively attributed to al-Hujjah Muhammad (a.s.)?

We reply: If you acknowledge that before and after birth of the virtuous successor, nobody except him has been found to possess all those characteristics and signs then this very acknowledgement will be sufficient enough to substantiate these afore-said signs and characteristics for Mahdi.

Moreover, your saying that in the future there exists the possibility of someone appearing from the progeny for the Holy Prophet (S) who would possess the afore-said signs, does not bring any damage in the effect of reasoning, nor acts as any obstacle. This is because the existing proof is preferred (due to its manifestness) to the possibility of appearance of (another) proof which is against it. Thus it is not advisable to forsake the preferable proof. Otherwise it will not be possible to act upon the existing and firm proof because there exists no reason but the possibility of an opposite proof being found against it in the future. However as per consensus of the '*Ulama* (scholars) the appearance of an opposite proof cannot serve as an obstacle to the existing proof (from being put into practice).

An example, which can perfectly clarify and accentuate this matter, is the saying of the Holy Prophet (S) to 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (as narrated by Imam Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj his *Sahih*). It goes as follows:

“Uways ibn 'Amir who belongs to the tribe of Murad, and from Qaran, shall come to you with the people of Yemen in the future. He will have been cured of leprosy except for a spot the size of a dirham. He has a mother to whom he is very dutiful. If he swears an oath to Allah, he fulfils it. If possible, ask him to seek forgiveness on your behalf”.

Here, the Prophet (S) has mentioned Uways ibn 'Amir's name, lineage and qualities and set them as the sign and proof such that if anyone is found possessing this name and quality and if he swears by Allah, he will fulfil the oath. Moreover, he would be competent enough to seek forgiveness and this is a very great position and status before Allah.

After the Holy Prophet (S) and Abu Bakr passed away, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab used to inquire from the

people of Yemen about the person who was endowed with those characteristics. This continued until a delegation came from Yemen and 'Umar asked them and they informed him about a person fitting that description. 'Umar did not stop from acting upon those signs and guidelines which the Holy Prophet (S) had set forth. Rather, he took action and contacted that person. He asked him to seek forgiveness. He believed that he was the same person who had been pointed out by the Holy Prophet (S). In spite of this possibility that perhaps in the near future, another person could appear with those characteristics which the Holy Prophet (S) had referred to, (notwithstanding that the tribe of 'Murad' was many in numbers and their offspring rapidly multiplying). 'Umar did not stop. The same possibility, which you give for the Mahdi, can be given here too.

The incident of Khawarij too is the same since the Holy Prophet (S) had introduced their attributes and characteristics and issued judgment about them. Thus, in the incident of Harura' and Nahrawan, when 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) was certain that they were those same ones whom the Holy Prophet (S) had described, he fought and killed them. Therefore, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib acted upon the proof furnished by the description given by the Holy Prophet (S), although there was a possibility that some other group may have been meant. Examples of such kind of reasoning and the necessity of acting upon them (in spite of the possibility of opposite reasoning) are many. Thus, it became obvious that one cannot forsake a superior reasoning for the sake of an inferior one.

We further say: The necessity of affirmation of a decree, (with the existence of signs and reasonings, which are found in someone) is an affair, which is essential to be acted upon. The one who forsakes it and says that perhaps the one who is endowed with these characteristics and is worthy of this decree is not that intended person but is some other person who will come in the future, has indeed deviated from the truth and made himself worthy of rebuke.

The incident mentioned in Torah too denotes this matter, when Allah revealed (a sign) upon Musa and said: An Arab Prophet, who will be the Last of the Prophets, shall be appointed at the end of time. He described the Prophet by some qualities and made those signs as the sign and indicator of his Messengership and Prophethood. As such, the Ummah (nation) of Musa remembered the Prophet of Islam by those qualities and knew that he would be appointed in the future. When the time of his emergence and appointment drew near, Musa's nation threatened the polytheists and said: 'A Prophet with such and such signs and qualities shall soon come. We shall join him and seek his help in fighting and campaigning against you'.

However, when the Holy Prophet (S) was appointed and they discovered in him all those signs and qualities which were the proof of his Messengership and Prophethood, they denied him and said: 'This is not the same Prophet which we often talk of. Rather, he is someone who shall come afterwards.' When they left the existing proofs and acted upon something which was probable, God too turned away from them (for forsaking the afore-said signs and reasoning of Torah and acting upon the probable).

This account of Torah is the greatest and strongest proof for acting upon the existing proofs and

substantiating the decree for the one who is endowed with these qualities. Thus, when these qualities which are the proof of substantiation of the afore-said decree, are present in al-Hujjah al-Khalaf al-Salih Muhammad, then that Mahdi, whom we spoke about will be verified without paying any regard to the possibility of a new Mahdi coining in the future.

1. Kanz al-'Ummal, vol.7, Pg. 186; 'Arf al-wardi, pg.58 – narrated from Abu Na'im; Jami' al-Saghir, vol.2, tradition No.9244, adds that the Holy Prophet said: "His face is like a twinkling star" and in tradition No.9245 the Holy Prophet says: "The Mahdi is from me. His face is like a twinkling star." After mentioning these two traditions, Suyuti confirms their authenticity.

2. 'Arf al-Wardi, page 66, narrating from al-Ruyani and Abu Na'im adds that the Holy Prophet said: "On his right cheek is a mole."

3. Commentary of Nahj al-Balagha, Ibn Abi al-Hadid, vol. 1, pg. 93, narrating from Qa'iqi al-Qusairi and Ibn Qutayba.

4. Author of 'Arf al-Wardi, on page 63, narrates from Abu Na'im a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) who said: "Allah shall appoint from my progeny a person who shall have gaping teeth, sparkling forehead...."

Also, in 'Arf al-Wardi, page 63, and Kanz al-'Ummal, vol. 7, pg. 187, it is narrated from Abu Na'im that the Holy Prophet, in sequel of a tradition about Mahdi said: "He is from my offspring. He is a youth of forty with a face like the luminous moon. On his right cheek is a black mole and on him are two Qathwani cloaks. He shall look as if he is someone from the Bani Isra'il".

Author of Kanz al-'Ummal in vol. 7, pg. 188, narrates from the Holy Prophet (S) as such: "The hour shall not be established until a person from my household becomes the master of the earth. His forehead will be sparkling and his nose a protracted one".

In Sirah al-Halabiya, vol. 1, pg.186, we read: The Mahdi's face is like the luminous star and on his right cheek is one spot. In Saba'ik al-Dhahab, chapter 6, pg. 78, it is written that the Mahdi possesses a tall figure with good appearance and hair, protracted nose and handsome face.

5. The author of 'Arf al-Wardi too has narrated on page 65 the same tradition of the Holy Prophet from Hakim. Moreover, on page 82 he has brought the same contents in a lengthy tradition narrated from Daani from Shar-ibn-Hushab from the Holy Prophet.

6. Arf al-Wardi, page 66 – narrating from al-Ruyani and Abu Na'im.

7. The author of 'Arf al-Wardi has narrated (on page 78) from Hafiz Abu Na'im that Tawus has said: "When the Mahdi shall come, he will donate wealth, will be firm with the government officials and will be merciful to the indigent".

8. The author of 'Arf al-Wardi has narrated the same from Ahmad, al-Mawardi and Abu Na'im. The author of Kanz al-'Ummal too has narrated in vol.7, pg. 186 from Ahmad and al-Mawardi.

9. The author of 'Arf al-Wardi on page 63 narrates from Mu'jam of al-Tabarani and Abu Na'im that the Holy Prophet (S) said: – "There shall emerge from my progeny a person whose name shall be the same as mine and his morals will be the same as mine.

10. 'Arf al-Wardi, pg.74, narrating from 'Ali (a.s.), from the Holy Prophet (S).

11. The author of 'Arf al-Wardi narrates a tradition on pg.62, from Abu Na'im from the Holy Prophet (S) as such: – "There shall emerge a person from my progeny who will speak for my Sunnah. Allah will send rain for him from the heavens and the earth shall throw out its bounties for him. He shall fill the earth with equity and justice just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression..."

On page 64, he narrates from Abu Na'im that the Holy Prophet while mentioning the injustices and seditions of despotic rulers says: "If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, Allah will prolong the day until a person from my progeny comes and rules. Then great events shall take place through his bands and Islam shall manifest itself..."

12. 'Arf al-Wardi, pg.75, states that Ka'b al-Ahbar says: – 'The Mahdi shall bring out the Ark of Covenant from the cave of Antioch. Also it is written: The reason he has been called the Mahdi is that he shall be a guide to the secret affairs. Then, he shall bring out the Ark of Covenant from the cave of Antioch'.

13. 'Arf al-Wardi, pg.77.

14. The same can be found in Kanz al-'Ummal, vol. 7, pg. 186, and 'Arf al-Wardi, page 59, from Abu Sa'id.

15. Tarikh Ibn 'Asakir (vol. 1 pg. 186), Kanz al-'Ummal (vol. 7 pg. 186) narrating from Jabir and on page 187 from Abu Sa'id

and 'Arf al-Wardi (page 60 & 61) narrating from Jabir and Abu Sa'id have brought the same and instead of 'end of time' the word of 'Ummah' has been used.

Also, the authors of Kanz al-'Ummal (vol.7 pg. 189) and 'Arf al-Wardi (on page 62) have narrated from Abu Humira and Abu Sa'id as such: – The Holy Prophet said: 'The Mahdi is from my Ummah. If he endures short, it will be seven, eight or nine years. At that time, my Ummah shall enjoy such bounties which the good and evil amongst them had never enjoyed before. The heavens shall pour for them and the earth shall throw out its wealth without keeping anything in store. At that time, there will be no esteem for wealth such that a person will rise and say: "O Mahdi bestow me something" and he will say: 'Take'.

Moreover, the authors of 'Arf al-Wardi and Kanz al-'Ummal have narrated on page 58 and page 186, vol. 7 respectively, a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) as such: – 'A caller shall cry out on behalf of Mahdi: "Is there anyone having some wish? If so, then come forward."

Then none shall come except for one person who will ask something from him. He will say: "Bring the vessel". When it is brought he will bestow him so much so that he will be unable to carry. Then he shall take away the amount, which he is capable of carrying but afterwards will repentantly come back to return the wealth. He will say: "We shall not accept the thing which we have already bestowed..."

The author of 'Arf al-Wardi on page 63 narrates from Abu Na'im and on page 64 from Ibn Abu Shuiba and all three from Abu Sa'id that the Holy Prophet (S) said: – "At the time a seditions shall occur, Allah will send at the end of time a person from my progeny whose munificence will be at ease." In some copies the words 'will be swift' is written.

16. 'Arf al-Wardi, pg.81.

17. The author of Jami' al-Saghir, vol. 2, pg. 277, as well as Suyuti in 'Arf al-Wardi, Pg. 63, have narrated from Hakim and Abu Na'im that the Holy Prophet (S) said: – 'The Mahdi shall emerge from my Ummah. Allah shall send and inspire him for the rescue of the people such that the nations will enjoy the bounties and the four-legged will live in freedom...

18. Suyuti has brought this tradition on page 63 of his book 'Arf al-Wardi narrating from Na'im ibn Hammad from Makhool from 'Ali (a.s.). Moreover, he has narrated another tradition with similar contents from the Awsat of Tabarani who has narrated from 'Amr ibn 'Ali from 'Ali (a.s.)

19. A tradition, almost similar to the above has been mentioned in 'Qarmani' (page 118) narrating from Abu Basir from Imam al-Sadiq. Thereafter it says: A person will stand in front of him and shout: Covenant, covenant. Then, his followers will hasten towards him from all sides and will conclude allegiance to him.

The Mahdi and his Distinction

In the first chapter of *'Iqd al-Durar* the author narrates from Abu Ayyub al-Ansari who said: 'The Holy Prophet (S) told Fatimah (may Allah's peace be upon her):

"Our Prophet is the best of the Prophets and he is your father. Our martyr is the best of the martyrs and he is Hamza, your father's paternal uncle. And from us is the one who possesses two wings and will fly with them to whatever part of the paradise he wishes. He is your father's paternal cousin Ja'far. And from us are the two *sibt* (offspring) of this Ummah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn and they are your sons. And from us shall come the Mahdi".

Thereafter he writes: 'Hafiz Abu al-Qasim al-Tabarani has narrated this tradition in his *Mu'jam al-Saghir*.¹

The author says: What honor and greatness Allah has bestowed upon the awaited Mahdi, so that by virtue of his great and truthful grandfather's saying, he got the honor of being amongst the family from whom Allah has removed uncleanness and purified them a (thorough) purification!

The Mahdi and his lofty position

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* narrates (in the first chapter) from Abu 'Abd Allah Na'im ibn Hammad who narrates from Ibn 'Abbas who said: 'In his first look, 'Isa ibn Maryam (Jesus Christ) looked at what would be bestowed upon the *Qa'im* from the progeny of Muhammad and then said: "O Lord, grant me the position of *Qa'im* of the family of Muhammad (ʿAl-e-Muhammad)."

It was said to him: "He shall be from the offspring of Ahmad". Thereafter, he looked for the second time and found the same as that he had first seen. He asked (Allah) the same and heard the same reply. He looked for the third time and saw exactly what he had seen before. He requested the same and once again received the same reply.

Also, the author of *'Iqd al-Durar* narrates from Sa'lim al-Ashal: I heard Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali (may Allah be satisfied with them) narrate (a tradition) similar to that, except that he would say: "Musa ibn 'Imran looked..".

May my life be sacrificed for you, O awaited Mahdi, O *Qa'im* of ʿAl-e-Muhammad! What is this sublime position which Allah has bestowed upon you and distinguished you with, so that both the one addressed by Allah, Musa ibn 'Imran, and the Spirit of Allah, 'Isa ibn Maryam (a.s.), despite their exalted position, wished to attain your sublime status, but Allah, the Exalted, did not accede to their request? They both beheld your sublime position and looked at your lofty station, and the honor and exaltedness with which Allah had distinguished you. They were overcome with admiration for it and requested Allah for such a position, but the reply they received was that it was a station singled out for the *Qa'im* of ʿAl-i-Muhammad.

Then they looked at the consequences that would result from the existence of the Mahdi and his emergence i.e. the raising of the true creed (of faith) in the East and West, the establishment of equity and justice and the extermination of cruelty and oppression. They requested Allah to make these occur under their patronage and make them the consequence of their mission of propagation. However they were told that this sublime position was exclusively for *Qa'im* of ʿAl-e-Muhammad.

The Mahdi and 'Isa

Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih*, vol.2, pg. 158, narrates from Abu Hurayra, and he from the Holy Prophet (S) who said:

"How will you be when the son of Maryam shall descend amongst you and your Imam shall be from you."

The same tradition with similar reference has also been narrated by Muslim.

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* narrates, in the first chapter, from the book *Manaqib al-Mahdi* of Hafiz Abu Na'im al-Isbahani who narrates from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri who narrates from the Holy Prophet (S) as such:

“From us is the one behind whom ‘Isa ibn Maryam shall pray.”²

Traditions in this regard are many and what we have narrated about his Imamate, distinction and leadership are adequate.

Al-Kanji in his book *al-Bayan*, after mentioning traditions on Salat (prayers) says: If someone says:

The authenticity of traditions that ‘Isa (a.s.) shall stand for prayers behind the Mahdi (a.s.) and will fight along with him and will kill Dajjal in the presence of the Mahdi, and the Mahdi (a.s.) will have precedence over ‘Isa at the time of prayers and precedence in jihad (holy war) are all well-known.

The authenticity of these traditions is established with the Ahl al-Sunnah and the Shi’a too have narrated them in a similar manner.

Therefore, all the Muslims, whether Shi’a or Sunni, are unanimous and united over the evidence of the Mahdi’s existence which means that except for the sayings of Shi’a and Sunnis, the sayings of other sects is immaterial. In spite of such consensus on this matter and its authenticity we ask: Amongst the two (i.e. the Mahdi and ‘Isa) who has precedence over the other in prayers and battle?!

We reply: The Mahdi and ‘Isa are both leaders, one is the Prophet and the other is the Imam; although in a congregation the one who is the Imam shall be the leader over the other who is the Prophet. Besides, none of the two fear from reproach (of others) seeking the path of Allah and both are immaculate from all types of sins such as deceit, showing off (the good deeds) and hypocrisy. Moreover, none of the two will invite the others towards an act which is outside the ruling of the Shar’iah (religious laws) and against the wish of Allah and His Prophet.

When such is the affair, then the Imam (who is the Mahdi) is superior to *ma'mum* (the follower, who is Isa) because, Muhammad’s Shari’ah has commanded as such. The proof of this is what the Holy Prophet (S) has said:

“The one whose recitation of Qur’an is better (than others) shall lead the people. If it is equal amongst all, then the wisest shall lead and if still they are equal, the most learned shall lead. If yet they are equal, the one who has taken precedence over the others in Hijrah (migration) shall lead and if again they remain the same, the one with a handsome face shall lead”.

Thus if the Imam realizes that ‘Isa is superior to him, it is not permissible for him to take precedence over ‘Isa according to the Shari’ah, since Allah has kept the Imam pure and clean from every abominable act.

Similarly if 'Isa realizes that the Mahdi is superior to him, it is not permissible for him to allow the Mahdi to follow him because, Allah has protected him from pretension, hypocrisy and showing-off. Rather, when the Imam is certain that he is more learned than 'Isa it is permissible for him to take precedence over 'Isa. Similarly when 'Isa becomes certain that the Mahdi is more learned than him, he will allow the Mahdi to take precedence and he himself will follow him. This was regarding superiority in prayers.

Jihad (the holy war), is giving one's life before the one who has an inclination towards Allah through this means. If it is not such, then nobody has the right to take part in Jihad in front of the Holy Prophet (S) and someone other than him. The verity of this saying are the following Divine words: –

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنْ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ ۖ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ
 اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ ۖ وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ وَالْقُرْآنِ ۖ وَمَنْ
 أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ ۖ فَاسْتَبَشِّرُوا بِبَيْعِكُمُ الَّذِي بَايَعْتُمْ بِهِ ۖ وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ
 الْعَظِيمُ

Surely Allah has bought of the believers their persons and their property for this, that they shall have the garden; they fight in Allah's way, so they slay and are slain; a promise which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Injil and the Quran; and who is more faithful to his covenant than Allah? Rejoice therefore in the pledge which you have made; and that is the mighty achievement (9:111)

Another point is that the Imam is the representative of the Holy Prophet amongst the people, and 'Isa (Jesus) cannot take precedence over the Holy Prophet. Similarly, it is not permissible for him to take precedence over his representative.

The Mahdi and the Ummah

In the third chapter of *'Iqd al-Durar* its author narrates from Abu 'Umar al-Maqri and he, from Hudhayfa bin al-Yaman and he, from the Holy Prophet (S) who while speaking about the incident of Sufyani and his wicked deeds said:

“At that time, a cry shall be heard from the heavens: ‘O people, verily Allah has severed the hands of the oppressors, hypocrites and their followers from you and made the best from the Ummah of Muhammad (S) to be your guide. Join him in Mecca, for indeed he is the Mahdi.’”

Allah has exclusively eulogized the Islamic Ummah in His Holy Book and attributed this Ummah with qualities if they were to take pride in one of them they would be justified let alone if they took pride in all of them.

His first statement:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا

And thus We have made you a medium (just) nation... (2: 143)

Second:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ

You are the best of the nations raised up for (the benefit of) men... (3: 110)

Third:

لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ

...that you may be bearers of witness to the people.. (2: 143)

Fourth:

هُوَ اجْتَبَاكُمْ

He has chosen you. (22:78)

Fifth:

هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ

..He named you Muslims since before... (22:78)

Besides these, there are other traditions and writings which have come with regard to their superiority and if there was no other superiority but the relationship and kinship with the Holy Prophet of Islam (S) it would be sufficient pride for them.

Verily, the Islamic Ummah is that very Ummah in which exists specimens of martyrs of Karbala as well as the battles of Badr and Uhud; amongst them being Hamza, the Chief of the Martyrs.

In them are the likes of those who accompanied the Prophet in battles and fought with their lives and properties in the way of Allah. In them are examples like Salman, Abu Dharr, Miqdad and Ammar, Talha, Zubayr, Abu 'Ubaydah and Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas. Moreover, the tradition, which we had mentioned says:

“The Mahdi is the best of Muhammad's 'Ummah”.

Therefore, speaking about his superiority, suffice it is to mention this very fact that he is the best among the Islamic Ummah.

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* narrates (in the seventh chapter) from the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad and the *al-'Awali* of Hafiz Abu Na'im and these two from 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas who said: 'The Holy Prophet (S) said:

“Destruction is not for a nation (Ummah) in which I am the first of it, 'Isa the last and Mahdi the middlemost”.

Ibn Hajar in his *al-Sawa'iq* narrates from Abu Na'im who narrates from Ibn 'Abbas that the Holy Prophet (S) said: – “A nation whose first is myself; whose last is 'Isa ibn Maryam and center one Mahdi will never be destroyed.”

The same tradition can be found on page 151 of *Is'af al-Raghibin*.³

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* has narrated (in the seventh chapter) from the *Sunan* of Nisa'i and he from Anas ibn Malik who said: 'The Holy Prophet (S) said:

“Destruction is not for a nation of which I am the first, the Mahdi the middlemost and the Messiah the last.”

Al-Kanji in his book *al-Bayan*, after narrating the afore-said tradition says:

'This tradition is *hasan* (good) and Hafiz Abu Na'im and Ahmad ibn Hanbal have narrated it in their books *al-'Awali* and *Musnad* respectively. His saying that 'Isa shall be the last,' does not mean that 'Isa will remain alive after Mahdi because as it has been proved, the Mahdi is the Last Imam and except for him, no other Imam has been mentioned by them, and it is not possible for the people to remain without an Imam.

'If it is said that 'Isa shall remain after him as an Imam of the Ummah, we reply:

That cannot be said because it has been clearly stated that there will be no good after him (the Mahdi). If 'Isa remains amongst the people, it cannot be said that there is no good among them.

It also cannot be said: 'Isa is his vicegerent because his dignity is much higher than the position of vicegerency. It can also not be said he is independent in Imamate as the ignorant people shall start imagining Muhammad's nation to have changed and converted into a Christian nation and this is

unbelief. (*kufr*).

‘Therefore, it is necessary to interpret the tradition in this manner that Muhammad (S) was the first leader and the first inviter to the Islamic Shari’ah and the Mahdi is the midmost inviter. This interpretation appears to be correct to me. It is also possible to interpret the Mahdi’s middle stage as his superiority and betterment over the others because he is the Imam and ‘Isa shall descend after him and confirm his position of Imamate. Moreover he shall become his associate and helper in his affairs and declare to the people the integrity of whatever Imam claims. Therefore Isa is his last confirmer’.

The author of *Kashf al-Ghumma* after mentioning what we have narrated from the book of *al-Bayan* regarding the interpretation of this tradition says:–

‘If, by middleness of the Mahdi is meant his superiority then it is apprehended that he will be better than ‘Ali too and I can find no person believing in this talk. However, we may interpret this as such: The Holy Prophet (S) was the first inviter and the Mahdi was the midmost because he followed the Prophet (S) and was of the people of his nation. He was nearer than his other followers and better placed in the center than those living on his path. However, since ‘Isa was the leader of another nation and would invite (the people) at the end of time towards a Shar’iah other than his (i.e. Islam), thus it is proper that he is called the last inviter towards Islam. And Allah knows best.’

The author says: The details regarding these two noble traditions which we have mentioned is that we say: The word of negation *lan* (لَنْ) denotes nullity forever. That is to say, if this letter appears in a sentence, it shall render it ineffective (it shall not occur). ‘Destruction’ in tradition either refers to worldly torments just as some of the previous nations got afflicted by it) or deviation after receiving guidance and blasphemy after having belief (just as it occurred with some of the previous nations). Or it refers to disconnection of the field of social life. Just as a person dies, a nation too dies and fades away.

As Allah says:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ ۖ

Every nation has its term.. (7:34)

The meaning of *wasat* (وسط) or *awsat* (اوسط) is its apparent meaning which is that which is between the first and last. It does not refer to the best of the Ummah because in the second tradition the word ‘middle’ occurs before words ‘first’ and ‘last,’ and because the word *fi* (في) (in the first tradition) and the occurrence of the word *wasat* (وسط) as an adverb. Thus one cannot interpret *wasat* to mean ‘the best’.

The Holy Prophet (S) being the ‘first’ of the Ummah is apparent. The Mahdi being the ‘middle’ is because he was born in the year 256 A.H. and he is living until he appears by the will of Allah. ‘Isa is the

‘last’ of the Ummah because he shall descend and return to earth after the emergence of Mahdi. Thus, the words ‘first’, ‘last’ and ‘middle’ have been used in the literal sense for these three personalities and not in any other sense.

After becoming aware of what we have written we say: What the Holy Prophet (S) meant by this saying, although Allah knows best, is that how can a nation that is encompassed, in the beginning, middle and end, by sacred personalities such as these, be destroyed? Therefore, it is by the blessing of these three personalities that Allah has refrained from sending worldly chastisement, or that deviation will not occur for them as a result of the teachings and training of these three personalities (either directly or indirectly) or that by being attentive to people like them and their reformatory instructions, a nation shall not be destroyed and will not lose its social life.

The Mahdi and Paradise

The author *‘Iqd al-Durar* narrates (in the seventh chapter) from Ibn M^ujah, al-Tabarani, Abu Na’im and some others who in turn narrate from Anas ibn Malik that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“We, the seven sons of ‘Abd al-Muttalib are the chiefs (*sad^{iq}*) of the people of Paradise: I, my brother ‘Ali, my paternal uncle Hamza, Ja’far, al-Hasan, al-Husayn and the Mahdi.”⁴

Ibn Hajar in *al-Sawa’iq* (page 112) narrates from Ibn M^ujah, and he from Anas that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“We, the sons of ‘Abd al-Muttalib are the chiefs of the people of Paradise: I, Hamza, ‘Ali, Ja’far, al-Hasan, al-Husayn and the Mahdi.”

In *Nahj al-Balagha*, ‘Ali (a.s.) says: “Know that **“whoever is wary of Allah, He shall make a way out for him..** (65:2) from seditions, and (make) a light (to help him) out of darkness. He will keep him forever in whatever (condition) he wishes. He will make him reside in a station of honor with Him, in an abode He has made for Himself; its canopy is His Throne, its light His radiance, its visitors His angels and its friends His Messengers.” (Sermon 183)

The author says: Paradise is a place, which Allah has prepared for His obedient servants. Thus its inhabitants are the best ones and its residents are the most righteous ones. In them are the Prophets, the Messengers, the veracious believers and the martyrs. With these, the Mahdi (a.s.) is amongst the seven chiefs of Paradise and the great chief over here refers to the greatness of spirituality and not greatness in age.

The author of *Nur al-Absar* on page 229 writes: ‘Ibn Shayrawiya in his book *al-Firdaws* reports from Ibn ‘Abbas who said: The Holy Prophet (S) said:

“The Mahdi is the peacock of the inhabitants of Paradise.”

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* too has narrated a tradition similar to this one from *Kunuz al-Daqa’iq*

quoted from Ahmad ibn Hanbal.⁵

The author says: – Comparing Mahdi with a peacock amongst the inhabitants of Paradise (while knowing who its inhabitants are) is a beautiful expression of his excellence which is the specialty of Mahdi and no other human being.

Verily, whatever is derived from Mahdi's existence and his emergence such as Divine majesty and beauty, greatness and glory is such an affair, which has not occurred for any of the Prophets or Messengers. Why should not it be so when traditions which are abundant (*mustafidhah*) clearly stipulate that he shall fill the earth with equity and justice, and the earth will be radiant with the light of its Lord, and his dominion shall encompass the East and the West?

These signs of beauty and majesty are specialties of the awaited Mahdi, and he will be among the inhabitants of Paradise like the peacock in comparison to other birds.

The Mahdi and Obedience

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* narrates in chapter 3 of section 4 from Abu 'Abd Allah Na'im ibn Hammad and he, from Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah who said: – A person once visited Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Baqir and said: Take these 500 dirhams from me for the Zakat (alms-tax) on my wealth. Abu Ja'far said: "You take it and give it to your Muslim neighbors and those brethren who are in dire need". Thereafter he said: "When Mahdi from our Ahl al-Bayt shall emerge, he shall distribute wealth equally and act justly with the people. Therefore, whoever obeys him has obeyed Allah and whoever disobeys him has disobeyed Allah".

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* narrates in the fourth chapter, section 3, from Hafiz Abu 'Abd Allah Na'im Ibn Hammad that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

"A caller will call out from the heavens in Muharram: Know that, the chosen one of Allah amongst His servants is so and so. Thus listen to him and obey him."⁶

The same tradition has come in the seventh chapter of the afore-said book and its author mentions that by so and so is meant the Mahdi.

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* narrates (on page 435) from Ibn Maja' who in turn narrates from Ibn 'Umar who narrates from the Holy Prophet (S) who said:

"An angel shall cry out from the heavens and will urge the people towards him and say: Verily the Mahdi has emerged. Obey him."

The Mahdi and the Truth

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* narrates (in the seventh chapter) from the *Mu'jam* of Abu al-Qasim al-Tabarani, *Manaqib al-Mahdi* of Abu Na'im al-Isbahani and Hafiz Abu 'Abd Allah Na'im ibn Hammad who

in turn narrate from Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) that the Holy Prophet (S) said: –

“When the caller shall cry out from the heavens that the truth is in Muhammad’s household (ﷺ-i Muhammad), Mahdi shall emerge at that time”.⁷

In the afore-mentioned book, section 3, Chapter 4, its author narrates from Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) as such: “When the caller shall call out from the heavens: ‘Indeed the truth is with ﷺ-i Muhammad’, the Mahdi shall come forth”.

The author of *Durar al-Musawiyah* writes: Ahmad ibn Musa ibn Mardawiya narrates through various channels from 'A'isha, the wife of the Holy Prophet (S) that he said:

“The truth is with 'Ali and 'Ali is with the truth. The two will never separate until they meet me at the fountain.”

The author says: The son appears to be so similar to the father that the Holy Prophet (S) made this remark with regards to both of them.

The Mahdi and the Caliphate

The author of *Iqad al-Durar* narrates (in the eighth chapter) from Hafiz Abu Na'im from 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“The Mahdi shall emerge and above him will be a cloud in which will be an angel calling out: Verily, this is the Mahdi, the caliph (*khalifah*) of Allah, so follow him.”

The author of *Nur al-Absar* has narrated the same tradition on page 231 from Abu Na'im, al-Tabarani and others who in turn have all narrated from 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar.⁸

The author of *Is'af al-Raghibin*, on page 153, says: ‘Traditions mention that at the time of his emergence, an angel shall cry out over his head: “This is the Mahdi, the *khalifah* of Allah, therefore obey him”. Then the people will yield to him’.

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* narrates on page 447 from *Fara'id al-Simtayn* from Abu Na'im from Ibn 'Umar that the Holy Prophet (S) said: –

“The Mahdi shall emerge and an angel above him shall cry out: This is the Mahdi, the representative (*khalifah*) of Allah. Therefore follow him.”⁹

The Mahdi and Allegiance

The author of *Iqad al-Durar* narrates (in Section 3, Chapter 9) from the *Sunan* of Abu 'Amr Uthman ibn Sa'id al-Maqri and *Al-Fitan* of Hafiz Abu 'Abd Allah Na'im ibn Hammad who in turn narrate from Ishaq ibn 'Awf who said: ‘On the flag of the Mahdi shall be written: allegiance is for Allah (البيعة لله)”.’

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* too has narrated from *Fasl al-Khitab*, pg. 435, from Nawf that he said: "On the flag of the Mahdi shall be written: allegiance is for Allah".¹⁰

The Mahdi and the Angels

The author of *Iqd al-Durar* narrates (in the eighth chapter) from Abu 'Amr 'Uthman ibn Sa'id al-Maqri in his *Sunan*, who in turn narrate from Hudhayfa ibn al-Yamān that the Holy Prophet (S) while speaking of the Mahdi and the allegiance paid to him between *Rukn* and *Maqam* said: "Jibra'il (Gabriel) shall be in front of him and Mikail on his right. The inhabitants of the heavens and earth, the beasts and birds shall rejoice at his presence."¹¹

The author of *Is'af al-Raghibin* writes on page 152 as such: – 'It has come in traditions that Allah, the Exalted, shall support the Mahdi with three thousand angels¹² and the people of Cave (*Ahl al-Kahf*) shall be among his helpers.

Mahdi and People of the Cave

The author of *Iqd al-Durar* writes in the seventh chapter: Imam Abu Ishaq al-Tha'labi in his exegesis of the Holy Qur'an, said with regards to the incident of the people of the Cave: 'They took their places of sleep and remain therein until the end of time when the Mahdi shall emerge. Then Allah will revive them, and then they shall return back to their sleeping places and will not rise until the Day of Judgment'.

The author says: In the same exegesis, under divine saying of:

أَمْ حَسِبْتَ أَنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْكَهْفِ وَالرَّقِيمِ كَانُوا مِنْ آيَاتِنَا عَجَبًا

Do you suppose that the Companions of the Cave and the Inscription were among Our wonderful signs? (18:9)

it is mentioned that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

"Verily the Mahdi (a.s.) shall greet the people of the Cave. Allah, the Exalted, shall revive them and then they shall answer his greetings. Thereafter they shall return to sleep and will not rise until the Day of Judgment."¹³

The author says: 'Perhaps the reason that Allah will revive them is that they may give allegiance to the Mahdi. The author of *Is'af al-Raghibin* has said that according to certain traditions they shall be among the helpers and companions of the Mahdi.

The Mahdi is the Proof (Hujjah) of Allah

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* narrates (on page 448) from the book *Fara'id al-Simtayn* from al-Hasan ibn Khalid who said: 'Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha (a.s.) said:

"He who has no piety, has no religion.

Indeed the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the most God-wary among you (49:13)."

Thereafter he said: "The fourth from my offspring is the son of the chief of slave-girls. Through him, Allah shall cleanse the earth of every cruelty and oppression. He is the one whose birth people will doubt and for him there will be an occultation. When he shall emerge, ***the earth will be illuminated by the light of its Lord (39:69)*** and the scale of justice will be established amongst the people such that no one will oppress the other.

Verily, he is the one for whom the earth will roll up and he has no shadow. He is the one for whom a caller from the heavens will call out and all the inhabitants of the earth will hear: Be aware that the Proof (*Hujjah*) of Allah has emerged at the House of Allah. Therefore follow him as truth is in him and with him."

The Mahdi and the completion of religion

Ibn Hajar in his *al-Sawa'iq* (page 97) narrates from Abu al-Qasim al-Tabarani that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

"The Mahdi is from us. Religion shall find its completion through him just as it found its expansion through us."

The same tradition has been mentioned in *Is'af al-Raghibin*, page 148.

Sayyid Mu'min ibn al-Hasan al-Shablanji in *Nur al-Absar*, page 231, narrates from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) who said:

I said: "O Messenger of Allah, is the Mahdi from us, the family of Muhammad, or from other than us?"

He replied: "No. Rather he shall be from us. Through him, Allah shall bring the religion to its completion just as He had expanded it through us."¹⁴

This matter is further strengthened by numerous (*mustafidhah*) traditions which give indication to this fact that religion shall not come to its stage of completion until twelve Caliphs come and pass over it. As research shows, you already know what Ibn Abi al-Hadid narrated about the consensus of the Muslims on this fact and that the duties shall not cease but with Mahdi. Thus he is the last of the legatees and the religion of Islam shall terminate in him, just as his forefather was the last of the Prophets and the religion commenced with him.

The Mahdi is the Twelfth Caliph

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* narrates (on page 447) from the book *Fara'id al-Simtayn* from Sa'id ibn Jubair who narrates from Ibn 'Abbas that the Holy Prophet (S) said: –

“Verily my Caliphs and successors after me are the Proofs (*hujaj*) of Allah upon the people and they are twelve in number. The first of them is 'Ali and the last of them is my son the Mahdi.”

The author says: All those reasons and arguments which give indication to this fact that the Caliphs after the Holy Prophet (S) are twelve in number and are all from Quraysh or Bani Hashim, give indication to the afore-mentioned matter too. All those reasons have been collected by Ahmad Hanbal in his *Musnad*, and by other Sunni scholars and experts of traditions. The reasons which they have collected cannot be conformed but to what we, the Shi'a Ithna 'Ashar, say: The successors to the Holy Prophet (S) are twelve in number where the first of them is 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, Amir al-Mu'minin and the last of them is Muhammad ibn al-Hasan the Mahdi (a.s.). May Allah place us amongst his followers and helpers.

Mahdi is the Twelfth Wasi (Legatee)

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* narrates (on page 486) from the *Manaqib* of al-Khawrazmi who narrates from 'Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha who narrates from his father and he from his father that the Holy Prophet (S), while relating his own merits and the merits of his Ahl al-Bayt, and something about his ascension (to heaven) said:

“O my Lord, who are my legatees (*awsiya'*)?” A voice called out: “O Muhammad, your legatees are those whose names have been written over the enclosure of My Throne (*'arsh*)”.

Therefore, I looked and witnessed twelve lights; on each light was a green line on which was the name of one of my legatees, the first of them was 'Ali and the last of them the Qa'im”.

In the afore-mentioned book, its author narrates (on page 486) from the *Manaqib* of al-Khawrazmi and he from Abu Sulayman, that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“The night when I was being taken towards the heaven... (and he narrated the same tradition so far as Allah says): “O Muhammad, do you wish to meet them”? I replied: “Yes my Lord.” Then Allah said: “Look towards the right of the Throne (*'arsh*).”

As I looked I suddenly saw 'Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan, al-Husayn, 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, Muhammad ibn 'Ali, Ja'far ibn Muhammad, Musa ibn Ja'far, 'Ali ibn Musa, Muhammad ibn 'Ali, 'Ali ibn Muhammad and al-Hasan ibn 'Ali with Muhammad al-Mahdi ibn al-Hasan amongst them, like a glittering star.

Thereafter He said: “O Muhammad, they are My Proofs (*hujaj*) upon My servants and they are your legatees.”

In the same book, the author narrates (on page 487) from *Fara'id al-Simtayn*, from Sa'id ibn Jubayr, from Ibn 'Abbas that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“Verily, my legatees and the Proofs (*hujaj*) of Allah upon the people after me are twelve in number. The first of them is my brother and the last of them is my son.”

It was said: “O Messenger of Allah, who is your brother”? He replied: “‘Ali.”

Again he was asked: “Who is your son”? He replied: “Al-Mahdi.”

Again, in the same book, the author narrates (on page 487) from Ibn ‘Abbas that the Holy Prophet (S) said: –

“I am the Chief of the Prophets and ‘Ali the Chief of legatees. Verily the legatees after me are twelve in number. The first of them is ‘Ali and the last is the Mahdi.”

Mahdi is the Twelfth Imam

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* narrates (on page 492) from the *Manaqib* of al-Khawrazmi that Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali said: “Once when I visited my grandfather, the Holy Prophet (S), he made me sit on his lap and said: “Allah shall select from your loins nine Imams (leaders), the ninth of whom shall be the *Qa’im*. All of them are the same in rank and position before Allah.”

In the same book, the author narrates (on page 493) from the afore-said book of al-Khawrazmi who narrates from ‘Ali (a.s.) that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“The Imams after me are twelve in number. The first of them is you O ‘Ali, and the last of them shall be the *Qa’im* through whom Allah shall liberate the East and West”.

Mahdi is the Imam of the Age

‘Ali (a.s.) in *Nahj al-Balagha* says: – The earth shall not remain vacant of God’s *Hujjah* and *Qa’im*. He is either manifest and well-known or concealed and fearful (of his enemies). It is narrated from al-Taftazani that he said: ‘Ali (a.s.) said: The earth will not be devoid of an Imam who will rise for Allah with a Proof, whether openly and well-known, or fearful and unknown”.

In this regard, there is another tradition, which is famous amongst Shi’a and Sunnis and as far as the authenticity of this tradition is concerned, there exists no controversy between the two sects. In this tradition, the Holy Prophet (S) says:

“The one who dies and does not recognize the Imam of his age has died the death of ignorance.”

We ask: “Who is the one who is the Imam of this time?”

This is a question which requires an answer, and I do not see any correct reply that is in conformity with the proofs, and whose correctness is witnessed by reports and traditions, except our statement: He is the awaited Mahdi.

We have the following evidence for that:

The first evidence: Traditions clearly stipulate this fact that he is the Caliph (vicegerent) of Allah and the Divine *Hujjah* (Proof) and what can be understood by these two attributes, is that its possessor must be an Imam i.e. one who is a deputy of the Holy Prophet (S) since Imamate according to us (the Shi'a) is only the guardianship of religious and worldly affairs on behalf of the Holy Prophet (S).

It is apparent from the traditions which we have mentioned before, that awaited Mahdi, is the same Abu al-Qasim Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-'Askari. When it is proved that the Mahdi will be the Caliph and *Hujjah* of Allah on the day of his emergence, it is also proved that at present too, he is the Caliph and *Hujjah* of Allah. His being the Imam is also according to this meaning, because amongst the Muslims, there is no one who reckons the Imam to be separate from the Caliph and *Hujjah*.

In other words, if someone says that the Imam of the Age is not the Mahdi, he is bound to reject one of the following two matters: Firstly that the awaited Mahdi is not Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-'Askari and secondly that the Mahdi shall neither be Allah's Caliph nor *Hujjah* at the time of his emergence.

In this regard, we say: Since both of these points have been proved by the appropriate traditions, there remains no way to reject any one of them let alone both.

The second evidence: In many of the traditions (previously mentioned for our readers) we have been enjoined to obey and follow him and forbidden from disobeying and opposing him. In fact, some traditions state that one who obeys him has obeyed Allah and one who disobeys him has disobeyed Allah. Now, the essential condition for enjoining obedience to him and forbidding disobedience to him, in all cases, is his being an infallible Imam, free from every error and forgetfulness.

Indeed, enjoining obedience to him and forbidding disobedience to him in all cases, indicates to us two things:

Firstly that the Mahdi is infallible. Otherwise enjoining obedience to him would necessitate obedience in all cases, even in sins. Similarly forbidding disobedience to him would lead sometimes to forbidding obedience to Allah. For clarifying this matter we further say: If he is not infallible, it is possible that he may command us to disobedience of Allah and forbid us from His obedience. Consequently what will necessarily follow is that enjoining obedience to him will amount to enjoining disobedience to Allah and forbidding disobedience to him will amount to forbidding obedience to Allah.

Rather, in case of the Mahdi not being infallible, the statement of the Imam (a.s.) that has been narrated in some traditions: 'Whoever obeys him has obeyed Allah, and whoever disobeys him has disobeyed Allah', necessitates that Allah will sometimes be disobeyed through obedience, and obeyed through disobedience, and that, as is apparent, is unreasonable.

Secondly, enjoining obedience and forbidding disobedience includes all people unconditionally. Thus his obedience becomes obligatory and his disobedience forbidden upon every one, and if there was another Imam this unconditional decree would not be correct because, he would sometimes command opposition

to the Imam and forbid his obedience.

The third evidence: Thirdly, there are many traditions which prove that the Mahdi is the twelfth Caliph of the Holy Prophet (S) or his twelfth legatee (*waṣī*) or the twelfth Imam or the twelfth *Hujjah* from the *Hujaj* (Proofs) of Allah. These traditions clearly state his Khilafah, his being a legatee, his Imamate and that he is the Proof (*Hujjah*) of Allah upon His creatures.

Yes, these traditions establish that the awaited Mahdi possesses these virtues and qualities right from the time of his birth until his departure from this world. However, he was silent during the time of his father, al-Hasan al-‘Askari and it was obligatory for him to obey his father. But after his father’s demise he has been the caliph of Allah and the legatee of His Messenger, and he will be the Imam and the *Hujjah* till the end of his life, and the essential condition for this matter is that he should be an Imam in this period.

The fourth evidence: Fourthly, there are *mustafidhah* and in fact, *mutawatir* traditions from Shi’a and Sunni sources that the Holy Prophet (S) had said that there will be twelve Imams, or Caliphs or legatees (*awṣiyā*) after him.”

In some of those traditions it is mentioned that they are from Quraysh and in others that they are from Bani Hashim, and some say that the first of them is ‘Ali and the last is the Mahdi. In other traditions, the names of each of the Imams have been mentioned one after the other. Those wishing to have information about them can refer to the books of tradition especially the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad and the *Mustadrak* of Abu ‘Abd Allah Hakim. Similarly, they can refer to the books which have been written about their virtues like the *Manaqib* of al-Khawrazmi, *Fara’id al-Simtayn* and *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda*.

Now, in order to substantiate what we have written we shall set forth some of them from the book *Durar al-Musawiya fi Sharh al-Aqa’id al-Ja’fariya*:

– In his *Sahih*, Muslim reports from Jabir ibn Samurah that the Holy Prophet (S) said: “Religion shall continue to exist consistently till the time when the Hour is established or twelve successors (*khalifah*) from the Quraysh who are guardians over the people have come and gone”.

‘Ali ibn Muhammad too has referred to this tradition and concludes that nine of them shall be from the progeny of al-Husayn and the Mahdi is one of them.

– ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Samurah said: “I asked the Holy Prophet (S): ‘Show me the path of salvation.’ He (S) replied: “O son of Samurah. When desires diversify and opinions differ, it is upon you to stick to ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib. Verily, he is the leader (Imam) of my Ummah and my successor (*khalifah*) over them after me...” until he (S) said:

“Surely, from them is the Imam of my Ummah, the two Chiefs of the youths of Paradise, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and nine descendants from the progeny of al-Husayn, the ninth of them being the *Qa’im* of my Ummah”.

– Ibn al-Maghazali narrates from Abu Umamah that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“The Imams after me are twelve and all of them are from the Quraysh. Nine of them are from the progeny of al-Husayn and the Mahdi is among them”.

– It has been narrated from Abu Saleh who has narrated from Zayd ibn Thabit that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“The world shall not come to an end until a person from the progeny of al-Husayn emerges to lead my nation. He shall fill the earth with justice just as it had been filled with oppression.”

We asked: “Who is that person”?

He replied: “He is the ninth Imam from the descendant of al-Husayn.”

– Another tradition has been narrated from al-Hasan ibn ‘Ali al-Razi, at the end of which the Holy Prophet (S) says:

“Righteous and infallible leaders shall emerge from the descendants of al-Husayn. Among them is the Mahdi of this Ummah, behind whom ‘Isa ibn Maryam shall pray. He shall be the ninth one from the offspring of al-Husayn.”

The fifth evidence: Fifthly, some traditions have come regarding the occultation of Mahdi and his concealment from the people. These traditions (which will be mentioned later on) clearly stipulate that Mahdi (a.s.) is a leader whose obedience is obligatory – whether in his absence or presence and whether he is manifest or hidden. As such, the Muslims are bound to recognize this quality of his.

Among these traditions is what has been narrated in *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda*, page 488, from Sa’id ibn Jubayr who narrates from Ibn ‘Abbas that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“Verily, ‘Ali is the leader of my Ummah after me and from his progeny shall be the awaited *Qa’im* who shall fill the earth with equity and justice just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression. I swear by Allah who appointed me by the truth and as the bearer of glad tidings and as a warner, that those whose belief is firm in his Imamate (during Occultation) are scarcer than red sulphur.”

The author of afore-said book narrates from the *Manaqib* of al-Khawrazmi that Abu Ja’far Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) said: The Holy Prophet (S) said:

“Blessed is he who finds the *Qa’im* from my Ahl al-Bayt in a state when he has followed him during the period of his Occultation, before his emergence, and has made friendship with his friends and enmity with his enemies. Such a person is amongst my companions and friends and he shall be the most honorable one of my Ummah before me on the Day of Judgment”.

The same author of the same book quotes on page 494 from the *Manaqib* of al-Khawrazmi and he from Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Ansari that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“O Jabir, verily my legatees and the leaders of the Muslims after me are firstly ‘Ali followed by al-Hasan, then al-Husayn, then ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn, then Muhammad ibn ‘Ali, known as al-Baqir; very soon you

shall meet him, O Jabir, and when you do so, send my greetings to him.

“After him shall come Ja’far ibn Muhammad, then Musa ibn Ja’far, then ‘Ali ibn Musa, then Muhammad ibn ‘Ali, then ‘Ali ibn Muhammad, then al-Hasan ibn ‘Ali and then the *Qa’im* – his name shall be the same as my name and his agnomen too shall be the same as mine. He is the son of al-Hasan ibn ‘Ali. He is the one whom God shall give victory over the East and West. He is the one who shall remain hidden from his friends such that they will not remain steadfast in his Imamate except those whose hearts God has tested for faith.”¹⁵

The author of *Durar al-Musawiyah* writes: ‘Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Mahmud al-Hafiz al-Bukhari, known as Khawaja Parsa, in the margin of his book *Fasl al-Khitab* when referring to the birth of the Mahdi says:

“There are innumerable traditions on this subject, and traditions about the virtues of the Mahdi (the one who is the Master of the time; the Hidden one from the public eye, and the one who is existing at all times) are many and in support of each other. Moreover, traditions about his emergence, his illuminating light, his bringing to life the Shari’ah of Muhammad, his battles in the way of Allah and his purifying the world from uncleanness are all decisive.

“His companions are pure from every doubt and sound from every flaw. They are those who have traversed the path of guidance and gone towards research through the channel of truth. Caliphate and Imamate shall end in him and right from the time his father bid farewell to this world he has been the Imam and will remain so until the Day of Judgment. ‘Isa shall pray behind him and acknowledge him and will invite the people to follow his creed, which is nothing but the creed of the Holy Prophet.”

Sayyid (Hamid Husayn, the author of *‘Abaqat al-Anwar*) in *Istiqsa’ al-Ifham* says:

‘A copy of what has been written in this margin has been read out to him (i.e. Khawaja Parsa) and corrected.”

Messengership in Childhood and His Imamate

Whatever we have written about Mahdi and his characteristics, necessarily proves that he was raised to the position of Imamate and held this glorious position when he was only a young child of five years, not having reached the age of maturity. Is that conceivable, or is it necessary for a Prophet or Messenger or Caliph to have reached the age of maturity?

In this regard, we say: This is a theological issue, and this is not the place to discuss it in detail. However, we say in brief: Based on the truth that Messengership, Prophethood, Imamate and successorship (*khilafah*) lie in the Hands of the Exalted Allah and nobody else has any choice or authority in this regard, this matter is rationally conceivable. There is nothing to prevent it along with the presence of proof, because Allah, the Exalted, is able to combine, in a child, all the requirements for

Messengership and Imamate.

Yes, reason accepts this that the Exalted Allah takes someone as His friend and then makes him a Prophet or a Messenger or appoints him as an Imam (leader) and an executor (*waṣī*) while he is a child not having reached maturity. This is because there exists no weakness in the Power of Allah, and the story of 'Isa and Yahya's Prophethood bear testimony in the truth of what we say.

The author of *Basa'ir al-Darajat* narrates from 'Ali ibn Isbāḥ as such:

'I saw Imam Abu Ja'far approaching me. When he came close to me I quickly cast my glance at him and looked at him from head to toe so that I could describe him to my friends in Egypt. Then he went into prostration and said:

"Verily Allah has set forth argumentation in the matter of Imamate just as He had done so in the case of Prophethood and He has said:

وَأَتَيْنَاهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا

...And We granted him wisdom while yet a child. (19: 12)

Also, He has said:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً

...Until when he attains his maturity and reaches forty years... (46: 15)"

Thus it is possible that he is given wisdom while he is yet a child, and it is possible that he is given wisdom when he is forty years of age'.

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* after mentioning the matter of the Mahdi's birth, narrates on page 452 from the book *Fasl al-Khitab* as such: "It has been said that the Exalted Allah granted him wisdom, in his childhood and also made him a sign (ayah) for the people of the world, as He, the Exalted, says with regard to one of His Prophets:

يَا يَحْيَىٰ خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ ۖ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا

O Yahya! Take hold of the Book with strength, and We granted him wisdom while yet a child. (19: 12)

Also, He says:

قَالُوا كَيْفَ نُكَلِّمُ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الْمَهْدِ صَبِيًّا قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي
نَبِيًّا

They said: How should we speak to one who was a child in the cradle? He said: Surely I am the servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and made me a Prophet. (19:29-30)

Ibn Hajar in his *al-Sawa'iq* (on page 114) after relating the incident of the demise of Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-'Askari writes: – “He did not appoint anyone as his successor but his son, Abu al-Qasim Muhammad al-Hujjah whose age at the time of his father's demise was five years. However Allah granted him wisdom at that time.”¹⁶

At the time of his father's demise he was five years old and Allah granted him wisdom in his very childhood just as He made Prophet Yahya an Imam in his infancy and appointed 'Isa as a Prophet in his childhood. Also, al-Shabrawi in *Al-Ithaf*, pg. 79, mentions his successorship to have started at the age of five after his father's demise and reckons his birth to have occurred in the night of 15th Sha'ban.

Ibn Khallikan too (in *Wafayat al-A'yan*, vol.1, pg. 451) has mentioned the birth of the Mahdi to be on the 15th Sha'ban 255 A.H. Suyuti in *Saba'ik-al-Dhahab* (page 78) has mentioned his age at the time of his father's demise to be five years.

Also Abu al-Fida, vol. 2 pg. 45, mentions the birth of the Mahdi to have occurred in the year 255.

1. The author of Yanabi' al-Mawadda on page 185 has narrated from Dhakhir al-'Uqba, from the 'Arba'in' of Hafiz Abu al-'Ala al-Hamadani.

2. Kanz al-'Ummal vol. 7 pg. 187. Also, Suyuti narrates in 'Arf al-Wardi, pg 65, Ibn Abi Shuaiba that the Holy Prophet (S) said: 'The Mahdi is from this 'Ummah' and he is the same one behind whom shall pray 'Isa ibn Maryam'. On the same page, he has narrated a tradition with similar contents from Ibn-Majah, al-Ruyani, Ibn-Khuzayma, Abu Awaane, al-Hakim and Abu Na'im from the Holy Prophet.

Also, he narrates on page 81 from Hudhayfa and on page 83 from Jabir and the author of Al-Hawi al-Fatawi on page 167 narrates from 'Uthman ibn Abi al-Qas, Abu Umamah al-Bahili, Ibn Sireen, and each in turn from the Holy Prophet, a tradition with content that 'Isa will follow the Mahdi in prayers.

3. In Tarikh Ibn 'Asakir (vol. 2 pg. 62), Sirah al-Halabiya (vol. 1 pg. 156), 'Arf al-Wardi (page 64) of Suyuti and Al-Hawi al-Fatawi (page 156) the words 'how shall it be destroyed' is written instead of 'It will not be destroyed'. The author of Yanabi' al-Mawadda (page 375) narrating from Fara'id al-Simayn and the author of Kanz al-'Ummal (vol. 7 pg. 187) have said that after the word of Mahdi, the Holy Prophet (S) added the words: 'from my progeny'.

4. The authors of 'Arf al-Wardi (page 58) and Yanabi' al-Mawadda (page 223) have narrated the same from Ibn Serri, Daylami and Ibn Majah.

5. 'Arf al-Wardi, pg.83.

6. Kanz al-'Ummal, vol.7, pg. 189; 'Arf al-Wardi, pg.76.

7. Kanz al-'Ummal, vol.7, pg. 185; 'Arf al-Wardi, pg.68.

8. 'Arf al-Wardi, pg.61.

9. A similar tradition has been narrated in 'Arf al-Wardi, narrating from Abu Na'im. Also, on page 76 he writes: 'Ammar says – 'A caller shall cry out from the heavens: Verily, your Chief is so and so and he is the Mahdi. He shall make the earth flourish and fill it with justice. He further adds: At the time when Sufyani shall engage in a battle with the Mahdi, a caller shall cry out from the heavens: Know that the friends of Allah are the companions of the Mahdi.
10. The author of 'Arf al-Wardi has narrated the same (on pg.85) from Ibn Sireen.
11. The author of 'Arf al-Wardi has narrated the same tradition (on page 83) and instead of the phrase 'on his right' the phrase 'will follow him' has been written.
12. 'Arf al-Wardi, pg.73.
13. The author of Sirah al-Halabiya, in vol. 1, pg. 18, says: As per research, some of the exegetes have mentioned that People of the Cave are all non-Arabs and they shall not speak but in Arabic and they are the ministers of the Mahdi.
14. The author of 'Arf al-Wardi has narrated, on pg.61, the same tradition from Na'im ibn Hammad and Abu Na'im and on the afore-said page, narrated a tradition with similar contents from al-Tabarani. The author of Muruj al-Dhahab in vol. 1, pg. 15, while narrating a lengthy tradition from Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) writes: He said: The Proofs (hujjah) will terminate in our Mahdi, the one who is the last Imam and the savior of the Ummah...
15. Al-Hamawayni al-Shafi'i in Fara'id al-Simtayn (Chapter 32) while narrating from Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ansari with regards to a Sahifa [God's saying about Imams and their number] which he had seen in the possession of Sayyidah al-Zahra' (a.s.) writes that after mentioning the name of al-Hasan he said: So he perfected it with his son Muhammad who is the Mercy of this Universe and he is the beauty of Musa, worth of Isa and patience of (Job) Ayub (Nasaheh al-Kafiya, pg.22)

He further writes: Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) told Jabir: "Narrate from us what you have seen from the Sahifa (scroll)". Thereafter Jabir described the incident of Sahifa of Fatimah al-Zahra (a.s.) and all that it contained such as the name of each of the Imams in order and the names of their fathers and mothers till the name of Imam al-'Askari. Thereafter he said: Abu al-Qasim Muhammad ibn al-Hasan is one who is the Hujjah (Proof) of Allah upon His servants and surely he shall be the Qa'im, and his mother is a lady by the name of Narjis (Nasaheh al-Kafiya, pg. 23).

The same author in the afore-said book narrates on page 24 from Ibn 'Abbas that the Holy Prophet (S) mentioned to a Jew the names of each of the Imams in order until he reached to the name of Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.) and then said: When al-Hasan shall pass away, his son Hujjah ibn al-Hasan Muhammad al-Mahdi shall become the Imam and they are twelve in number."

This tradition has also been narrated by Shaykh Saduq in Kamal al-Din (Chapter 28), Shaykh Tusi in Ghaybah, al-Tabarsi in al-Ihtijaj, Shaykh Mufid in Ikhtisas, Muhammad ibn Yaqub in al-Kafi and al-Numani in his Ghaybah.

16. Tarikh al-Qarmani (page 117): His age at the time of his father's demise was five years and Allah granted him wisdom at that very time just as He granted wisdom to Yahya when he was only a child.

Also, Muhammad Khawand Shah in Raw'at al-Safa' (page 18) writes: The birth of Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him), who is similar in name and agnomen to the Holy Prophet (S), secretly took place on the night of 15th Sha'ban, 255 Hijri.

The Mahdi and his Birth

A group of scholars, amongst them being the learned and mystic traditionist Muhammad Khawaja al-Bukhari in his book *Fasl al-Khitab* (as per what has been written on page 387 of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda*) have reported:

Hakimah, the daughter of Imam Muhammad al-Jawad (a.s.), and the paternal aunt of Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.), loved him (al-Hasan) and would pray for him and beseech Allah to make her

succeed in meeting the Imam's son. Thus it was the night of 15th Sha'ban, 255 A.H. when she visited Imam al-Hasan, who said: "O aunt, stay (with us) tonight. We have a matter that concerns us". So she remained there. It was the time of dawn when Narjis (mother of Imam al-Mahdi) felt uneasy. Then Hakimah hastened towards her and a few moments later Narjis delivered a blessed child while circumcised.

When Hakimah saw the child she took him in her arms and went towards Imam al-Hasan (a.s.) who embraced him and rubbed his blessed hands over his back and eyes and then placed his mouth over his mouth. Thereafter he recited the *Adhan* (call to prayer) in his right ear and *Iqamah* (establishment of prayers) in his left ear, then said: "O aunt, take him to his mother." Hakimah obeyed and took the child back to his mother.

Hakimah says: 'Once again, I visited Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-'Askari's house, and I saw the baby before him in a yellow garment, covered with radiance and light. Love for him overwhelmed my heart and I said: "O my Master, have you any knowledge of this blessed child"? He replied: "O aunt, he is the same awaited one about whom we have been given glad tidings." Then, I threw myself on the ground and prostrated in thanksgiving for that'.¹

The author says: "What we have narrated before and what we shall narrate later on necessarily proves his birth and those traditions comprise several parts. One of the parts indicates that he is the twelfth successor (*khalifah*) while another shows that he is the twelfth legatee (*waṣī*). Still another portion indicates that he is the twelfth Imam and leader and another indicates that he is the ninth from the progeny of al-Husayn (a.s.). Others reveal that he is the fourth from the offspring of al-Ridha (a.s.) and yet others reveal that he is the son of Imam Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-'Askari. Another part indicates his occultation and the fact that he is concealed from the public view and cannot be recognized.

These *mustafidha* (traditions with several narrators) and in fact, *mutawatir* (traditions with numerous chains of transmitters) traditions clearly stipulate and or necessarily indicate that the awaited Mahdi is the immediate son of Imam Abu Muhammad Al-Hasan al-'Askari. Moreover this indication is so manifest and evident that no one has any doubt in it and none disputes it.

Now we say: Based on this, we are bound to accept one of the following:

Firstly, that we reject the afore-said traditions due to the unsoundness and weakness in their chains of transmission and in indication and as a result deny the afore-mentioned claims.

Reply: Anyone who has reviewed the traditions and gone through the books of *Rijal* (distinguished scholars) can never ever imagine such an affair because a number of leading traditionists have clearly stated the authenticity of some of them and have given evidence of their credibility and acceptability. In fact, al-Hakim, who is the leader of this art has himself recorded some of them and said: They are authentic according to the criteria of al-Bukhari and Muslim, has reckoned them to be correct. As far as rejecting the traditions due to their indication, man's conscience itself bears testimony against

this rejection.

Secondly, renouncing and abandoning those traditions and not acting upon them.

Reply: This would be independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) in the face of authentic and explicit texts. Rather, just as you were told before, most of the scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah have clearly stipulated the successive transmission of these traditions and compendiously reckoned their issuance to be decisive. Thus, resorting to this rejection will amount to refutation of the Holy Prophet (S) and rejection of what has come from him through successive transmissions, while Allah has said:

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۖ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ

Nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed (53:3-4)

Thirdly, believing that Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-‘Askari is still alive and will continue to exist till the end of time when Allah has foretold the birth of the Mahdi.

Reply: Here too, we cannot consider this to be correct because both the Shi’a and Sunnis are unanimous over this fact that Abu Muhammad Al-Hasan al-‘Askari passed away in the year 260 A.H.

If we assume that Imam al-Hasan al-‘Askari is still alive, why can’t we assume the same for the Mahdi and believe him to be living. If a decree on such a matter is permissible then there exists no difference between these two cases, so that we may say that it is possible in the case of al-Hasan al-‘Askari but not so for the Mahdi.

Fourthly, believing that Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-‘Askari has passed away, as per the consensus of the Shi’a and Sunnis. However, Allah (All Glory be to Him) with the Power that He possesses, shall revive him at the end of time for the birth of the Mahdi.

Reply: There is no proof, which gives evidence to the truthfulness of this saying that al-Hasan al-‘Askari will be brought back to life at the end of time, although that is possible in relation to Allah’s absolute Might and that He is Powerful over all things. However, the opposing party denies the continuation of the Mahdi’s life, regarding it as an improbable matter and contrary to the custom (as is in vogue amongst us), so being brought back to life after death and restored after extinction, would be even more improbable and unusual than continuation of life. In addition, the restoration of Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-‘Askari’s life after his demise is a profession of the belief in *Raj’ah* (return to life), which the Shi’a hold, while the opposing party does not profess this belief.

Fifthly, believing that Abu al-Qasim Muhammad al-Mahdi (a.s.) has been born and is still living. Moreover, he is being given sustenance and is living just like other people live, until the time when Allah

wishes him to fill the earth with equity and justice just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression. Thus, He shall command him to emerge and inspire him to bring about a complete reform and universal peace. This is exactly what we, the group of Imamiyah, believe and the proof of his being alive will be mentioned in what follows.

Among those things, which necessarily and explicitly prove the birth of the Mahdi, are the statements of a number of Sunni scholars, traditionists and historians in this regard. We may mention the names of some of them:

- (1) Shaykh Muhiy al-Din al-‘Arabi in *al-Futuhāt* as mentioned in *Is‘āf al-Raghibin*.
- (2) Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha‘rani in the book *Al-Yawaqit wa al-Jawahir*.
- (3) Ibn Wardi, a historian, in his *Tarikh* as mentioned in *Nur al-Absār*.
- (4) Shaykh Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Kanji in his book *Al-Bayan fi Akhbar Sahib al-Zaman*.
- (5) Ibn Hajar al-Haythami in the book *al-Sawa’iq al-Muhriqa*.
- (6) Sibṭ ibn Jawzi in the book *Tadhkirah al-A‘imma*.
- (7) Shaykh Muhammad ibn Talha in *Matalib al-Su’l*.
- (8) Shaykh Nur al-Din ‘Ali in *al-Fusul al-Muhimma*.
- (9) The noble Sayyid Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad Siraj al-Din in the book *Sihah al-Akhbar*.
- (10) The famous historian Ibn Khallikan in *Wafayat al-A‘yān*.
- (11) Ibn al-Azraq, a historian, in his *Tarikh* as mentioned by Ibn Khallikan.
- (12) The mystic Shaykh, Sayyid Al-Hasan al-‘Iraqi as mentioned in *Al-Yawaqit wa al-Jawahir*.
- (13) Shaykh ‘Ali al-Khawas as mentioned in the afore-mentioned book.
- (14) The mystic scholar, Shaykh Muhammad Khawaja in *Fasl al-Khitab* as narrated in *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda*.
- (15) Sayyid Mu’min al-Shablanji in *Nur al-Absār*.
- (16) The mystic scholar, Shaykh Qunduzi in *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda*.
- (17) The learned genealogist Abu al-Fawz Muhammad Amin al-Baghdadi al-Suwaydi in *Saba’ik al-Dhahab*.
- (18) The learned genealogist of recent times Sayyid Husayn al-Rafa’i, a contemporary professor of al-

Azhar University, in his book *Nur al-Anwar*.

(19) Shaykh Ahmad Jāmī – on the basis of his poems and as quoted in *Yanabi' al-Mawadda*.

(20) Shaykh al-‘Attar al-Nisaburi – on the basis of his poems.

(21) Shaykh Jalal al-din al-Rumi – on the basis of his poems. Besides them, many others too have confirmed this matter.²

Verily, Mahdi's birth is unanimously agreed upon by both the Shi'a and the Sunnis and they are in accord with each other on this matter.

Thus, there exists no difference between the two groups. Rather its firmness is as clear as a fire kindled over the tip of a flag or as bright as a sun present during the day. Those who refer to their books and writings (Sunni references) will realize that they are all unanimous over this matter that Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-‘Askari had a son by the name of Muhammad whose title is al-Mahdi and agnomen is Abu al-Qasim, and he was the only son of his father.

This is notwithstanding the fact that they have had minor differences amongst themselves about the Mahdi as can be seen from the sayings of Ibn Khallikan and some other Sunni scholars. Ibn Khallikan says: 'The Shi'a think that the Mahdi is the son of Imam al-Hasan al-‘Askari.' After this, he said: 'The continuation of the Mahdi's life till now is something unusual and improbable'.

When the birth of Abu al-Qasim Muhammad al-Mahdi, son of al-Hasan al-‘Askari is proved (which was done so from the Prophetic traditions which are *mutawatir* and the sayings of the Infallible household members who are more knowledgeable than others and the excessive stipulations of mystics and scholars who have reckoned the Awaited Mahdi to be the very child which we have mentioned) it will automatically be verified that the Mahdi (a.s.) has already been born and not that he will be born in the future.

Moreover, with regard to his birth, what appears to be more correct is that he was born at dawn, on 15th Sha'ban 256 A.H. Thus, at the time of his father's demise, he had passed five years of his age.

The Mahdi's name, title and agnomen

Al-Tirmidhi in vol. 2 of his *Sahih* (page 270) narrates from ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas’ud that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“The world shall not cease to exist until a person from my progeny (Ahl al-Bayt) shall rule the Arabs. His name is the same as mine.”³

In the same place of the afore-mentioned book he narrates from Abu Hurayra that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth ... a person from my progeny who carries the same name as mine shall appear.”⁴

Thereafter al-Tirmidhi writes: “This is an acceptable and authentic tradition.”

Ibn Hajar in his *al-Sawa’iq* (page 98) narrates from Ahmad, Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi and all the three from the Holy Prophet (S) who said:

“The world shall not end until a person from my progeny (Ahl al-Bayt) shall come and rule. His name shall be similar to my name.”

The author of *Is’af al-Raghibin* too has narrated the same.⁵

The author of *‘Iqd al-Durar* in the second chapter narrates from *Sunan* of Imam Abu Bakr al-Muqri and he from ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas’ud that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“The world shall not come to an end until a man from my progeny (*ahl bayti*) shall rule it.”

In the same chapter of the afore-said book, he narrates from *Sifah al-Mahdi* of Hafiz Abu Na’im and the *Sunan* of Abu ‘Amr al-Muqri and they two from ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar who said: The Holy Prophet (S) said:

“A person from my progeny (*ahl bayti*) shall emerge. His name is similar to mine and his character too is the same as mine. He shall fill the earth with equity and justice.”

Again, in the same chapter of the afore-said book, he narrates from Hafiz Abu Na’im who in turn narrates from Hudhayfa ibn al-Yaman that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, God will make a person to appear who carries the same name as mine and whose character is the same as mine. His agnomen is Abu-‘Abd Allah.”⁶

Yet again, in the same chapter of the afore-said book, he narrates from ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“A person from my progeny shall emerge at the end of time. His name and agnomen will be the same as my name and agnomen. He shall fill the earth with justice just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression”.

These are only a few of the noble traditions which mention about the name and agnomen of Imam Mahdi.

The author of *‘Iqd al-Durar* has specially earmarked a chapter for this matter. Thus, these and some other traditions together with their lengthy exegesis (which was already mentioned and will be mentioned in future) reveal that his name is Muhammad, his title is al-Mahdi and his agnomen is Abu al-Qasim and

this is a well-known matter. However, on the basis of only one or two traditions his name has been mentioned to be Ahmad. Apparently, it has been the independent reasoning of its narrator and a mistake committed from his side. Nevertheless it is an isolated and irregular (*shādh*) hadith and there are many traditions contrary to it.

The author of *Tadhkirah Khawāṣṣ al-Ummah* while mentioning the children of Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-‘Askari says:

Amongst them is Imam Muhammad son of al-Hasan, son of ‘Ali, son of Muhammad, son of ‘Ali, son of Musa, son of Ja‘far, son of Muhammad, son of ‘Ali, son of Husayn, son of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib. His agnomen is Abu ‘Abd Allah and Abu al-Qasim and he is the successor, the *Hujjah* (Proof), Master of the age, the *Qa’im* (Upholder) and the awaited one (*al-Muntadhar*). He shall be the last Imam.

The author of *Matalib al-Su’l*, after mentioning the place of birth of Imam Mahdi (may the blessings of Allah be upon him and his holy forefathers) says: “His name is Muhammad, his agnomen is Abu al-Qasim and his titles are *al-Hujjah* (Proof) and *Khalaf al-Salih* (virtuous successor). He has also been called *al-Muntadhar* (the awaited one).

Ibn Hajar in his book *al-Sawa’iq*, after mentioning the circumstances of Imam Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-‘Askari writes:

“He did not leave behind any successor but his son Abu al-Qasim Muhammad al-Hujjah whose age at the time of his father’s demise was five years. However Allah granted him wisdom at that time and he has been called as *al-Qa’im al-Muntadhar*”.

The author of *Nur al-Absar*, after mentioning about the Mahdi says: “His name is Muhammad and his agnomen Abu al-Qasim. The Imamiyah have given him such titles as *al-Hujjah*, *al-Mahdi*, *al-Khalaf al-Saleh*, *al-Qa’im*, *al-Muntadhar* and *Sahib al-Zamān*. The most famous amongst them is *al-Mahdi*.⁷

A subtle point: Amongst the strange events (even if we do not say it is coincidental) is that amongst the immediate sons of the Imams, none has been bestowed with the title of al-Mahdi except this Imam al-Qa’im Al-e-Muhammad (a.s.). Surely, they were a family which spread for a period of over two hundred and forty years. They had many children and repeatedly heard this blessed title of ‘al-Mahdi’.

Nevertheless amongst their immediate children there was none who was called by the title of al-Mahdi because, this was something against the custom. It is possible to say that Allah, the Exalted may have dissuaded them from this matter in order to safeguard the position of the Mahdi (a.s.).

The Mahdi and the names of his father and mother

What seems evident from the previous traditions (mentioned in chapter No. 4) is that the Mahdi, the Awaited one, is the son of Abu Muhammad Imam al-Hasan al-‘Askari (a.s.). The Shia Imamiyah and majority of the Sunni scholars unanimously believe that his honorable father’s name is al-Hasan.⁸

Verily, it is in some of the rare and uncommon traditions that the name of Imam Mahdi's father is mentioned to be the same as the Holy Prophet's father.

Abu Dawud in his *Sahih* (vol. 4 pg. 78) has narrated from Zurra from 'Abd Allah a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) as such:

"If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, God will extend that day until a person from my progeny shall appear and... His name is the same as mine and his father's name is the same as my father's name."

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* has narrated this tradition (in the second chapter) from a group of traditionists among them al-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud and al-Bayhaqi.

He said: 'This tradition has been mentioned by Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal in his *Musnad*. However he has not mentioned the sentence: "His father's name is the same as my father's name"'.

The author says: I have come across a group of traditions which contain this sentence: "The name of his father is the same as my father's name". What is apparent is that it originated from Abu Dawud because of his precedence in time.

Thus, we say: Al-Shablanji, in *Nur al-Absar* (page 231) has narrated the afore-mentioned tradition of the Holy Prophet (S) from Abu Dawud and he from Zurra, from 'Abd Allah, from the Prophet (S) but without this sentence. Then he (al-Shablanji) said: "According to one report, (the Prophet said): "His father's name is the same as my father's name".

This difference in narration from Abu Dawud raises doubts about what he has reported, and the unreliability of his report. Even if we assume this tradition to be firm, it is (still) against and contrary to the numerous *mustafidhah* traditions which are more authentic (from the view – point of the chain of transmission) and obvious (from the viewpoint of reasoning) than the previously mentioned tradition. Therefore, one should not pay attention to this tradition at all.

In this regard 'Ali ibn 'Isa al-Arbali in *Kashf al-Ghumma* says: The Shi'a do not consider this tradition to be correct because the name of the Mahdi and his father's name too has been proved for them (as per authentic reasons). The Sunni scholars have mentioned that the narrator of the tradition would add on material to the traditions. Thus it can be assumed that he has added something to this tradition, and it should be said that this sentence (i.e. the Holy Prophet saying: "His father's name is the same as my father's name") is an addition.

The author of *Al-Bayan fi Akhbar Sahib al-Zaman* says:

'Abu al-'Abbas ibn Abu al-Karam al-Khath'ami has related to us from 'Umar ibn Mu'ammal al-Baghdadi, from Abu al-Fath ibn Abu al-Qasim ibn Abu Suhayl al-Karukhi, from Abu 'Umir ibn al-Qasim and others; they said: Abu Muhammad al-Maruzi related to us from Abu al-'Abbas ibn al-Marzubani

who narrated to us from Hafiz Abu 'Isa from 'Abd al-Jabbar ibn al-'Alī al-'Attār from Sufyan ibn 'Uyayna and he from 'Ḥakīm and he from Zurra and he from 'Abd Allah and he from the Holy Prophet (S):
–

“A person from my progeny who carries the same name as mine, shall become the Master (of this earth).”

'Ḥakīm said: Abu Salih related to us from Abu Hurayra who said: “If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, God will prolong that day until a person becomes the owner of this earth.”

The author of *Al-Bayan fi Akhbar Sahib al-Zaman* says: “This tradition is an authentic one and Hafiz Muhammad ibn 'Isa al-Tirmidhi has narrated it in this way in his *Sahih*.”

He continues: 'Allama al-Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Laghwi sent a letter for me in Damascus and after I met him in Baghdad he said: Nasr ibn Abu al-Faraj al-Husari has related from Abu Talib Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Zayd al-'Alawi and he from Abu 'Ali al-Tustari and he from Abu 'Umar al-Hashimi and he from Abu Ali Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn 'Umar al-Lu'lu'i al-Basri who narrated from Hafiz Abu Dawud Sulayman ibn al-Ash'ath al-Sijistani, from Musaddad, from Yahya ibn Sa'id, from Sufyan, from 'Ḥakīm, from Zurra, from 'Abd Allah from the Holy Prophet (S) who said:

“The world shall not cease to exist until a person from my progeny who shall carry the same name as mine becomes the Master amongst the Arabs.”

The author of *Al-Bayan fi Akhbar Sahib al-Zaman* adds: “This tradition is an acceptable and correct tradition and Abu Dawud has narrated it in his *Sunan* in the same manner which we have narrated.”

Abu Dawud said: 'Uthman ibn Abu Shayba narrated from al-Fadhl ibn Dakkin, from Qatar from al-Qasim ibn Abi Murra, from Abu Tufayl, from 'Ali and he from the Holy Prophet (S) who said:
“If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, God will appoint a person from my progeny to fill the earth with justice just as it had been filled with oppression.”

The author says: Abu Dawud has mentioned this tradition in the same manner in his *Sunan*.

The author of the book *Manaqib al-Shafi'i* has mentioned the afore-said tradition and then said:
The narrator has added the following sentence to this tradition and said: “If there remains not more than a day in the life of the earth, God will extend the day until He sends a person from my progeny who has the same name as mine and whose father has the same name as my father's name, appears and fills the earth with equity and justice just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression”.

The author says: Al-Tirmidhi has narrated the afore-said tradition but not the sentence of the Holy Prophet (S) saying: “..whose father has the same name as my father's name”.

However Abu Dawud has mentioned the afore-said sentence. In most of the traditions which are object

of reliance of most of the experts (of traditions) and narrators, only this sentence can be found where the Holy Prophet (S) says: “His (i.e. the Mahdi’s) name is the same as mine.” The sentence that the Holy Prophet (S) said: “His father’s name is the same as my father’s name” is an addition made by the narrator.

If the afore-said sentence is correct it would mean that the Holy Prophet (S) has said: “The name of the Mahdi’s father is the same as my son, al-Husayn and his agnomen is Abu ‘Abd Allah”.

He has set the agnomen as a name so as to allusively speak of this fact that the Mahdi would be from the progeny of al-Husayn and not from the progeny of Imam al-Hasan. It is (also) possible that the Holy Prophet (S) may have said: “The name of the Mahdi’s father is the same as my son, al-Hasan’s name.” The name of the Mahdi’s father too was al-Hasan but the narrator thought ‘my son’ (*ibni*, ابني) to be ‘my father’ (*abi*, ابي) and hence changed it to *abi* (ابي). Thus it is necessary to interpret and explain this tradition in the manner which we have done so as to combine together all the traditions.

This interpretation which was said with regards to the previously mentioned tradition is not correct.

The final word on this is that Imam Ahmad, with his faithful recording and precision in traditions, has mentioned the afore-said tradition in several places of his book *Musnad* in this manner that the Holy Prophet (S) only said: “His (the Mahdi’s) name is the same as my name.”

‘Allamah Abu Muhammad ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Muhsin al-Ansari related to us (with the chain of transmission leading to) Zurra who narrated from ‘Abd Allah that the Holy Prophet (S) said: “The world shall not be destroyed” or he said: “The world shall not terminate until a person from my progeny who carries the same name as mine shall become the master amongst the Arabs.”

In the book of *Manaqib al-Mahdi*, Hafiz Abu Na’im has gathered together the chains of transmission of the afore-said tradition from a great number of people who have all narrated from ‘Umar ibn al-Nujud and he from Zurra and he from ‘Abd Allah and he from the Holy Prophet (S).

Amongst them are: Sufyan ibn ‘Uyayna, whose traditions we have mentioned, and there are various chains of transmission from him; Qatar ibn Khalifa with various chains of transmission from him; also al-A’mash, Abu Ishaq Sulayman ibn Firuz al-Shaybani, Hafs, ibn ‘Umar, Sufyan al-Thawri, Shu’ba and Wasit ibn al-Harith, with various chains of transmission from each of them.

Also amongst them are: Yazid ibn Mu’awiya Abu Shayba, from whom are two chains of transmission. Amongst them is Sulayman ibn Qaram with various chains of transmission; Ja’far al-Ahmar, Qays ibn Rabi’ and Sulayman ibn Qaram and Asba who are all in one chain of transmission. Amongst them is Salam Abu al-Mundhir. Amongst them are Abu Shahab Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Kanani, ‘Umar ibn ‘Ubayd al-Tanafusi, Abu Bakr ibn ‘Ayyash, Abu al-Hijaf Dawud Abu al-‘Awf and ‘Uthman ibn Shabrama, with various chains of transmission from each of them; and ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Abi ‘Uyayna.

Amongst them is Muhammad ibn ‘Ayyash who has narrated from ‘Umar and al-‘Umiri through various chains of transmission. He has mentioned the chain of transmission and said: ‘Abu Ghassan has narrated to us from Qays that Qays narrated to us’ but has not narrated his connection.

Amongst them is ‘Amr ibn Qays al-Mala’i, ‘Ammar ibn Zurayq, ‘Abd Allah ibn Hakim ibn Jubayr al-Asadi, ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn Bashir, Abu al-A‘wa‘, and Sa‘ad ibn al-Hasan ibn Ukht Tha’laba.

Amongst them is Ma‘adh ibn Hisham who said: ‘My father narrated to me from ‘U‘aym.’

Amongst them is Yusuf ibn Yunus, Ghalib ibn ‘Uthman, Hamza al-Zayyat, Shayban, al-Hakam ibn Hisham. They narrated the afore-said tradition from someone other than ‘U‘aym who narrated from Zurra i.e. they narrated from ‘Amr ibn Murra from Zurra.

All these narrators have narrated that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“His (the Mahdi’s) name is the same as my name,” with the exception of what has been reported from ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Musa from the one who made an addition in the afore-said tradition and narrated it from ‘U‘aym. Only the one who has made this addition in the tradition has narrated that the Holy Prophet (S) said: “His father’s name is the same as my father’s name”.

A wise person will not hesitate to conclude that this additional sentence lacks credibility, together with the fact that almost all these leading Sunni traditionists have narrated against the afore-said sentence. And Allah knows best.

This concludes what has been mentioned in *Al-Bayan fi Akhbar Sahib al-Zaman*.

The author says: It is apparent in *Al-Bayan fi Akhbar Sahib al-Zaman* that al-Tirmidhi has not narrated this additional sentence. However previously we have been acquainted with what was said by the author of *Iqd al-Durar*, and what is evident from him and from the books of *Matalib al-Su’l* and *Fusul al-Muhimma*, that Abu Dawud, al-Tirmidhi, al-Bayhaqi, Abu ‘Umar, al-Muqri and Abu Na‘im have all narrated the afore-said additional sentence; and you have comprehended the truth about it.

The author of *Matalib al-Su’l* says:

‘If someone remonstrates and says: We agree that when these false attributes are discovered they would be a sign and proof. It would then become necessary to act upon them and prove them for the one who is endowed with them. However we do not believe that these signs and proofs could be applied to *Khalaf al-Salih* Muhammad (a.s.) because, amongst the false attributes, is the sign and proof that the Mahdi’s father should carry the same name as the Holy Prophet’s father and Prophetic hadiths too (just as they have narrated) stipulates this matter.

However, this attribute (i.e. the Mahdi’s father bearing the same name as the Holy Prophet’s father) cannot be found in the existence of the Mahdi because the name of the Mahdi’s father is al-Hasan and the name of the Holy Prophet’s father is ‘Abd Allah. What connection exists between al-Hasan and ‘Abd Allah? Therefore, this attribute which is only a part of the signs and proofs cannot be applied to the

Mahdi and when one part of the cause is not proved the entire cause too cannot be proved, since the rest of the attributes are not enough for proving this decree. This is because the Holy Prophet (S) has not substantiated this decree except for the one in whom all the attributes (where one of them is the similarity of his father's name) is found and this matter cannot be true of *al-Hujjah al-Khalaf*. Thus, this decree too cannot be established for him and it is an extremely doubtful matter.

Before giving a detailed reply to this problem it is necessary to express two matters so that we may achieve our aim:

First: – In the Arabic language it is a common practice to use the word ‘father’ for forefathers. The Holy Qur’an too speaks of this matter and says:

مِلَّةَ آبَائِكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ۖ

...The faith of your father, Ibrahim... (22:78)

Also, quoting Yusuf, it says:

وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ آبَائِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ

And I follow the religion of my fathers, Ibrahim and Ishaq...(12:38)

The holy Prophet (S) too has clearly stipulated this matter as can be seen in the tradition of *Mi'raj* (ascension). The Holy Prophet (S) asked: “Who is this”? He replied: “Your father, Ibrahim”. Thus it can be observed that the word *ab* (أب father) is applied to forefathers.

Second: – The word ‘name’ too is used instead of ‘agnomen’ and ‘attribute’, and it has been used by eloquent speakers and mentioned in traditions. This can be observed in the tradition where al-Bukhari and Muslim have narrated from Sahl ibn Sa’d al-Sa’idi who narrated from ‘Ali (a.s.) that the Holy Prophet (S) named him (‘Ali) ‘Abu Turab’ and there was no name more loved by him than it. Thus the word ‘name’ has been used for ‘agnomen’.

A poet too has pinpointed this matter in the following poem:

أجل قدرك أن تسمى مؤمنته ومن كذاك فقد سماك للعرب

The words (و من يصفك) have also been narrated.

Thus this poet has used 'name' instead of agnomen and attribute and this rule is prevalent in the Arabic language.

Now that the two afore-mentioned matters have become clear, know that the Holy Prophet (S) had two grandsons, Abu Muhammad al-Hasan and Abu 'Abd Allah al-Husayn. Since the *Hujjah al-Khalaf al-Salih* Muhammad (a.s.) was from the progeny of Abu 'Abd Allah al-Husayn and not from the progeny of Abu Muhammad al-Hasan and the agnomen of al-Husayn is Abu 'Abd Allah, therefore the Holy Prophet (S) has used the word 'name' (اسم) in place of agnomen and used the word 'father' (أب) in place of forefather.

It is as if the Holy Prophet (S) said: "His (the Mahdi's) name is the same as mine. He is Muhammad and I too am Muhammad, and the agnomen of his forefather is the same as my father's name because his forefather is Abu 'Abd Allah and my father (too) is 'Abd Allah".

He (S) explained it in this manner so that these brief words could be comprehensive enough for explaining the attributes and he himself has had briefly announced that the Mahdi is from the progeny of Abu 'Abd Allah al-Husayn.

Therefore, (with this explanation) the afore-mentioned attributes have been put in order and all of them can be applied to the *Hujjah al-Khalaf al-Salih* Muhammad (a.s.).

This explanation is clear and sufficient enough to overcome this ambiguity. So ponder over it. (End of quote from *Matalib al-Su'l*).

The author says: Apart from the reasons which the author of *Al-Bayan* and Ibn Talha in *Matalib al-Su'l* have narrated, there are other aspects too as follows: –

Firstly, Allama Majlisi in the 13th volume of his book *Bihar al-Anwar* says: Some contemporaries have said: With regard to the afore-said tradition there are other aspects too, like the fact that Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari's agnomen was Abu Muhammad and 'Abd Allah's (i.e. Prophet Muhammad's father) agnomen was Abu Muhammad. Thus these two agnomens are in accord with each other and (amongst the Arabs too, just as it will come later on) the agnomen too is in the name. (i.e. the Arabs use agnomen instead of name).

Secondly, some of the contemporary learned scholars have said in the margin of the book of *Al-Bayan*: The best way to reply to this matter is to say that the wording of the tradition is perhaps in this manner: – 'The Mahdi's name is the same as my name and my father's name'.

This is because many traditions in the book *al-Ghaybah* say: The Mahdi possesses three names, one of which is 'Abd Allah, and the Holy Prophet's father's name too was 'Abd Allah. In some of the traditions previously mentioned, the Holy Prophet (S) has said: 'The Mahdi's name is the same as my father's name'. Moreover, on the subject matter of this tradition too, it has come that (the Holy Prophet) said:

“The Mahdi’s name is the same as my name and my father’s name”.

The narrator, not grasping the meaning of the tradition and not even imagining that the Mahdi (may Allah hasten his emergence) possesses two other names, and wishing to correct the tradition (as per his own reflection) has added the afore-said sentence: “The Mahdi’s name is the same as my father’s name” to the tradition. Previously, we came to know that the afore-said tradition lacked any defect because the Mahdi possesses three names. Thus it can be seen that the aforementioned tradition does not contradict our traditions in any way. This is the best reply and I have not found anyone objecting to it as it appears to be clear and obvious.

Thirdly, the afore-said scholar in the margin of the afore-mentioned book says: It is possible that the Holy Prophet (S) may have said: – “The Mahdi’s name is the same as mine and his son’s name is the same as my father’s name.” This is because in some of the traditions the name of the Mahdi’s son has been mentioned to be ‘Abd Allah and in the third section of this book it will be stated that the Mahdi’s agnomen is Abu ‘Abd Allah. Thus a change has occurred and the word of (**ابنه**) (his son) has been converted to (**ابيه**) (his father).

Fourthly, Mawla Muhammad Ridha al-Imami al-Mudarris al-Khatun Abadi, a researcher and scholar writes in his book *Jannat al-Khulud* (which contains all that hearts desire and pleases the eye) as such: “Our Master Imam al-Hasan al-’Askari (a.s.) has two names – One is al-Hasan and the other ‘Abd Allah”.

On the basis of the saying of this scholar, the problem is solved and is in accord with the tradition of Abu Dawud and all other traditions. Although some of the subject-matter of the book of *Jannat al-Khulud* is not found in any other book, yet its author is a person who is a scholar as well as a researcher, and perhaps God may enlighten us to discover the source of his reference and sayings.

Allama Sayyid Shahab al-Din al-Najafi who is one of the spiritual leaders of Qum narrated for me as such: “The Qazwini scholar, Agha Radhi al-Din (may his dust be fragrant) has mentioned in *Kurrah al-fiqh* the same as that mentioned by the author of *Jannat al-Khulud*.

The conclusion that we can derive from these traditions is this that the most preferable reply would be to stick to one of the following:

(1) The chain of transmission of this tradition (i.e. the Holy Prophet saying: the Mahdi’s father carries the same name as my father’s name) appears to be weak because, it comprises such men who are not reliable and authentic. Rather, they belong to the unknown group. On the contrary, they are those people who are famous as the fabricators of traditions. If there was no one amongst them except the (**زائدة**) (i.e. the one who is amongst the narrators of this tradition) suffice it was to render this tradition weak.

(2) The text of this tradition is disturbed (*mudharibah*) because Imam Ahmad Hanbal has narrated the

same tradition in his *Musnad*, just as it can be seen in *'Iqd al-Durar*, without mentioning this sentence of the Holy Prophet (S) that “the name of the Mahdi’s father is the same as my father’s name.”

(3) This tradition has been narrated by Abu Dawud (who is the original source) in different ways. This is because some have narrated this tradition along with the afore-said sentence while others have narrated without this sentence.

(4) This tradition is opposite and contrary to the numerous traditions which, from the viewpoint of chain of transmission are more authentic and from the view-point of expression are more manifest. Rather, this tradition contradicts a number of other traditions.

(5) If this tradition is interpreted in either of the above four ways (which have been interpreted against its apparent form and to me is inconceivable) it is still better than rejecting it outright.

The author of *Nur al-Absar* says: – ‘The Mahdi’s father was Abu Muhammad al-Khalis ibn ‘Ali al-Hadi ibn Muhammad al-Jawad ibn ‘Ali al-Ridha. The Mahdi’s mother was a slave-girl who was called Narjis, and it is said she was called as *ʿayqal*, and it is also said that she was called Sawsan’.

It is mentioned in *Tadhkirah al-Khuwāʾim al-Ummah*: ‘His father was Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-‘Askari ibn ‘Ali ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Ali al-Ridha. His mother was a slave-girl who was named Sawsan’.

The author says: “The truth is that Imam al-Hasan al-‘Askari’s mother was called Hadith, and what is well-known is that Sawsan was one of the names of the Mahdi’s mother.”

The author of *Matalib al-Suʾl* says: “The Mahdi’s father was al-Hasan al-Khalis ibn ‘Ali Mutawakkil ibn Muhammad al-Qāʾini ibn ‘Ali al-Ridha... His mother was a slave-girl called *ʿayqal* and it is said she was called Hakimah.”

The author says: I do not know who has said this because the lady by the name of Hakimah was the daughter of Abu Jaʿfar Muhammad ibn ‘Ali al-Jawad and paternal aunt of the Mahdi’s father and she was present at the time of the Mahdi’s birth.

The Mahdi and his long life

It was verified from the previous traditions that the awaited Mahdi who shall emerge at the end of time and will fill the earth with equity and justice just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression is none other than Abu al-Qasim Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-‘Askari (a.s.). It was also proved that he was born in the night of 15th Shaʿban, 256 A.H. which establishes that he has lived a long life of more than one thousand and one hundred years, and Allah knows best about the time of his emergence and his demise.

Although longevity is something unusual amongst the people yet, as per the nature it is a possible

phenomenon. Moreover, there exists proofs and reasons for the long life of Mahdi (a.s.). In other words, the prolongation of Mahdi's life is amongst the possible affairs and proofs confirm this point. Thus one is helpless in accepting and acknowledging this matter.

The author of *Tadhkirat al-Khawāṣṣ al-Ummah* says:

The entire Imamiyah sect believe that the *Khalaf al-Hujjah* is living and receiving his sustenance. For proving him to be alive they set forth the following reasons:

First reason: A group of people such as Khizr and Ilyas have lived a long life and it is (still) not known for how many years they have been living. Every year they meet each other.⁹

It is mentioned in the Torah that Dhu al-Qarnayn lived for 3000 years. However Muslims believe that he lived for 1500 years.

Muhammad ibn Ishaq says: – ‘Awaj ibn ‘Anaq lived for 3600 years.¹⁰ Awaj ibn ‘Anaq, whose father's name was Subhan and mother's name was ‘Anaq, was born during the Prophet Adam's time and continued to live until Musa (a.s.) killed him. Al-Ahḥāk lived for 1000 years.¹¹ Ahmuras too lived for 1000 years.

Amongst the Prophets, we may mention such names as Hazrat Adam, Nuh, Shith and others who lived for 1000 or more years.¹² Qaynān lived for 900 years.¹³ Mahlīl lived for 800 years.¹⁴ Nufayl ibn ‘Abd Allah lived for 700 years. The soothsayer Suṭayh, whose name was Rabi’a ibn ‘Umar lived for 600 years. ‘Imir ibn al-Ḥarb who was the ruler amongst the Arabs, lived for 500 years; so also Taym Allah b. Tha’laba and Sām b. Nuh. Al-Harb ibn Madhūd al-Jarhami lived for 400 years. It was he who said:

كان لم يكن بين الحجون الى الصفا

Arfakhshad too lived for 400 years. Qays ibn Sā’ada lived for a period of 380 years.¹⁵

Ka’b ibn Jamjama or Jamma al-Dawsi lived for 390 years. Salman al-Farsi lived for 250 and according to some other sources for 300 years.

The author of *Matalib al-Su’l* writes:

‘The Mahdi was born during the rule of Mu’tamid ‘ala’llah, and has been concealed till now due to fear (from the enemies). Thus it is not possible to say how long he lived, because the one who is concealed and there is no news from him, (then) his occultation and absence of news from him is no reason to believe that his life has come to an end. The Power of Allah is vast. The decree and favors of Allah upon His servants are great and having universality.

It is necessary for the eminent scholars to perceive the realities of objects of power (i.e. the creatures) of Allah. However, there exists no way for recognizing the essence of Allah's Power and those trying to do so will be left in bewilderment. One of the verses of the Holy Quran says:

وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

... You are not given aught of knowledge but a little.” (17:85)

It is not innovation and it is not improbable that some sincere servants of Allah may have lived long lives or that their lives have been prolonged until now. Allah has prolonged the life of many of His chosen ones and friends, and also His expelled ones and enemies. Amongst His pure ones, we may mention the names of ‘Isa and Khidhr. Moreover there were many other Prophets (like Hazrat Nuh) who each lived for a 1000 years.

Amongst the expelled ones and enemies we may mention Satan and Dajjal and others like the tribe of ʿAd among whom were those who lived for approximately 1000 years. The same was the case with Luqman. All these examples reveal the extent of Allah’s Power by which He has given such long life to some of His servants. So what is wrong in saying that the Mahdi’s age (too) has been prolonged until his emergence’?

Man’s Long Life

There is no doubt that if principles for healthy living are observed, and religious and medical directives are followed, it is not impracticable to live a lengthy life. The reverse is also true (i.e. non-observance of the afore-said rules will result in reduction in one’s life-span.

On this basis, the number of deaths in some countries is much less at present than former times and the number of aged people is more than the previous years. Of course it should not be unsaid that since the principles for safeguarding health are better observed today than former years we see such magnificent results. For this reason, some important companies have been established which ensure man’s health and give guarantee for his limited life under special regulations and fixed limit, which have been enacted according to the principles of safeguarding health.

As a result of following such principles we see the desired effects out of our conscience. If it was not such, the attention of the wise would not have been focused on them.

Since the observance of these principles ensures a person’s health and prolongation of life it necessarily follows that the more their observance the longer will be a person’s life. What we see out of our conscience (like difference in health and age and difference in the mode of life) is the best proof and evidence to what we have written.

Therefore, whenever society enjoins practices that engender good health, people’s ages shall be prolonged to the extent which Allah wishes. The principles of these practices are of three types:

First: The first step to observing these rules is when the human being is in the loins of his father and

then is transferred to his mother's womb, where he grows and develops, and then after birth the period of being suckled by his mother. The parents' observance of the principles of health during this stage is the first step for ensuring a child's health. How often we see a child dying during his infancy or childhood because of his parents suffering from some disease and or their heedlessness in applying the means of sound health and non-observance on their part of his (i.e. the child's) hygienic principles. Thus the parents in such cases are the cause of this crime, and they are responsible for depriving their child from living a natural and normal life. Would that the parents deem it necessary upon themselves to follow such rules and regulations and as a result save themselves from such blame!

Second: Observance of those things which are the basis of man's life like the air that he breathes, the food that he eats, the water that he drinks, the clothes that he wears and the environment in which he lives. This is because observance of the means and rules of sound health in each of these five affairs with respect to quantity, quality, age, strength, weakness, time and place are the most important channels having influence over the health and long life of man.

How many a person has been overtaken by death and has died before dying naturally. The reason for giving away one's life which by nature, is loved by every living creature is the non-observance of one of the afore-mentioned five affairs. A number of physicians and doctors have emphasized that majority of the people who die do not die a natural death. Rather the main cause has been the external factors, which come into existence by not observing the rules of sound health with regards to the afore-mentioned affairs. Farid Wajdi Effendi has narrated the statements of some of the physicians and doctors in his book *Dīrah al-Maʿrif*.

Third: External occurrences and incidents and contact with natural phenomenon like unusual heat and cold, pain and maladies, misfortunes and difficulties, grief and sorrow and actions and movements. All these greatly influence a person's health and life-span. How often it has occurred that a person has died of heat or cold or has perished because of pain and illness. How many a person's life has been shortened due to misfortunes and difficulties or he has turned old due to grief and sorrow. Besides, a great number of people's life do obliterate and break up due to severity of their actions and bodily movements. If these factors do not play any role in man's death then, his life would certainly be long enough.

If man observes the rules for health as per the afore-said three principles; then nothing can prevent him from living for hundreds and rather thousands of years in this world by the will of Allah!¹⁶

No matter how much we ponder over this point and probe into some of the appropriate books, we cannot find any objection and reason against this matter. Rather, too often a person doing research into this matter has come across some facts forcing him to testify in the subject of longevity.

The mysteries of life and the faculties which have been deposited in man's existence is always hidden and unknown. Today, medical science with all its advancement has not become cognizant with all those

mysteries and has not perceived its realities the way it should have done so. Some of our friends who are doctors have confirmed this point.

One of them says: Often it occurs that a patient is brought to me and as per the medical rules, I see him close to death. Rather his chance of survival is one percent and I lose hope of his recovery. When on the same day or the next day I visit him again, I see him well and fine and the probability of his dying becomes one percent. On the other hand, how often it has occurred that I come across another patient whose case is just the opposite of the first patient.

Indeed, to live for hundreds of years is something unusual and uncommon, meaning that gathering together and obtaining the means of a sound health from all the aspects (which we previously pointed out) is very rare – and does not occur for majority of the people in most of the periods and places. However if those means are gathered together, it is possible for man's lifespan to prolong habitually and naturally. So, the problem lies in gathering together and making available the means (of sound health) and not in the means of a lengthy life.

When you become fully conversant with what we have previously mentioned and become aware of the article written in the magazine “Al-Muqtataf” you will realize that God's statement in Sura ‘al-ʿAḥqāf’ with regards to the story of Yunus (a.s.) is something customary:

فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ لَلَبِثَ فِي بَطْنِهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ

But had it not been that he was of those who glorify (Us), he would certainly have tarried in its belly till the day when they are raised. (37: 143–144)

Thus it is possible for man to live in the depth of the sea till the Day of Judgment. Why shouldn't it be so when Allah has Power over all things?

Views of the Magazine ‘Al-Muqtataf’

The magazine ‘Al-Muqtataf’ published an article in part 3 in the year 1359 under the title “Does man live in this world forever?”

It said: What is life and what is death? Has death been destined for every living being?

Every grain of wheat is a living substance having a place in its own cluster. That cluster too is grown from another grain and that grain too comes into existence from another cluster and so on. As such, prying into the history of six thousand or more years becomes easy. Grains of wheat which have been found amongst the remains of ancient Egyptians and Assyrians reveals this fact that ancient Egyptians and Assyrians used to sow wheat and make bread out of its flour.

The wheat which is available with us at present has not been created from nothing (لا شيء) . Rather this wheat has come into existence from that ancient wheat in a concatenated manner. Thus this present wheat is one part of another living wheat and that one from another one and so on until it goes back to six or seven thousand years or rather hundreds of thousands of years.

These grains of wheat which turn into bread and do not have any movement and growth are in reality living entities like all other living creatures. Nothing is deficient in them but a little water. Thus life and existence of wheat have been for thousands of years – right from ancient times until now. This also applies to all types of plant possessing seed or fruit. Even the animals are not excluded from this rule. This is because all insects, fishes, birds, beasts, mosquitoes and even human beings, who are the greatest of all creatures, are reckoned to be a part of their own parents and their parents a part of their parents and so on.

Man leaves behind a generation and that generation is one living part from his own self just as the seed of one plant or tree is a part of that particular plant or tree. In this living part, there exists very small particles like those particles which have given shape to the organs of parents, and the organs of this part are the very food which he eats. Thus a date-seed becomes a tree which shall possess branches and leaves and dates, and an olive-seed turns into a tree which shall have branches, leaves and fruits. All plants, eggs of insects, fishes, birds, beasts, mosquitoes and even human beings can be inferred in this manner.

All the afore-mentioned examples are so well known that not even two persons can be found who will dispute over it. Sometimes it happens that a tree itself lives for 1000 or 2000 years but man does not live for more than 70 or 80 years. In rare cases, he may live for 100 years and the gastric particles remain alive and grow in order to preserve the generation. However, all the parts die as though death has been destined for them. Centuries have passed since man has thought of relieving himself from the claws of death or at least increasing his lifespan. This is especially true so at present when man wishes to fight various diseases and plagues with medicines. It has still not been ascertained that for example someone has lived for 120 years in recent times.

However, reliable scholars say: – The entire body-tissue of an animal is so endurable that it has no end and it is possible for man to live for thousands of years provided no accident severs his age. This opinion is not merely a conjecture. Rather it is something practical and has been confirmed by experiments.

One of the surgeons was able to cut off a part of an animal and then keep it alive for many years more than the animal itself could have normally lived. That is to say, the very existence of that cut-off part finds connection with the nourishment that is given to it. Thus it is possible that that part may live forever if ample nourishment is given to it.

The afore-said surgeon is Doctor Alexis Carrel who worked in the Rockefeller Institute, New York. He

conducted this experiment on a part of an embryo of a hen, and it grew and remained alive for more than eight years. The afore-said doctor and others like him have experimented on the human parts such as the organs, muscles, heart, skin and kidney and have come to this conclusion that the said parts develop and remain alive so long as they are given ample nourishment.

Even Dr. Dimend Webrel who is a professor of John Hopkins University says:

It has been proved through experiments that the tissue of a human body remains in working order due to nourishing power. Since this saying is based on scientific findings it is highly explicit and significant.

Apparently, the first person who conducted this test on the body parts of an animal was Doctor Jacques Loeb who was one of the surgeons of Rockefeller Institute in New York. The said doctor experimented on the birth of a frog from eggs which were not inseminated. He saw that some eggs remained alive for a long period while some died very soon. That led him to experiment on different parts of a frog's body and consequently was successful in keeping alive these parts for a long time.

Later Doctor Warren Lewis and his wife proved that it is the tissue of a bird's foetus can be placed in salt-water and kept alive. When some organic substance is added to it, the tissue tends to grow and multiply. Successive tests have revealed that it is possible for the tissue of any animal to remain alive and grow in saline provided they are given nourishment. However it is still not known whether that tissue remains alive or not after turning old.

Afterwards, Doctor Carrel embarked on further tests and proved that these tissues do not age an animal. Rather the lifespan of these parts is more than the normal lifespan of the animal itself. The said doctor started his experiment in the year 1912 and on this path faced many problems until he and his assistants finally succeeded in proving the following points:

- (1) The afore-said tissues remain alive constantly provided they do not encounter certain occurrences which destroy them like deficiency in food and entry of certain microbes.
- (2) These tissues not only remain alive but grow and multiply just as they grow and multiply inside an animal's body.
- (3) It is possible to know the measure of growth and increase of these tissues and their relation with the nourishment given to them.
- (4) Time has no effect on them. That is to say, these tissues do not turn old and weak through the passage of time. In fact the least sign of ageing does not appear in them. Moreover, these tissue grow and multiply in the current year just as they grew and multiplied in the previous years. All these signs reveal that they grow and remain alive if proper care and food is provided to them. Therefore the main factor which causes death is inattentiveness and not ageing.

So, what is the cause of man's death? Why it is that man does not live for more than hundred years and usually lives for only seventy or eighty years?

We may reply as such: An animal's body possesses numerous and diverse parts and these parts have a strong connection with each other, to the extent that the life of one is dependent on the life of the other. Thus, when due to some reason, one part weakens and dies, the other remaining parts also die. In addition to that are microbes which cause illnesses. These reduce man's age and restrict it to seventy or eighty years especially the number of human beings who die during childhood.

What has ultimately been concluded from tests and experiments is as such: The reason why man dies is not because he has completed seventy, eighty or hundred years but because the external factors enter some of his (internal) parts and kill and destroy them and since there exists a relation between these and other parts, the other parts too get destroyed.

Thus, whenever medical science becomes powerful enough to destroy these external factors or at least prevent them from influencing the parts of our body, there can be nothing which can stop man from living hundreds of years just as some species of trees live for this number of years. It is not far when medical and health sciences will attain this lofty achievement and consequently the number of people living an average life will increase or that they will live twice or thrice the normal age.¹⁷

The Mahdi is alive and being given sustenance

When we wish to speak on this topic and prove that the Mahdi, the awaited one, is alive, receiving his sustenance and living a life just like others until the time when Allah gives him permission to emerge and establish the truth and justice and destroy oppression, we are bound to mention before anything else, the following preliminaries:

Firstly, the possibility of man's living hundreds or rather thousands of years and just as you are aware, science and nature do not repudiate this possibility.

Secondly, the awaited Mahdi is the same Abu al-Qasim Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-'Askari ibn 'Ali al-Hadi ibn Muhammad al-Jawad ibn 'Ali al-Ridha..., until the end of his lineage, as mentioned previously.

Thirdly, the Mahdi was born on the day which we have previously mentioned, and Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari had no son other than the Mahdi. Rather he is the only child of his father.

Now that you have become aware of these points we say: We have reasons which prove that the Mahdi is alive and is being given sustenance. For an impartial person it suffices him to refer to only one of them:

First: Basically, what is deemed to be expedient is this that the Mahdi is alive. This is because we are sure about his birth but doubt his death. Not even one authentic and reliable person has narrated anything about the Mahdi's demise. The only thing which can be seen in the expressions of some of the deniers is certain improbabilities and the point that how it is or would be possible for the Mahdi to live such a long life.

Verily, whatever I have reviewed of the sayings of reliable traditionists, historians and genealogists, I could not find in their sayings any stipulation about the demise of the Mahdi. Thus it is not right on our part to pass judgment about the Mahdi's death after knowing for sure that he is living.

The Mahdi's long life being merely unusual does not mean that we give up our previous firm belief. Thus it is fair to say that the one who believes in the Mahdi's death is compelled to produce evidence for it as against the one who says that the Mahdi is alive and is being given sustenance.

However, even if we assume that evidence can be produced, yet one cannot pass judgment on the Mahdi's demise. Rather one is forced to oppose the evidence with views which are stronger in reference and more manifest in proof.

Second: When the Mahdi's birth is proved, there remains no alternative but to accept one of the following two matters:

We either accept that the Mahdi (a.s.) is alive and continues to live like all other human beings until the time when Allah shall command him to emerge, or that he has died a natural death and Allah by His Power will revive him at the appointed time. There is no doubt that the first matter is closer to what is customary and to the principles of nature than the second which is more unlikely and far from the natural wont. For this reason, the action of Prophets in bringing the dead to life was considered to be a miracle and not longevity.

Third: The traditions unanimously accepted by both the Sunnis and the Shi'a state that the Caliphs after the Holy Prophet (S) who are the Imams of the Muslims, are twelve in number, and will exist so long as this religion continues. After it has been proven that Mahdi is the twelfth amongst them, then that necessitates the belief that he remains alive. Otherwise what necessarily follows is that there is no Imam amongst the Muslims in this era and their death will be similar to the death of those people living during the period of Jahiliya.

Fourth: Traditions which speak of Mahdi's occultation and indicate the manner in which people derive benefit from his existence clearly show that the Mahdi is alive and being given sustenance, living like other human beings. Some of those traditions state that the Mahdi is awaited (*muntadhar*) during the period of his occultation, while others specify that the period of Mahdi's occultation will be the same as the period of his age, and a third group of traditions say: Blessed is the one who during the period of occultation of the Mahdi is steadfast in his belief about his Imamate. Besides these, there are other sayings which prove his life and his remaining alive till the day of his emergence.

In fact, it can be said that the very word occultation (*Ghaybah*, غيبة) about the Mahdi and his title 'the hidden one' (*al-gha'ib*, الغائب) are itself a clear testimony of his living because, the words 'occultation' and 'the hidden one' have been placed vis-a-vis the words 'presence' (*udhur*, حضور) and 'the present one' (*al-hadir*, الحاضر), not the words 'death' (*al-mawt*, الموت) and 'the deceased' (*al-mayyit*, الميت), or one who will be born, as Ibn Abi al-Hadid has claimed.

Fifth: the clear statements of some of the great Sunni scholars about continuity of the Mahdi's existence.

Amongst them we may mention the name of Shaykh Muhyi al-Din al-'Arabi in his book *al-Futuhāt* as narrated by Shaykh 'Abd al Wahhab al-Sh'arani in his book *Al-Yawaqit wa al-Jawahir*, which we quote from the book *Is'af al-Raghibin*:

'The Mahdi is the immediate son of al-Hasan al-'Askari and the fact that Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari departed this world in the year 260 A.H. necessitates the Mahdi's existence and his continued life till the time of his emergence, or that he dies and then Allah will bring him to life again.. It does not appear that Shaykh Muhyi al-Din had the second possibility in mind'.

Amongst them is Shaykh Abu 'Abd Allah, Muhammad ibn Yusuf ibn Muhammad al-Kanji who in his book *Al-Bayan fi Akhbar Sahib al-Zaman*, based on what the author of *Is'af al-Raghibin* has narrated on page 227, says:

'One of the points which proves that the Mahdi is alive and still living after going into occultation, and the fact that his continuity is not an impossibility, is the very existence of 'Isa ibn Maryam and al-Khidhr and Ilyas who are amongst the friends of Allah, and the existence of the one-eyed Dajjal and the accursed Satan who are amongst the enemies of Allah. The existence of these personalities has been substantiated by Qur'an and Prophetic traditions'.

Amongst them is the learned scholar and mystic Shaykh Khawaja Muhammad Parsa who in his book *Fasl al-Khitab*, based on what is mentioned in *Yanabi' al-Mawadda*, page 451, after mentioning the birth of the Mahdi says: 'Allah bestowed wisdom and decisive speech upon the Mahdi in his infancy just as He did in the case of Yahya and 'Isa.'

Khawja Muhammad Parsa continues: 'Allah lengthened the age of the Mahdi just as He lengthened the age of Khidhr'.

Amongst them is Shaykh 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha'rani who in his book *Al-Yawaqit wa al-Jawahir*, as mentioned on page 157 of *Is'af al-Raghibin*, says: 'The Mahdi is the son of Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari and his date of birth is 15th Sha'ban 255 A.H. He is still living until he meets 'Isa ibn Maryam'.

Thereafter he says: 'Shaykh Hasan al-'Araqi narrated this for me after his meeting with Imam Mahdi and the same has been confirmed by my master, Sayyid 'Ali al-Khaw^س_ر'.

Amongst them is Shaykh Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi who, as mentioned in *Yanabi' al-Mawadda*, pg.469, said to his students at the time of his death:

"You may sell my medical and philosophical books and give the money derived from them in charity to the poor. But with regards to my books on exegesis (*tafsir*), hadith and mysticism, preserve them in the libraries; and every night recite seventy thousand times the attestation of Unity (of God) i.e. (لا اله الا الله) and send my salutations to the Mahdi."

The author says: This saying of Shaykh Sadr al-Din does not necessarily prove the existence of the Mahdi because he must have spoken these words under this impression that perhaps his students will witness his emergence. However the first saying is more evident.

Amongst them is Shaykh Sa'd al-Din al-Hamawi, as mentioned on page 474 of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda*, narrating from the book of Shaykh Aziz ibn Muhammad Nasafi, who while classifying Allah's saints says:

'Allah, the Exalted, chose twelve 'Wali' (custodians) from the Ahl al-Bayt for this Ummah (nation) and made them the successors to the Holy Prophet (S)..... the last of the saints who is the last successor of the Holy Prophet and the last custodian and the twelfth representative is the Mahdi, Sahib al-Zaman'.

Amongst them is Shaykh Shahab al-Din al-Hindi, well-known by the title of 'Malik al-'Ulama'. In his book *Hidayah al-Su'ad*, as mentioned in the book *Durar al-Musawiya*, he says: "The ninth Imam from the offspring of Imam al-Husayn is Imam Hujjat Allah al-Q'im al-Mahdi. He is hidden, and he has a long life just like 'Isa, Ilyas and Khidhr, amongst the believers, and Dajjal and al-Samiri, amongst the infidels.

Amongst them is Shaykh Muhammad famous as Khawja Parsa who said in the margin of his book *Fasl al-Khitab*, in addition to what has been mentioned from him in *Durar al-Musawiya*: 'Caliphate and Imamate shall end in the Mahdi. He is the Imam right from the time of his father's demise until the Day of Judgment. 'Isa shall pray behind him and acknowledge him and will invite the people towards his school of thought which is the school of thought of the Prophet (S)'.

Amongst them is the famous traditionist Shaykh Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, the author of *Fath al-Bari fi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*. In his book *Al-Qawl al-Mukhtasar fi 'Alam al-Mahdi al-Muntadhar*, according to what has been mentioned in *al-Futuh al-Islamiyah*, vol.2, pg. 320, he said:

'Sound traditions have determined for us the belief of the Mahdi's existence. The Mahdi is the same person whose emergence shall coincide with the emergence of 'Isa and Dajjal. By the Mahdi is meant this very personality and those before him were not the Mahdi at all.'

Amongst them are some other learned scholars and mystics who have written such sayings and sentences about the Mahdi in the form of poems and odes in Arabic and Persian, as mentioned in *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* and other books. These poems speak of the Mahdi's existence and the fact that he is a living personality receiving his sustenance from his Lord. They have depicted the Mahdi with such positions as *wilayah*, Imamate, Caliphate and deputyship on behalf of the Holy Prophet (S) and that he is the channel of divine blessings.

Those wishing to know more should refer to books written by our scholars in this regard especially the book *Kashf al-Astar fi al-Gha'ib 'an al-Andh* written by Haj Mirza Husayn al-Nuri al-Tabarsi (may his dust be fragrant) – the Master of the 'Mujtahids' and the last of the inspired traditionists. The contents of this book are such that it would quench the thirst of a thirsty person and cure the sickness of a sick

person.

The Mahdi and those who have seen him

Under this title we shall set forth three fine narratives as a means of cooling the heart and not in the form of reasoning and argumentation.

Firstly, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha’rani in his book *Tabaqat al-Urafa’* while writing about Shaykh Hasan al-‘Araqi says:

‘I went along with Sayyid Abu al-‘Abbas al-Huraythi to meet Shaykh Hasan al-‘Araqi. The latter said: ‘Should I narrate to you the story of my life right from its beginning until now, in such manner as if you have been my intimate friend right from childhood’? I replied: ‘Yes, please do.’

He said: ‘I was a youth amongst the craftsmen of Damascus. On Fridays, we used to occupy ourselves in playing, drinking and gambling. It was on one of those Fridays that I received some sort of an inspiration from Allah that: Have you been created for such deeds? Therefore, I gave up my usual activities and fled away from my companions. They pursued me but could not find me. I entered the mosque of Bani Umayyah and saw a person on the pulpit who was speaking about the Mahdi. Hearing this, I yearned to meet him. There was not a single prostration that I performed without asking Allah to fulfill my wish for meeting him. One night, while being engaged in the recommended prayers, I saw all of a sudden someone sitting behind me. He rubbed his hands over my back and said: “O my son, the Compassionate Allah has granted your wish. I am the Mahdi, what do you want?”

I said: “Will you come with me to my house?”

He replied: “Yes.” Then we went together and on the way he said: “Make a place vacant for me so that I can be alone.” I made a place vacant for him and he stayed with me for seven days and nights’.

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* narrates on page 455 (an incident) from the book *Kashf al-Ghumma* of Shaykh ‘Ali ibn ‘Isa al-Arbali who in the view of the Shi’a and the Sunnis is a reliable person. The said author relates as such: People narrate stories and incidents about the miracles of Imam al-Mahdi (may Allah be pleased with him) which describing them would take a long time. However I shall narrate two of them which are closer to our time and which have been narrated to me by a group of reliable brothers.

First: There lived a man named Isma’il ibn al-Hasan in the city of Hilla, between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. My brothers narrate from Isma’il that there appeared a boil on his left thigh, which was the size of the fist of one’s hand. Doctors who looked at his boil expressed their inability to cure it, so he went to Baghdad to see the foreign physicians who said that there was no cure for it. Thereafter, Isma’il left for Samarra and visited the graves of Imam ‘Ali al-Hadi and Imam al-Hasan al-‘Askari (may Allah be pleased with them). Later he entered the cellar (*sardab*). There he beseeched the Compassionate Allah and sought help from the Mahdi.

Then, he entered the Tigris River, took the ritual bath and put on his clothes. Suddenly he saw four riders coming from the direction of the city of Samarra. One of them was an old man holding a spear in his hand while the other was a youth wearing colorful clothes. The one holding the spear was coming from the right flank while the other two were coming from the left flank. The youth with colorful clothes was coming from the center.

This youth asked Isma'il: "Will you go tomorrow to your family?" Isma'il replied: "Yes". He said: "Come close to me so that I can see what ails you". Isma'il went close to him. He bent down and pressed his thigh with his blessed hand and then sat back on his saddle. The old man who was holding a spear in his hand said: "You have been cured, Isma'il. This is the Imam".

The four riders left and Isma'il too followed them. The Imam said: "Return!" Isma'il replied: "I shall never part from you." The Imam said: "It is for your own good that you go back." Isma'il replied: "I shall not part from you under any circumstances." The old man said: "Have you no shame! Your Imam has twice commanded you to go back and yet you disobey?" Isma'il stopped. After Imam went forward a few steps, then turned back to him and said: "Isma'il, when you reach Baghdad, the Caliph Abu Ja'far Mustansir Bi'llah will forcibly summon you. When he offers you something, refuse to accept it. Also tell our son Razi al-Din to write on your behalf to 'Ali ibn 'Awadh. I have directed him to give you whatever you wish."

After this the Imam left with his companions and Isma'il's eyes were fixed on them until he could see them no more. He sat on the ground for some time and started to weep because of his separation from them.

He then went to Samarra where the people surrounded him and said: "Why do we see you so much changed? What has happened?" Isma'il said: "Do you know who those riders were who had left the city and gone towards the river?" They said: "They were from the nobles and are the owners of cattle". Isma'il said: "They were Imam and his companions. The one dressed in colorful clothes was Imam and it was he who rubbed his blessed hand over my boil".

They said: "Allow us to see for ourselves". When Isma'il displayed his thigh to them there was not even a scar left to be seen. They started tearing his clothes (to take as blessings) and then took him to a safe house so that others could not reach him. Later, the Caliph's representative came and inquired about this incident and asked his name, his background, his native place and the purpose his exit from Baghdad in the first week.

The next morning after reciting his prayers, Isma'il left the city of Samarra before a huge crowd. On the way he reached a place where people had gathered in great numbers and were inquiring about his name, genealogy and the place from which he came. When they saw and recognized him by the afore-said signs, they began to tear his clothes and took them away as blessings. The Caliph's representative wrote a detailed report on this incident and dispatched it to Baghdad. The minister called in Sayyid

Radhi al-Din to inquire from him the authenticity of this incident.

When Radhi al-Din (who was one of Ismail's companion and had been Ismail's host before leaving for Samarra) and some others saw Isma'il they dismounted from their animals. When Ismail showed his thigh to them and they could not see any trace of the wound. Radhi al-Din fainted, and after gaining consciousness, he caught hold of Isma'il's hand and took him to the Minister. Radhi al-Din cried and said: "He is my brother and the most beloved of all men to me".

The Minister inquired from Isma'il about that particular incident and he in turn described it in length. The Minister ordered the doctors who had previously seen Isma'il's thigh to come forward. When they arrived he asked: "When did you last see his wound"? They replied: "Ten days ago". The Minister displayed Isma'il's thigh and when the doctors saw no trace of it, they said: "This is the act of the Messiah". The Minister said: "We know who has performed this act".

The Minister took Isma'il to the Caliph who asked him to give an account and Isma'il explained in detail what had occurred. When the Caliph presented Isma'il with a sum of one thousand dinars, the latter said: "How dare I take even a little of this offer." The Caliph said: "Whom do you fear?!" He said: "The one who cured me because he has forbidden me from accepting anything from you." On hearing this, the Caliph began to cry.

'Ali ibn 'Isa says: I was once narrating this incident to a group of people who were around me. Shams al-Din, who was Isma'il's son, was also present, but I had then not recognized him.

Shams al-Din said: "I am Isma'il's son."

I said: "Had you seen the wound on your father's thigh"?

He replied: "At that time, I was only a child. However I had heard this matter from my parents, relatives and neighbors and saw the place of wound after it had been cured. I could not find any trace of the wound and hair had grown on that spot".

'Ali ibn 'Isa further says: I inquired about this incident from Sayyid Safi' al-Din Muhammad ibn Muhammad and Najm al-Din Haydar ibn Amir too and they informed me of this incident and said: "We had seen Isma'il before and after his recovery."

Moreover his son related to me that his father after his recovery, went to Samarra forty times so that he would perhaps get the honor of visiting him once again.

Second: Sayyid Bāqī Athwah 'Alawi Hasani related to me that his father Athwah did not acknowledge the existence of the Mahdi. He would often say: "Whenever the Mahdi comes and cures me, I will confirm the people's saying" (about the Mahdi). When we had all gathered for the 'Isha' (night) prayers, we heard a shriek from our father. We went close to him and he said: "The Imam passed from here at this very moment. Look out for him." We went in search for him but could not find anyone. We returned back and then our father said:

“Someone approached me and said: ‘O Athwah! I replied: “At thy service.” He said: “I am the Mahdi. I have come to cure you.” He stretched out his hand, pressed my thigh and then left”.

The narrator says: After this incident, he used to run like a deer and there was not a trace left.

‘Ali ibn ‘Isa says: I inquired about this incident from Sayyid Ḅiqi’s son and he too admitted it.

1. A detailed tradition with almost similar contents has also been narrated in Rawdat al-Safa, vol.3, pp. 18–19.
2. Abu al-Fida in his Tarikh, vol.2, pg.45, ‘Abd Allah al-Shabrawi in Al-Ithaf, pg. 179, Muhammad ibn Shuhna in Rawḍat al-Manadhir (in the margin of Muruj al-Dhahab) vol.1, pg. 294, Abu al-Fallah al-Hanabli in Shadharat al-Dhahab, vol. 3, pg. 150, Muhammad ibn Khawand Shah in Rawḍat al-Safa’, vol. 3, pg. 19, Abu al-‘Abbas Ahmad al-Qarmani in Akhbar al-Duwal, pg. 117, Shaykh Sa’ad al-Din al-Hamawi (as per what has come in Yanabi’ al-Mawadda, pg. 395), Shaykh Salah al-Din Safadi (Yanabi’ al-Mawadda, pg. 393) and Shaykh Abd al-Rahman al-Bastami (Yanabi’ al-Mawadda, pg. 337).

Besides these names, those which have been mentioned by Nuri in his Kashf al-Astar are Sayyid Jamal al-Din, author of Rawḍat al-Ahbab, Ahmad Bayhaqi Khusrojardi Naishaburi, Hafiz Abu al-Fath Muhammad ibn Abu al-Fawaris, Shaykh ‘Imir ibn ‘Imir Basri, ‘Abd al-Haq Dahlawi, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahman J̣̣mi, Q̣̣i Shahab al-din Malik al-Ulama, Ibn Khashshab, Hafiz Abu Muhammad Ahmad al-Baladhuri, ‘Abd Allah al-Mutairi author of Riyaḍ al-Zahira, Mulla Husayn Kashifi, Naḥr ibn ‘Ali Jahzami al-Nasri (as mentioned in Najm al-Thaqib), Q̣̣i Jawad Sabati, Mulla ‘Ali Qari, Shaykh Sadr al-din al-Qunawi, Al-Nasir li Din Allah Ahmad, the Abbasid Caliph, Mufez ibn-Ahmad well known as ‘Akhtab-ul-Khutaba’ Khawrazmi and others whom al-Qunduzi and Nuri have mentioned in their books Yanabi’ al-Mawadda and Najm al-Thaqib.

3. ‘Arf al-Wardi, pg.59.

4. ‘Arf al-Wardi, pg.59.

5. The author of ‘Arf al-Wardi (page 58) too has narrated the same. Thereafter he writes: Al-Tirmidhi says: – This an acceptable and authentic tradition.

6. The author of Rawḍat al-Safa’, vol. 3, pg. 18, narrates from Ibn Mas’ud that the Holy Prophet (S) said: “If there remains not more than a day from the life of the earth, God will prolong the day until a person from my progeny who carries the same name as mine, shall appear and fill the earth with equity and justice just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression.”

7. Author of Rawḍat al-Safa’ (vol..3, pg. 18) writes: “Abu al-Qasim is his agnomen and the Imamiyah call him al-Hujjah, al-Q̣̣im, al-Mahdi and Sahib al-Zaman. In the same place, he mentions his name and agnomen to be the same as that of the Holy Prophet (S) Abu al-Fida n his Tarikh (vol. 2 pg. 45) and al-Shabrawi in Al-Ithaf (page 179) have also narrated the same.”

8. Tarikh Abu al-Fida, vol. 2, pg. 45, Tarikh Farmani, pg. 117, Al-Ithaf of al-Shabrawi, pg. 179, Rawḍat al-Manadhir (in the margins of Muruj al-Dhahab) vol. 1, pg. 294, Saba’ik al-Dhahab of Suyuti, pg. 78, Shadharat al-Dhahab, vol. 2, pg. 150, and Wafayat al-A’yan of Ibn-Khallikan, vol. 1, pg. 451.

9. Author of Qarmani writes (on page 44): Mas’udi says Khiḥr is Alexander’s cousin and the vanguard of Dhu al-Qarnayn’s army living during Hazrat Ibrahim’s time. He drank from the well-spring of life so that he has remained alive till today, and will continue to live till the sounding of the trumpets.

10. Qarmani, pg.50.

11. Qarmani, pg.348.

12. Author of Qarmani (on page 20) has quoted Wahab as saying that Adam lived for 1000 years and as per Torah has mentioned his life to have lasted for 900 years. On page 22 he has mentioned Nuh’s life to have lasted for 1000 years and that of Shith for 912 years.

13. Torah (Verse 14 – Journey of Genesis) has mentioned 910 years.

14. The author of Qarmani (page 20) mentions his age to have been 965 years and the Torah (Verse 17 – Journey of Genesis) has mentioned 895 years.

15. Ibn Hajar in *Iṣṭabāḥ*, vol. 5, pg. 255, has written the same.

16. – About death the Holy Quran (Verse 2 Chapter 6) says: He it is who created you from clay, then He decreed (i.e. a certain) term; and there is a term (i.e. a uncertain one) named with Him.

Thus man's term (i.e. death) is of two types. One is certain and cannot be changed or postponed under any circumstances. The other is uncertain which by some means or the other like strengthening of blood-kinship, breaking off ties of relationship, etc., is subject to change. In this regard Imam 'Ali ibn Musa al-Riḍā (a.s.) said: 'Strengthening blood-kinship prolongs the (decreed) short life, and breaking off ties of relationship shortens the (decreed) long life'. On this basis, a person can live for hundreds or thousands of years only if his term (of death) is an uncertain one and those who have lived for three thousand years and below are those whose term had been an uncertain one and secondly all the means of a sound health had been prepared for them.

17. The magazine *Al-Hilal* (part 2, pg. 196) has published an article from Doctor Jauki under the title 'Long Life' and says: 'Death does not occur because life has become exhausted and reached its natural level. Rather, most of the deaths are caused by poison'. Thereafter he says: 'Majority of us get poisoned and it is not that we die.

Verily life welcomes eternity and what has been worn out can become afresh provided these fresh faculties too do not get poisoned. However, we strive to poison ourselves because whatever we eat and drink are all contaminated with poison. Most of the people reaching the age of fifty tend to gradually commit suicide. They tear apart their own graves with their teeth because they tend to eat whatever they like and their food contains little poison, which weakens and destroys the arteries. Soon the signs of senility become visible'.

Tantawi Jawhari in vol. 17, pg.224, of his exegesis under the verse:

﴿وَمَنْ نُّعَمِّرْهُ نُنَكِّسْهُ فِي الْخَلْقِ﴾

And whomever We give a long life, We cause him to regress in creation... (36:68)

has written the following article taken from the afore-said magazine.

Everything indicates the possibility of long-life and making anew the strength of old people. Professor and Doctor Fured Nuf whose name is well known amongst all, is not a physician but like a Prophet who gives glad tidings. He believes in the possibility of long life exceeding a hundred years and the possibility of regaining back one's youth. His belief is based on the results of experiments conducted on animals and till now he has conducted six hundred experiments.

He further says: Today, we are happy that the 20th century shall not elapse until the possibility of youthful force is restored and the signs of senility removed from the faces.

Again, in vol. 17, pg. 226, Jawhari has written the following article under the title "For how many years we must live?" taken from the afore-said magazine:

'Hufland in his book "The art of living a long-life" says: Truly man is born while (from the viewpoint of structural form and physical powers) being ready and capable of remaining alive for two centuries'.

Thereafter he writes: 'Hufland is not the only one to have expressed this view. Rather all those who have been teaching the subject of 'Nature' have believed in the afore-said view. Moreover the discussion of "possibility of long-life" is the most sparkling discussion amongst them'.

Traditions on the Occultation (Ghaybah)

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* (page 447) narrates from the book *Fara'id al-Simtayn* a tradition from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) from his father, from his grandfather, from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib who narrates from the Holy Prophet (S):

“The Mahdi is from my progeny. There shall be an occultation for him. When he emerges, he will fill the earth with equity and justice just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression.”

In the same book, on page 448, its author narrates from Sa'id ibn Jubayr who narrates from Ibn 'Abbas that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“Ali is my *Wasi* (legatee) and from his progeny shall come the awaited Qa'im al-Mahdi, who shall fill the earth with equity and justice just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression. I swear by Allah Who appointed me as a warner and bringer of glad tidings that those whose belief will be firm in the Imamate of the Mahdi during the period of his occultation will be scarcer than red sulphur.”

Then Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ansari stood and said: “O Messenger of Allah! Shall there be an occultation for the Qa'im from your progeny?” He replied:

“Yes, I swear by my Lord,

so that Allah may purge those who have faith and that He may wipe out the faithless” (3: 141)

Thereafter he said:

“O Jabir, this affair is a divine affair and this secret is a divine secret. So be on guard against any kind of doubt in this affair, because doubt in the divine affair is unbelief (*kufr*)”.

Again, on the same page of the afore-mentioned book, the author narrates from al-Hasan ibn Khalid who narrates from 'Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha:

“Allah shall erase from the earth every cruelty and oppression through my fourth son from my progeny who shall be the son of the chief of slave-girls. He is the one about whose birth the people doubt. He is the same one who shall go into concealment. When he emerges,

the earth will beam with the light of its Lord.. (39:65)”

Once again, in the same book, on page 454, the author has narrated from Ahmad ibn Zayd who has narrated from Di'bal ibn 'Ali al-Khuza'i who was in the presence of Imam Ridha and recited an elegy before him, ending in the letter 'tā' (ت). He narrates that the Imam said:

“The Imam after me is my son Muhammad and the Imam after him will be his son 'Ali. After him will follow his son al-Hasan and after al-Hasan shall come his son, al-Hujjah al-Qa'im, the one who will be awaited during his occultation and who will be obeyed at his reappearance.

“He will fill the earth with equity and justice just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression. About his emergence, my father has narrated from my grandfathers who in turn have narrated from the Holy

Prophet (S) that:

‘The likeness of the (emergence of) Mahdi is like the likeness of Qiyamah:

it will not come on you but suddenly (7: 187)’.”

The author of the afore-said book (on page 488) has narrated from the book *Ghāyah al-Marām*, from *Fara’id al-Simtayn* that Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Ansari quoted the Holy Prophet (S) as saying:

“The Mahdi shall come from my progeny. His name and agnomen shall be the same as my name and agnomen. Amongst all the people, he shall resemble me the most in appearance and character. There shall occur an occultation for him, and bewilderment (about it) due to which nations will go astray. The Mahdi will emerge like a piercing star and fill the earth with equity and justice just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression”.

Again on the same page of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda*, he (i.e. Shaykh al-Qunduzi) narrates from *Fara’id al-Simtayn* from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, from his grandfathers, from ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“The Mahdi is from my progeny. There shall occur an occultation for him and bewilderment (about it) due to which nations will go astray.... He shall fill the earth with equity and justice just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression”.

On page 493 of the same book, he has narrated from the book *al-Manaqib*, from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“Blessed is the one who attains the time of the Qa’im from my Ahl al-Bayt, while believing him to be the Imam during his concealment (i.e. before his emergence) and he befriends his friends and is hostile to his enemies. Such a person shall be amongst my friends and those whom I love and the noblest of my Ummah to me on the Day of Judgment”.

The author of the same book narrates from Abu Basir who narrates from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq, from his forefathers, from Amir al-Mu’minin that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“The Mahdi is from my progeny. His name shall be the same as mine and his agnomen too shall be the same as my agnomen. Amongst all the people he shall resemble me the most in appearance and character. There shall be an occultation for him, and bewilderment among the people (about it), due to which people will go astray from their religion. Then the Mahdi will emerge like a piercing star and will fill the earth with equity and justice just as it had been filled with cruelty and oppression”.

In the same book, a similar tradition from Abu Basir is mentioned but with this difference: “The Mahdi shall emerge like a piercing star and will bring along with him the treasures of the Prophets...” (Till the end)

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* (on page 494) has narrated from Abu Basir who narrated from Jabir

ibn Yazid al-Ju'fi: I heard Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ansari saying: The Holy Prophet (S) told me:

“O Jabir! My legatees and the Imams of the Muslims after me are 'Ali, then al-Hasan, then al-Husayn, then 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, then Muhammad ibn 'Ali, known as al-Baqir. O Jabir! You shall meet him and when you do so send my greetings upon him. After al-Baqir will come Ja'far ibn Muhammad, then Musa ibn Ja'far, then 'Ali ibn Musa, then Muhammad ibn 'Ali, then 'Ali ibn Muhammad, then al-Hasan ibn 'Ali and then al-Q^{asim}, whose name and agnomen are the same as my name and agnomen. Al-Q^{asim} is the son of al-Hasan ibn 'Ali. He is the one whom Allah, the Exalted, will give victory over the East and West. It is he who will go into concealment from his friends. No one shall remain firm in his belief of his Imamate except for those whose hearts Allah has tested for faith”.

Mahdi and the manner of his occultation

Ibn Babawayh al-Saduq in his book *Ikmal al-Din wa Itmam al-Ni'mah* said:

‘My father and Ibn al-Walid both narrated to me from Sa'd ibn 'Abd Allah who said: “Innumerable people who had gathered for the burial of Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari narrated to us – and it is impossible for so many people to come together and forge a lie.”

The narrator says: In the year 278 A.H. when eighteen years or more had passed after Imam al-Hasan Al-'Askari's demise, we presented ourselves before Ahmad ibn 'Ubayd Allah ibn Yahya ibn Khaqan. He was the Caliph's representative in Qum, responsible for collecting the tribute. He was amongst the most severe in enmity to the progeny of Abu Talib. In that gathering, discussion took place about the progeny of Abu Talib who were the residents of Samarra and their faith, piety and standing before the Caliph.

Ahmad ibn 'Ubayd Allah said: In the city of Samarra and amongst the Alawis, I have never come across a person like al-Hasan ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Ridha, and I have not heard anyone amongst the kings and all the Bani Hashim possessing such chastity, nobility, magnificence and munificence like him. He was given more priority than (even) the aged. Similarly the commanders, ministers, writers and common people respected him very much.

Ahmad ibn 'Ubayd Allah said: One day I stood beside my father when it was his day for meeting the people. Suddenly, a guard approached and said: “Ibn al-Ridha (i.e. Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari) is at the door.” My father said loudly: “Allow him to enter.” A young man entered possessing a wheatish complexion broad eyes, good physique, good appearance and a good figure, majestic and awe-inspiring.

As soon as my father saw him, he went forward to welcome him. I had never seen my father doing that for any of the Bani Hashim or the leaders and companions of the Caliph. When Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari came near, my father hugged and kissed his blessed face and hands. He caught hold of his hands and offered him his own place. He himself sat facing Imam al-'Askari and began to converse with

him. He would address Imam by his agnomen (i.e. he would say 'O Abu Muhammad) and would often express his willingness to sacrifice his life for him. I was surprised by my father's behavior.

At that moment, the guard once again approached my father and said: "Al-Muwaffaq (who was the Caliph) has come." Whenever Al-Muwaffaq would come to meet my father it was customary for my father's guards and other special men to line up in two rows right from the place of my father's sitting until the doorway of Caliph until al-Muwaffaq would come and then return back. In spite of realizing that the Caliph was going to come, my father was still looking at the Imam's face and conversing with him until the Caliph's special servants were seen.

Then my father told the Imam: "May I be sacrificed for you. Whenever you wish, you may go." My father commanded his servants to take Imam al-'Askari from behind the rows so that the Caliph would be unable to see him. Once again my father hugged and kissed his blessed face and hands and then allowed him to go.

I told my father's door-keepers and servants: "Woe be upon you all. Who was this man that my father respected and honored him so much"?

They replied: "This man is from the Alawis. His name is al-Hasan ibn 'Ali and he is known as Ibn al-Ridha."

My astonishment increased. I passed the whole of that day thinking about the great man, and about my father and his behavior with him, until night approached. After the 'Isha (night) prayers it was always my father's habit to sit and look over the letters and petitions. After he finished reading the letters, I went and sat beside him. My father said: "O Ahmad, what do you want"? I replied: "I wish to ask you a question by your permission". He said: "Ask me whatever you wish to ask."

I said: "Who was that man whom you respected, honored, glorified and paid tribute so much so that you expressed your willingness to sacrifice your own life and your parents' lives for him"?

He replied: "He was Ibn al-Ridha, the Imam of the Shi'a." After a moment's silence my father continued and said: "If the Caliphate is taken away from the Bani 'Abbas, no person from the Bani Hashim is more entitled to it than this man because of his majesty, chastity, good behavior, self-continenence, piety, worship, good morals and virtuous deeds. If you had seen his father you would have found him to be a great, glorious and benevolent man".

Listening to this, I plunged myself deeper into the sea of thought and amazement and became furious at my father for speaking in this manner.

Later on, I did nothing but enquire about Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari and his affairs. Regarding him, everyone – i.e. leaders, writers, judges, jurisprudents and the common people, expressed his grandness, nobleness, dignity and high personality. Moreover they gave him priority over the rest of the Bani Hashim, the aged, and all other classes of people. All of them would say: "He is the Imam of the Shi'a."

This great man's position and dignity increased in my view because none from the friends and enemies said anything but good things about Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari.

A person who was from the Ash'arites said: "O Abu Bakr! How is this man Ja'far, the brother of Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari"?

He replied: "Ja'far is not a man to be asked or rather compared with Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari. Ja'far is a transgressor, adulterer, wine-drinker and an ill behaved personality. I have found fewer people like Ja'far who are disgraceful and ignorant".

I swear by Allah that when news of the demise of Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari reached the Caliph and his companions, I witnessed some unexpected scenes which were very astonishing for me. The incident was as follows:

When Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari fell ill, the Caliph called for my father to inform him about the Imam's illness. My father immediately rushed to the Capital and soon returned back. He came back with five special and trusted men of Caliph who were all reliable to him and one of them was Nuhayr Khadim. He ordered these five men to protect the Imam's house and inquire of his health. He called for several doctors and charged them with the responsibility of looking after the Imam every morning and night.

Two days later, news came of the Imam's deteriorating condition. My father rushed to visit him and commanded the doctors not to leave the Imam alone. Afterwards, he called for the Chief Judge and ordered him to bring ten of his companions who were reliable from the viewpoint of faith, trustworthiness and piety. The Chief Judge summoned those ten men to the Imam's house and ordered them to remain besides the Imam day and night. They too remained at the Imam's service until he passed away.

Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.) passed away in the month of Rabi' al-Awwal 260 A.H. and a tumult took place in the city of Samarra.

The Caliph sent several of his men to Imam's house and they in turn searched Imam's rooms and sealed off everything they could find. They also searched for Imam's son (i.e. Imam of the Age). They brought midwives in order to examine the slave-girls (of Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari). One of the midwives said: "So and so slave-girl is pregnant." The Caliph charged Nurayr Khadim, his companions and other women to keep watch over her.

Thereafter, they became busy in the Imam's funeral and the entire city came to a standstill. The Bani Hashim, the commanders, writers and all the common people attended the Imam's funeral. On that day, the city of Samarra resembled the Day of Judgment. As soon as the Imam's body was given the ritual wash and was shrouded, the Caliph sent forward Abu 'Isa Mutawakkil to recite prayers over Imam's dead body.

When Abu 'Isa came close to the Imam's body, he lifted the shroud and exposed his face to the Bani Hashim, (who were from the Alawis) the Abbasids, commanders, writers, judges, jurisprudents and the

common people and then said: "This man is Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari who has died a natural death. During the entire period of his illness, so and so doctor, so and so judge, so and so trusted person and so and so just person had been present and they can all bear witness on this affair". After this, he covered Imam's face and recited prayers over him and in his prayers he recited five times *Takbir* (inaugural phrase). By his commands, the Imam's body was taken out from his house and was buried in his great grandfather's house.

After the Imam's burial and the people's dispersal, the Caliph and his companions engaged in seeking the whereabouts of his son (the Imam of the Age). They properly searched various houses. They desisted from distributing the Imam's inheritance. Those people who were charged with the responsibility of keeping watch over the slave-girl continued their task for two years until they realized that she had not been pregnant. Thereafter, they distributed the Imam's inheritance between his mother and his brother (Ja'far al-Kadhdhab). Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari's mother claimed that she was the legatee of Imam and the same too was proved before the judge. Meanwhile, the Caliph was still in pursuit of the Imam of the Age.

After distribution of the inheritance, Ja'far al-Kadhdhab approached my father and said: "Grant me the status of my father and brother (i.e. the position of Imamate) and I will in turn, give you twenty thousand dinars."

On hearing this, my father became furious and said:

"O stupid person! The Caliph has unsheathed his sword and his whip against those who say that your father and your brother are Imams, in order to turn them away from their belief in that, but he has been unsuccessful until now. If, in the eyes of the Shi'a you are the Imam, then you are no more dependent on Caliph or others for giving you the position of Imamate. Conversely, if you are not the Imam before the Shi'a, the Caliph and others cannot procure this position for you".

When my father realized his stupidity and ignorance, he ordered his men not to allow him to attend his gathering any more. Thenceforth, he did not attend until my father died.

At present too, the Caliph is still in pursuit of the Imam of the Age but with no trace of him.'

Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni in the first volume of his book *Usul al-Kafi*, in the chapter on the birth of Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.), said: Al-Husayn ibn Muhammad al-'Ash'ari and Muhammad ibn Yahya and others said: Ahmad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Khaqan was in charge of the estates and collecting the land tax from Qum, and they related the same account as he had done.

Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi in his book *al-Fihrist* in the biography of Ahmad ibn 'Ubayd Allah ibn Yahya has also narrated the afore-mentioned tradition but with a minor difference.

Ahmad ibn 'Abbas ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Najashi has also narrated the same tradition in his book *al-Fihrist*.

The author says: Shaykh Mufid in his book *al-Irshad*, Fadhl ibn al-Hasan al-Tabarsi in his book *I'lam al-Wara*, and Muhammad ibn Muhsin al-Faidh al-Kashani in his book *al-Wafi*, have narrated the afore-said tradition from Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni.

Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Nu'man (i.e. Shaykh Mufid) in his book *al-Irshad* says:

'Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari fell ill on the first day of Rabi' al-Awwal in the year of 260 A.H. and passed away on the Friday, the eighth of Rabi' al-Awwal of the same year. At the time of his demise, Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.) was twenty-eight years old. He was laid to rest in the same room in which his grandfather was buried in their house in Samarra. He appointed his awaited son for the establishment of the just government. Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.) would keep secret the birth of his son and would conceal his affairs because the situation of that time was unfavorable.

The Caliph of that time searched intensely for Imam's son and made great efforts to find out about his affair because belief in the Mahdi had become widespread amongst the Shi'a Imamiyah, and he knew they were awaiting him. During his life, Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari never disclosed his son in public and after his demise too, the enemies never got the chance of recognizing his son.

Ja'far ibn 'Ali (i.e. Ja'far al-Kadhhab) took away Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari's inheritance and strove hard to imprison his wives and slaves. He rebuked and reprimanded the Imam's companions just because they were awaiting his son's appearance and had faith in his Imamate. He even encouraged the people against them so that in this manner he would be able to strike fear in their hearts and bring pressure on them. As such, the Imam's followers were subjected to all sorts of persecution like arrest, imprisonment, threat, insult, abasement and abjectness.

On the other hand, the Caliph did nothing to assist them. Apparently, Ja'far al-Kadhhab derived inheritance of Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari and strove to take his brother's place and become the Imam of the Shi'a. However, none of the Shi'a accepted his Imamate. Thereafter, he sought the Caliph's help and asked him to bestow the position of Imamate on him. He even agreed to donate huge sums of money but all these were of no avail'.

Mahdi and his place of occultation

We, the Shi'a Imamiyah regard as correct and authentic the afore-mentioned circumstances of the occultation of Abu al-Qasim Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Mahdi (a.s.), as related by the great scholars and traditionists upon whom we trust and rely. However what some of the common Shia's say in this regard, and the Sunni scholars attribute to us, is lacking in any evidence and proper transmission.

What we had previously mentioned about the circumstances of the Mahdi's occultation is correct in our view but such matters like: where was the Mahdi at the time of his father's demise? Where did he go into concealment or in which portion of his house did he conceal himself? Was he on the roof of his house or

did he go down into the *sardab* (cellar)? Did he hide in the house or flee from its door? Are all uncertain.

Verily, what appears customary is that he should have remained in the house besides his great father at the time of his father's demise. Why shouldn't it be so, especially if we consider that the Mahdi at that time was only a child (apparently) and besides had no other place other than his parents' house?

Perhaps this matter can be inferred from the tradition of Ahmad ibn 'Ubayd Allah ibn Yahya ibn Khaqan because he at that time was in his own house and disappeared without the people being aware of him. Although the Caliph and his followers and helpers were in search of him, yet they could not find him. Previously it was mentioned that the Caliph had put his trusted men in charge of looking over Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari at the time of his illness pretending to be his helpers because on that day none were present except 'Aqid, the servant and 'Uyayqal, who was the Mahdi's mother.

The Caliph had appointed ten of his trusted men under the pretext of serving Imam (a.s.). However his only purpose was to get information about the Mahdi's whereabouts because it was normal for a child like him to be present in his parents' house especially at that time when his father was on the verge of departing from this world. However Allah did not wish that they should become informed of the Mahdi and so kept his affairs concealed from them.

Verily, the One who protected Musa ibn 'Imran in the middle of the sea while the waves were driving him to the left and right, and Who protected him in his infancy in the Pharaoh's house is Powerful enough to protect our Master Mahdi in his own house.

The God Who protected his noble forefather on the day he fled from the enemies towards the cave, and Who kept secret his trace from the enemies and saved him by His Power and Strength, is not helpless in protecting our Master, al-Mahdi (a.s.) who was then five years old living with his parents.

I do not deny this matter that protection of our Master, the Mahdi at the age of five or six is something unusual. Rather, I am forced to say: Protection of the Imam at that time was through unseen channels and even if it was through ordinary channels we are compelled to say: These channels are rare and impracticable for majority of the people.

In short, our Master, the Mahdi (a.s.) apparently went into concealment either from inside or outside his own house without its particulars being known to us. Allah knows better this matter.

This is the final word on the place of the Mahdi's disappearance and what can be said on this subject. Whatever has been mentioned by some learned Sunni scholars and some Shi'a writers about the characteristics of the Mahdi's occultation are all lacking authentic references. How good it would have been if they had mentioned those references.

The cellar (sardab) and its pilgrimage

From the book of *al-Sawa'iq* it appears that the Shi'a Imamiyah or a group amongst them reckon that the Mahdi (a.s.) had concealed himself in the cellar. They expect him to emerge from this cellar and they stop near its door with their horses and await his reappearance. How good it would be if the author of *al-Sawa'iq* had mentioned the reference of this information.

I think the author of *al-Sawa'iq* has neither emerged from the land of Hijaz nor entered the country of Iraq nor visited Samarra. Otherwise, he would have realized that this matter bears no truth. Apparently, what is mentioned in some books that the Shi'a claim the Mahdi to have disappeared in the cellar, is because they see the Shi'a Ithna 'Ashari visiting the honoured location of the *sardab*. Thus it is necessary for us to mention the reason for visiting it.

Therefore we say: As per the historical books, the holy courtyard in which is the mausoleum of 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Hadi and al-Hasan ibn 'Ali al-'Askari and that courtyard which is behind their holy mausoleum, and the third courtyard in which the cellar is located were all places of residence of those eminent personalities. Some of the great Islamic scholars like Thiqah al-Islam al-Nuri have clearly stated this matter.

Since the Mahdi (a.s.) does not have any specified place to be visited in, it is better and more proper to visit him in his house. On the contrary, it even seems proper to visit his house itself because visiting friends' houses after they have left it is customary among friends.

In this regard, a poet says:1

امر على الديار يار ليلي اقبل ذي الجدار و ذي الجدارا

و ما حب الديار شفقن قلبي ولكن حب من سكن الديارا

Verily this matter has been the reason for the Shi'a visiting the cellar even though this reason is hidden and unknown to many. Visiting the *sardab* (cellar) is a good trend and a cordial custom which has become the motto of the Shi'a, and how good and proper this act appears to be even though I have not seen any text or traditions in this regard.

Rather, we have not come across any of the books with any supported tradition, which command us to visit Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) especially in the *sardab*.

We Shias believe that our Master, the Mahdi (a.s.) is a living being who receives his sustenance and hears words and answers. He is the Imam through whose obedience we should be 'upright' in the divine religion, and he is the channel between God and us. His *Ziyarah* (visitation) is correct; focusing (our attention) on him is permissible; conversing with him in every place and time and in any language is permissible. In this regard the holy *sardab* possesses no special significance except what we have mentioned before. Similarly, the *Ziyarah* (visitations) which have been mentioned do not possess any specification even though is preferable.

The houses over which tens of years have passed; the place where God has been worshipped; the place where God has been remembered; the place where prayers have been performed for days and nights and the place where the sound of recitation of Quran has been raised, are worthy of being honored and visited, and when a pilgrim enters them he is reminded of its dwellers.

One of the main reasons as to why such holy houses and especially the *sardab* (cellar) are visited is this that its owners are alive – the owners who cannot reside in them and have in fact deserted them out of fear of enemies. Besides, we are in need of the Mahdi (a.s.) and are deprived of his favors.

Visitation of these houses with such reminiscences will naturally move the heart of a pilgrim who is a Shi'a. How often a pilgrim weeps, calls out, implores involuntarily and requests God to hasten the emergence of the Mahdi. Verily, factors of spiritual intimacy and love greatly influence man's nature.

Philosophy and reason behind the occultation

Discussion on the occultation is a vast topic and traditions in this regard are many. What is necessary for us to know is the following: Is there anyone to ask about the philosophy behind the occultation and is there anyone who can say: Since I do not know the reason behind occultation, I do not believe as you do in the existence of the Mahdi and I further say: if as per what you say, the Mahdi is the Imam, then he should appear amongst the people and walk in the market-places!

We say: Concerning the numerous *mustafidhah* traditions (traditions with several narrators) which we previously mentioned and few more of which we shall inform you about later on, the awaited Mahdi is Abu al-Qasim Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-'Askari who was born on 15th Sha'ban 256 AH. Besides, we have also mentioned to you the names of those learned scholars who have approved the above point.

Since Allah is All-Wise, He would never command or forbid any matter or action except out of prudent knowledge. The same is true for this particular matter. All that prudent knowledge is referred to those charged with a duty because, in the Holy presence of God, there exists no want and His Holy Self is Needless and All-Sufficient. Thus every action of God is in conformity with prudent interests whether we realize those interests or not and whether we perceive those reasons or not.

From the known affairs where not even a single person dispute is this that every voluntary and

involuntary incidents and affairs which occur in this world should be as per the Divine prudence and rather as per the Divine Will. Amongst these affairs, the most important of them is the occultation of the Mahdi (a.s.). Based on this principle, the occultation of the Mahdi must be as per prudence and wisdom, whether we perceive it or not and whether we understand its reason or not.

If we do not believe in what we have said, we are helpless in denying an affair for which we do not possess any reason of its denial – Firstly that the Mahdi is the same Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-'Askari.

Secondly that he is hidden from view. (Its meaning will be mentioned later on).

Thirdly that his occultation has taken place by the Will and Decree of Allah.

If you pay attention and deliberate over each of these three affairs, you will realize that denying any one of them will not be rationally and traditionally permissible. So we are bound to believe that the event of Mahdi's occultation is in accordance with prudence. Otherwise, we have to deny one of the three afore-said affairs.

Shaykh al-Saduq in his book '*Ilal al-Sharā'i*' has narrated from 'Abd Allah ibn al-Fadhl al-Hashimi as saying: "I heard al-Sadiq Ja'far ibn Muhammad saying: "For the Sahib al-'Amr (master of the affair) there shall occur an occultation during which every speaker of falsehood will fall into doubt and skepticism."

I said: "May I be sacrificed for you. For what reason"?

He replied: "For a reason, which we are not at liberty to divulge to you". I asked: "What is the wisdom behind his occultation"?

He replied: "The wisdom for his occultation is similar to the wisdom for the concealment of the past Divine Proofs. The wisdom behind the Mahdi's occultation will not be disclosed until after his emergence, just as the reason for Khidhr's actions (meaning the drilling of a hole in the boat, the killing of a lad and the repairing of the wall) was not divulged until Musa and Khidhr decided to part company.

"O Ibn al-Fadhl, this affair is a divine affair, this secret is a divine secret and this concealment is a divine concealment. We must accept that all His actions are based on wisdom, even if the reason for them is not known to us".

This statement is the final word and the word of truth that every Muslim must submit to and confirm.

Indeed, very often a person seeks the reason and philosophy for some of the Divine Acts for the sake of gaining certainty and tranquility in his own self and not that he wishes to use his confirmation and rejection as a means for perceiving the reason of Divine actions or not. Therefore, before mentioning the philosophy and reason for occultation we are bound to briefly present certain preliminaries. Those interested to know its details should refer to books which have been written in this regard. The preliminaries are as follows:

An person who invites the people towards his call is bound to take resort to the apparent and ordinary channels. For achieving his aims it is not permissible for him to refer to the unseen and supernatural channels because doing so would destroy the essence of reward and punishment. Rather the coming of Prophets and Messengers would all come to vain.

A Prophet and *wasī* (legatee) are the same as far as the afore-said matter (invitation) is concerned and this matter is in fact one of the essential conditions of an evangelist (whether he may be a Prophet or an Imam). However there exists a difference between a Prophet and an Imam from another view-point and it is as such: As a Prophet is the establisher and founder of religion it is obligatory for him to start his invitation and mission in a customary manner and notify the people about the ordinances (as against an Imam).

Since argumentation has been completed upon the people through a Prophet, it is necessary for the people to seek and question from an Imam, and it is not obligatory for an Imam to invite the people.

Rather it is obligatory upon the people to approach the Imam and receive the religious commandments from him, protect him and ward off the enemies from him, just as it was obligator, for the people to protect their Prophet and receive the religious commandments from him. When the people begin to lapse such duties and forsake their Imam and the Imam in turn fears from being killed by his enemies and finds none to defend him from his enemies it is permissible for him to isolate himself from the people and leave aside the duty of invitation and propagation. This responsibility is directed towards the people and not the Imam.

The views of al-Muhaqqiq al-Khawja Nasir al-Din Tusi too are the same. In his book *Tajrid al-I'tiqad* he says: "The presence of Imam is a grace (*luṭf*), and his right of disposal (*tasarruf*) is another grace, and his absence is due to our sake".

Now that you have understood this matter, we say: We may mention the following as the reasons and philosophy behind the occultation of Imam Zaman:

First: Disciplining and Punishing the Shi'a, and in fact all others

If a Prophet or an Imam is present among a nation and that nation does not rise for his obligatory rights or disobeys his commands and does not submit to his prohibitions, and in short, the Prophet's invitation leaves no impression on the nation and rather they exceed the limit and cause harm to their Prophet, it is permissible for the Prophet to abandon and withdraw from his nation so that in this manner he rectifies them.

Perhaps in this manner, the nation concerned would stop its rebellion and begin to adopt the path of guidance. Perhaps they would obey and attain benefit from the Prophet's and Imam's existence among them as a preacher, guide, leader and the one inviting the people. It is regarding this matter that Allah, the Exalted, says:

وَأَعْتَزِلُكُمْ وَمَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ

And I will withdraw from you and what you call on besides Allah... (19:48)

When withdrawal and abandonment of invitation becomes the means for rectifying a nation then it is prudent to do the same even though people may be unaware of this matter. Moreover it would be beneficial to them even though they may not possess understanding of the same. This withdrawal and abandonment of invitation does not possess any fixed limit and boundaries and in fact, one cannot say anything about their limit. Rather its limit and duration depends on the nation turning back from its deviated path and becoming enlightened after heedlessness. It depends on the people's awareness of the benefits of the presence of the Prophet or an Imam.

History bears witness to the varieties of hardship and suffering the People of the house of revelation and messengership, and the family of Muhammad, had to face, and the Ummah's not discharging their obligations due to them which Allah had appointed as the reward of this messengership. Indeed, they were always subjected to severe persecution and pressure such as being taken captive, imprisoned, crucified, expelled, banished, exiled and driven away from their land.

The awaited Mahdi is aware of all such matters and knows that he too would be subjected to such cruelties and oppression. Rather, it would be much more severe, greater and bitter in nature because people are aware of his objectives and are aware that he would give orders to rise with arms. Thus the Mahdi has withdrawn from the Ummah as he knows he would receive the same treatment as his father, forefathers, cousins, and relatives had received.

His objective in this is nothing but to discipline the nation and make them aware, bring them back on the path of guidance and comprehend the obligation of his right and the benefits resulting from it. The author of '*Ilal al-Shari'i*' has narrated a tradition from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.): "When Allah dislikes that we should remain amongst a people, He takes us away from them."

Second: Freedom in invitation and independence in the affair

Anyone who wishes to rise for rectifying a nation in either worldly or religious matters should possess friends and companions and have a pact with some of the superior men so that they either remain his helpers or at least do not create any obstacles for him. The essential condition of this pact and agreement is this that he should not oppose them and abandon his invitation to them, and go along with them, in the fulfilment of the pact, until when the affair is completed and time of the pact has come to an end, he deals with them as he does with others.

This means that some of the commandments should not be implemented with respect to those who have concluded a pact with him and he deals with them contrary to the realities because of fear and

dissimulation. Thus Allah says:

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَمْ يُظَاهِرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَحَدًا
فَاتِمُوا إِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ

...except those of the polytheists with whom you have made an agreement, then they have not failed you in anything and have not backed up anyone against you, so fulfil their agreement...
(9:4)

When the Mahdi (a.s.) shall emerge, he is bound to invite (the people) through ordinary channels and his duty would be to judge according to the realities and not to fear anyone just as can be found in most of the traditions. This is because the Mahdi's period is the period of emergence of truth, the most sparkling emergence and so, fear and dissimulation are inconsistent with this matter. This requires that he should not have allegiance of anyone upon his neck. Indispensably, he should be needless of any pact and agreement, which would result in dissimulation. This would occur only when the ordinary channels for his assistance come to halt.

Shaykh al-Saduq in *Kamal a-Din* has directly narrated from Hisham ibn Salim who in turn has narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) as such: "The Q^{im} shall emerge without having paid allegiance to anyone."

In the same book, Shaykh al-Saduq directly narrates from Imam 'Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha who said: "It is as if I see my Shi'a, at that time when they will have lost my fourth offspring, (like cattle) seeking grazing land but not finding it."

The narrator said: I asked: "Why will that be, O son of Messenger of Allah"? He replied: "Because their Imam will be concealed from them".

I said: "Why will he be concealed from them"? He replied: "So that when he emerges with the sword, he will not have given allegiance to anyone".

Third: Perfecting and refining the souls

Amongst the well-known facts which are not a subject of dispute is that there exist differences in people's capacities with regards to the assumption of duties, and the acquisition of knowledge and sciences. From this stems differences in levels of faith, in the recognition of Prophets and legates and in the Divine laws.

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ؟

Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability... (2:286)

Rather, how often it happens that when duties exceed a person's ability and his studies are beyond his capacity, the very purpose (for which the duties and studies were performed) is lost. In fact, he would resort to disobedience or would become an apostate or still further, his ignorance would increase more than before.

رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ

.. Our Lord, do not burden us with that which we cannot bear.. (2:286)

It is said that if Abu Dharr knew what was in Salman's heart, he would have declared him an unbeliever or killed him.

Shaykh al-Kulayni in *al-Kafi* has narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.): "It is mentioned in the book of 'Ali's (a.s.):

Dawud said: "O Lord, reveal to me the truth as it is (with You) so that I can judge accordingly". It was said: "You do not possess the strength to bear this affair." Dawud insisted until God accepted.

One day a person approached Prophet Dawud with a complaint about another person and said: "This man has taken away my wealth". God revealed to Dawud that the claimant had killed the defendant's father and plundered his wealth. Dawud ordered for the claimant's death and he was killed. His wealth was seized and given back to the defendant. People were amazed by this incident and word on this matter went around until it reached Prophet Dawud's ears. He became worried by this talk and requested God to relieve him from this uneasiness. Afterwards, God revealed to Dawud: "You should judge amongst the people by means of proofs, and persuade them to swear in My Name...".

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "If people knew how Allah has created them, then none amongst them would find fault with the other."

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) said: The believers possess (various) ranks and positions – some of them have one rank, while some others have two, three four, five, six or seven ranks. If faith of the second level is placed on a person having faith of the first level, he will not have the strength for it, and if faith of the third level is placed on a person possessing faith of second level, he will be unable to bear it..."

It has come down from traditions that when the Mahdi emerges, he will rule as per his own knowledge; he will spread the true Divine sciences (*ma'rif*) amongst the people; he will enliven the holy religion of Islam and will annul all that is not in Islam and has been added to it such that people will imagine that the Mahdi (a.s.) has brought a new religion and a new Book.

Verily, the execution of such reforms and dissemination of the realities the ways it should and must be carried out requires much more perfect aptitudes and intellects than what we have today. Perhaps, the postponement of the Mahdi's emergence and continuation of his occultation is because of the hope of achieving perfection and development which, by the blessings of various sciences, is on the increase day by day.

The magazine "Al-Hilal" published an article about Resurrection a few years ago under the title "Does there exist a world after (the end of) this world?" and while replying to this question, it emphasized that a day will come when the literary and scientific world will reach its perfection like the material world.

Surely, very soon men shall become aware of the literary, scientific and ethical world – more than their cognizance today of the material world. Why shouldn't it be so especially when man has already perceived that the material world has ruined his rights and has put him in pressure and torment? Soon man shall witness how the earth will be illuminated by the Divine Light and by means of the awaited Mahdi's emergence.

Fourth: Trial and examination of the people

Amongst the practices of Allah that prevail amongst His servants right from the time He appointed the Messengers and Prophets – (and Allah's practices never alter or change) – is the matter of human trial and examination so that

"...he who would perish might perish by clear proof, and he who would live might live by clear proof.." (8:42).

This is in order that the levels of faith of people and their reality is manifested, and in fact, so that their own condition becomes known to themselves. Indeed, it often occurs that man's condition is unknown and remains a secret even for him.

The Divine Shari'ah (laws) contains literary, material, worldly, spiritual, individual and social programs and teachings. This world is a school and the Prophets are teachers and evangelists. Every school or lesson requires an examination appropriate to it. The events that occur in this world are a sort of examination for those lessons in order to ascertain the effect of these lessons on people's souls.

أَحْسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ

Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, "We believe", and not be tried? (29:2)

The holy Islamic Shari'ah (religious law) is the most perfect of all the Shari'ah. In the Islamic Shari'ah we find such divine sciences and instructions which cannot be found in other Shari'ah. So all that was

prevalent amongst the previous nations such as the various tests and examinations should, out of necessity, prevail in this nation too because this general rule comprises those lessons and even more than that.

Amongst the most important matters by which the previous nations were subjected to evaluation and examination was the matter of occultation of some of their Prophets. Then, the same occultation should occur for the leaders of this nation too just as the Holy Prophet (S) went into concealment in the mountain pass of Abu Talib for a period of three years. In the same way, the concealment of Mahdi, so that the path of guidance is distinguished from the path of deviation and a believer is distinguished from a hypocrite, is the greatest test and trial for his Shi'a, and in fact, for other than them. It is like the concealment of some Prophets and it makes no difference if the duration of concealment is short or prolonged.

Shaykh al-Saduq in *Kamal al-Din* has narrated a hadith with the chain of transmission ending in Sudayr al-Sayrafi who said:

I, along with Mufadhhal ibn 'Umar, Abu Basir and Abūn ibn Taghlab, were honored with meeting Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.). We saw him sitting on the ground in a coarse woolen cloak which was collarless and had short sleeves. He was weeping like a woman weeping over her lost dear one. The signs of grief and sorrow were visible on his blessed face and tears were flowing from his eyes.

He was moaning and saying: 'My master, your occultation has snatched away the sleep from my eyes. It has taken away my comfort and has deprived tranquility from my heart. My master, your occultation has fastened my grief and sorrow forever. Due to loss of friends one after the other, our gathering has been broken. I do not feel the tears of my eyes and the crying of my heart which result from the past calamities and hardships but that I see the same in my imagination which is greater, more sorrowful, severe and unknown than all other difficulties.

Sudayr said: We were perplexed (at witnessing Imam's condition) and our hearts became upset as a result of Imam's terrifying words about the destructible events. We thought that the calamities and misfortunes of the day, which had befallen on Imam, had brought him to this state of grief and sorrow.

So we said: "O son of the best mankind. May Allah not cause you to cry. For what reason are you weeping and what has made you grieve to such an extent"?

The narrator said: Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) heaved a sad sigh which caused pain to his heart and then said:

"This morning I was looking at the book of *Jafr* (the book which contains knowledge on deaths, calamities, misfortunes and knowledge about the past and future and which was exclusively given to Muhammad and his progeny by the Exalted God). I came across such matters like the Qa'im's birth, occultation, delay in reappearance, his long life, the sufferings of the believers at that time, the appearance of doubt and uncertainty in their hearts because of his prolonged occultation, the deviations that will occur for the majority of them and their removing the tie of Islam from their necks (i.e. shirking

Islamic obligations) while Allah has said:

وَكُلُّ إِنْسَانٍ أَلْزَمْنَاهُ طَائِرَهُ فِي عُنُقِهِ ﴿١٧﴾

And We have made every man's actions to cling to his neck.” (17: 13)

and that is *wilayah*.”

(The word *’irah* – طَائِرُهُ – here refers to the *wilayah* of the Holy Prophet’s progeny).

“These events have overpowered me with grief and sorrow”.

We said: “O son of the Messenger of Allah, honor and ennoble us by sharing with us some of those things of which you have knowledge”.

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) said: “The three characteristics which Allah has assigned for three of His Prophets have been assigned for our Q[’]im too.

First of all, the Q[’]im’s birth is the same as was the birth of Musa. Secondly, his occultation is the same as was the occultation of ‘Isa and thirdly his delay is the same as was the delay in the case of Hazrat Nuh (Noah). In addition Allah has set the long life of Hazrat Khidhr as a proof for the Q[’]im’s long-life”.

The narrator said: I said: “O son of Messenger of Allah, explain these affairs so that they become clear for us”.

He replied: “With regards to Musa’s birth, it should be said that when Fir’awn (Pharaoh) learned that his kingdom would fall at Musa’s hands, he summoned the soothsayers who. The wizards indicated to Fir’awn the lineage of Musa and that he will be from the Bani Isra’il.

“As a result of that, Fir’awn continued to order his men to slit the bellies of the pregnant women belonging to the tribe of the Bani Isra’il, until, in the search for Musa, they killed more than twenty thousand new born babies. However they were unable to kill Musa as All-Mighty Allah protected him.

“Similarly, when the Bani Umayya and Bani ‘Abbas realized that the downfall of their cruel kingdom and empire would take place by Mahdi’s hand, they set up enmity with us and engaged in killing and exterminating the descendants of the Holy Prophet (S) in their desire to kill the Q[’]im. However Allah does not let anyone from the oppressors to know His task save He shall complete and perfect His light even though the polytheists may dislike it.

“With regards to Isa’s (Jesus’) occultation, the Jews and Christians both agreed that ‘Isa had been killed. However Allah, the Glorified refuted their view as per these divine words:

وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ

..And they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them so... (4: 157)

“Similarly, during the occultation of our Q^u’im, the Islamic Ummah (nation) will at any time deny him due to the length of his occultation. Then, some of the deviated amongst them shall say: The Q^u’im is not yet born. Some others will say: The Q^u’im has been born and has died. Others who shall say that the eleventh Imam was barren will become apostates. Still others who would say that Imams are more than thirteen will deviate from the true religion. Yet others will disobey Allah because of their saying that the Q^u’im’s soul has become manifest in the body of another.

The incident of Nuh’s delay is that since he asked Allah for his nation’s punishment, Allah sent Jibra’il (Gabriel) with seven date-seeds.

Jibra’il said: O Nuh! Allah, the Exalted says: “These people are My slaves and My created ones. I do not wish to destroy My slaves in a lightening except after the confirmation of the invitation and completion of argumentation. So continue inviting your nation until I bestow My rewards upon you. Plant these seeds because you will attain salvation and deliverance after they become trees and bear their fruits. Give glad tidings about this matter to your believing followers.”

“When a long time passed and those seeds turned into strong trees possessing leaves, branches and stalks and the trees began to bear dates, Nuh (a.s.) asked Allah to fulfill His promise. For the second time, Allah ordered Nuh to sow fresh date-seeds yet again. He ordered him to strive and adopt patience in this regard and to inform this matter to his believing followers. When Nuh followed these instructions, three hundred of his men turned apostates and they said: ‘If what Nuh claims happens to be the truth, His Lord would not have broken His promise’.

Each time a group turned apostates, Allah commanded Nuh to sow seeds from the dates of the previous trees. This continued until the number of true believers remained only some seventy odd men.²

Then Allah revealed to Nuh (a.s.): ‘Now, the brightness of dawn has obviated the darkness of night since the truth has been established and faith has been purified except those whose nature are malicious and gloomy. If I had destroyed the unbelievers and spared this group who had brought faith in you and then turned apostates, I would not have been true to My previous promise made to your true believers, whose monotheistic belief was based on sincerity and who had held fast to the rope of your Prophethood. My promise to them was that I will make them vicegerents over the earth, give strength to their religion and turn their fear and anxiety into tranquility so that doubt and uncertainty is obviated from their hearts and they become sincere in their worship for Me.

How could it be for Me to make them successors, give them strength and turn their fear into security while being aware of the shaky faith and evil nature of those who had turned apostates. If at the time of

giving succession to the disbelievers I had given the kingdom to the believers, pride and discord would have overtaken them. A series of afflictions would have become strong in their hearts and they would have created enmity with their brothers and battled with them for gaining power.

If seditions had arisen and battle had taken place how was it possible for the believers to issue commands and how was it feasible to follow the religion? Such was not possible. Now,

“make the ark before Our eyes and (according to) our revelation.. (11:37)”.

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) said: “The same condition shall prevail for our Qa'im. The period of his occultation will be a long one until absolute truth appears and faith gets clearly distinguished from the evils of discord so that any of the Shi'a who are evil in nature and have feelings of discord will exit from the religion at the time when Caliphate and the affair is divulged and comes into view”.

Al-Mufadhdhal said: I said: “O son of Messenger of Allah, the Nawasib (a group belonging to Sunni sect) reckon that this verse³ has been revealed in honor of Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman and 'Ali.

He replied: ‘No. May Allah not guide the Nawasib. During whose period was it that the religion of Allah had been established and had become the object of satisfaction of the Holy Prophet? In which period was it that the Divine command had been divulged amongst the people with no fear in hearts and no doubt in minds? During which era of their time it was as such notwithstanding the fact that the Muslims turned away from the religion and seditions occurred during their time and battles took place between them and the disbelievers!?’

Then the Imam (a.s.) recited this verse:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا اسْتَيْأَسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِّبُوا جَاءَهُمْ نَصْرُنَا

Until when the Messengers despaired and the people became sure that they were indeed told a lie, that Our help came to them... (12: 110)

“As for the incident of 'Abd al-Salih (the virtuous slave), al-Khidhr, indeed Allah, the Exalted did not prolong his life for the sake of Prophethood He ordained for him, or for a Book He revealed to him, or for a divine law given to him by which he could annul the divine laws of the previous Prophets, or for an Imamate (leadership) by which he made His servants follow him, or for any act of obedience He made incumbent on him.

Rather as Allah is All-Aware that the Qa'im's age would be lengthy during the period of his occultation such that His servants would start denying him because of his prolonged life, therefore He lengthened the life of al-Khidhr with no reason for his longevity except to make it an argument in favour of the

Qa'im's long life. In this way, the proofs and reasons of the enemies and obstinate people is severed and people will not have any plea against Allah”.

The author of *Rawdhah al-Wa'izin* has narrated from Jabir al-Ju'fi: I asked Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.): “When will be your *faraj* (deliverance)”?

The Imam (a.s.) replied: “Alas! Alas! There shall be no *faraj* until you are sifted (and he repeated this sentence three times) so that impure (believers) are removed and only the pure (believers) remain.”

Again, in the same book, its author narrates with a chain of transmission from ‘Ali ibn Ja’far who narrates from his brother Musa ibn Ja’far (a.s.) who said:

“When the fifth one (i.e. Mahdi) from the progeny of the seventh one (i.e. Musa ibn Ja’far) disappears, then fear Allah with regards to your faith and be careful to see that nobody ruins your religion. This is because the Master of the affair will be compelled to conceal himself until a group who has faith in his Imamate will turn away from their belief. This occultation is only a trial from Allah Who wishes to examine His creatures by this means”.

Fifth: Fear of being killed

One of the reasons of seclusion of the Prophets was the fear of being killed. Thus, they would conceal themselves so that in this manner they could protect themselves and hence achieve their aim later on.

About Musa (a.s.), Allah, the Exalted says:

فَفَرَرْتُ مِنْكُمْ لَمَّا خِفْتُكُمْ

So I fled from you when I feared you..” (26:21)

Again, about Musa, another verse says:

يَا مُوسَى إِنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ يُتَمَرُّونَ بِكَ لِيَقْتُلُوكَ فَاخْرُجْ

..O Musa, surely the chiefs are consulting together to slay you, therefore depart (at once)...
(28:20)

Indeed fear and anxiety was one of the reasons which made Musa ibn ‘Imran (a.s.) flee from Egypt and go to Shu’ayb (a.s.). It was fear that caused the Holy Prophet of Islam to first take retreat first in the mountain-pass of Abu Talib, and later to seek shelter in the cave when the unbelievers decided to kill

him, until Allah commanded him to migrate to Medina along with his companion.

Due to absence of the customary methods through which he could get support and invite the people, and also due to the strength of his enemies, the Mahdi (a.s.) feared from such matters as imprisonment and exile, even crucifixion and being killed. Thus he had no alternative but to go into seclusion and occultation “..***until Allah brings about His command***” (9:24); and ‘Allah has appointed a measure for everything’ (ref. 65:3).

Questions about the Mahdi's fear

With regards to Mahdi's fear and occultation and in the light of what we have mentioned before, there remain a few questions which are worth mentioning:

First Question: Why does Allah, the Powerful not prohibit his enemies and prevent them from killing him?

Reply: Allah, the Exalted, has laid down the prohibition which is not incompatible with the obligation i.e. the command to follow, help and obey him, and forbidding opposition and disobedience to him. However preventing the enemies from him is incompatible with the obligation, and nullifies the reward and punishment. Rather, such a hindrance may give rise to mischief and this cannot emanate from Him, the Exalted.

Second Question: Why is the Mahdi (a.s.) absent amongst the people and why has he isolated himself from them considering that his great fathers were present amongst the people?

Reply: The Mahdi's very foundation is based on emerging with the sword and rising up for God's sake, but such was not the case of his noble forefathers. This is what would expose him to danger especially when it is well-known that he is waiting for an opportunity. Also it was known that if anything happened to one of his forefathers, there would be one to succeed him and take his place, whereas in the case of the Mahdi, there would be no one to take his place before his rising up.

Third Question: If the Mahdi's occultation is due to fear of his enemies, then why has he concealed himself from his friends!?

Reply: If there was a way for his Shi'a, who are in thousands, and for his numerous friends to meet him and visit him, then it would be certain that his whereabouts would be discovered.

Fourth Question: The reply to the third question would be true only if all the Shi'a are able to meet the Imam. However if such a meeting is only for a select group of them, then his whereabouts will not be discovered.

Reply: Among the well-known proverbs: Any secret, which is known to more than two, will no longer remain a secret.

Fifth Question: Why didn't the situation continue as it was during the Mahdi's minor occultation when the special deputies used to serve him?

Reply: The discontinuation of the Mahdi's minor occultation may have been for two reasons:

Firstly that deputyship from Imam's side is especially the post of special deputyship is a very high and lofty position. Since a group amongst the power-seekers falsely claimed the position of deputyship during the last days of the Mahdi's occultation, the door of special deputyship was hence closed.

Secondly the special deputyship, at that time as well, was kept secret and hidden and except for some select people, none were aware of it. If the minor occultation had continued, the position of special deputyship would become known, and the Mahdi's deputies too would have been exposed to danger.

The minor and the major occultation

Our awaited master, the Mahdi, has had two occultations, the minor occultation and the major occultation.

The minor occultation started from the time of the Mahdi's birth and continued till the end of the special deputyship, which lasted for seventy-four years.

The major occultation commenced after the minor occultation and will continue until Allah gives him permission to emerge and rise with the sword.

In his book *Ithbat al-Wasiyah*, 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn 'Ali al-Mas'udi said: "It is narrated that Abu al-Hasan (Imam 'Ali al-Naqi A.S.) was concealed from many of the Shi'a except a select few. When the affairs of Imamate were entrusted to Abu Muhammad (Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari), he used to converse with his special circle of Shi'a and others from behind the curtain, except when he was mounted and would travel towards the Sultan's palace.

Imam al-'Askari (a.s.) and his father were only acting in this manner so as to prepare the ground for the Mahdi's concealment. This was so that the Shi'a would be accustomed to the matter of occultation and would not deny it and would be used to the Imam's absence and concealment.

Verily, right from the time of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (a.s.) till the period of Imam 'Ali al-Naqi (a.s.) and Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.) it was customary for the Shi'a to meet their Imam whenever they wished. If they were deprived of this bounty all at once then doubt and hesitation would have overtaken them. In fact, the faith of some of them would have become shaky. Thus Imam 'Ali al-Naqi (a.s.) and Imam al-'Askari (a.s.) adopted this path as mentioned by al-Mas'udi so that the Shi'a would, little by little, become accustomed to Imam's concealment.

Both Imam 'Ali al-Naqi (a.s.) and Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.) adopted this practice for this noble objective. In addition, the strict surveillance of them by the rulers of their time further intensified this

practice. This resulted in fewer meetings and contacts with them especially so in the case of their Shi'a who were well-known.

The apparent might and magnificence of the afore-said two Imams (a.s.), the great number of servants and slaves and their state of splendor and eminence, also naturally resulted in fewer meetings with the common Shi'a, in fact even with their special Shi'a except at fixed and special times.

The previous policy of Bani 'Abbas with regards to the twelve Imams had changed. Now their policy demanded respect and honor of the Imams and this path was first put into practice by the Abbasid ruler, Ma'mun.

Those who cast a glance over history of Imam 'Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha, Imam Muhammad al-Taqi, Imam 'Ali al-Naqi and Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari will see the policy of association of the Caliphs with Imams. They had kept at the disposal of the Imams varieties of grandeur and splendor such as house, furnishing, clothes, servants, slaves and wealth for such motives which they had in mind. The main motive of the Caliphs, was that the Imams should be before their eyes and close to them so that their surveillance over them would be more intense, particularly during the time of Abu al-Hasan (Imam 'Ali al-Naqi) and Abu Muhammad (Imam al-'Askari).

The reason for Imam 'Ali al-Naqi's concealment from the Shi'a and the increased concealment of Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.) was that there were to be two occultations for our master, the Mahdi. One was the minor occultation during which the deputies and special representatives of the Mahdi (a.s.) had access to him, until the time when the Shi'a became accustomed to the absence and concealment of Imam (a.s.) and the period of major occultation started. In the major occultation, the special deputyship came to an end and the general deputyship started in which no one has the opportunity to meet the Imam officially, unlike the Shi'a of previous times who had the privilege of meeting the Mahdi's noble forefathers.

How people benefit from the hidden Imam

The benefits of Imam al-Zaman's existence from our view-point (i.e. Shi'ite view-point) are of two types:

Firstly, the benefit derived from his existence, since he is among those who are alive, whether he is present or absent, apparent or concealed.

Secondly, the benefit derived from his occupation (of the earth). It was previously reasoned that due to fear and insecurity it is not obligatory for him to put this into practice. However benefits of the first type will necessarily be derived from the Mahdi's existence.

The simile which has been mentioned in the tradition of Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ansari that the absent Imam is like the sun hidden behind the clouds, is one of the most elegant and beautiful similes.

Various benefits and effects are derived from the sun's existence even though it may be covered by a cloud. Moreover, other benefits are derived from its rays if it is not covered by a cloud or rather anything else. The Imam too is the same.

I believe, this comparison has been made from two aspects and there exists two reasons for this (one aspect when the sun is covered by clouds and the other aspect when the sun is not covered by any object and its light glimmers) Deriving benefit from the sun and making use of it by living, and in fact, non-living creatures, is something prevalent whether it is manifest or concealed under the clouds. Every creature derives its own share from it, with the difference that when it is manifest and radiant, the benefit derived is more than when it is covered and concealed. The Imam (a.s.) too is like the sun in both these cases.

This is the view of the Shi'a Imamiyah about the Imam (a.s.). However the Sunnis believe that the benefits and effects derived from the Imam's existence is confined to the second type (i.e. presence of the Imam).

To this, we reply as such:

Some of the Sunnis reckon the Mahdi's occultation to mean that he is invisible and cannot be seen. However, just as mentioned before, their reckoning is far from truth. Rather, his occultation means that he cannot be individually recognized and seen. Thus, it has come down in some traditions that after the Mahdi's emergence people will say: – "We used to see him before too."

Verily the Mahdi is absent (amongst us) but attends gatherings and meetings. He also accompanies travelers and residents. In fact, very often he presents himself during the Haj season. He wears the *Ihram* (pilgrim's garb), recites the call of *Labbayk*, performs the *tawaf* (circumambulation) and concludes his Haj by visiting his honored grand-father (S) and other forefathers' shrines especially at times of special Ziyarahs. Thus the Mahdi is present amongst the Islamic community but is not recognized.

In fact, we say: Who can dare say that during the major occultation it is not possible to come in contact with Mahdi (a.s.) whereas historical and other books provide us with evidences that a section of people have received the honor of seeing and meeting him. This matter is not inconsistent with the tradition which says: "If anyone claims that he has seen Mahdi, then reject his saying." This is because the rejection of the claim of one who has seen him only means rejecting one who claims his special deputyship.

Rather we can say: The Mahdi is one of the members of society and rather the most important member. It is possible that he acts upon his responsibility even though it may not be obligatory for him.

Verily, it is possible that Mahdi may come in contact with kings, rulers, princes and ministers and make some recommendations to them about reforms, maintenance of order and running of the affairs, whether they follow his recommendation or not.

It is also possible that he sits with the jurists, scholars, writers and the learned people and discusses with them such topics as divine theology, moral rectification and literary matters, guiding them towards the truth and right way, irrespective of whether they act upon his words or not. He may meet traditionists, historians, genealogists and scholars of *Rijal* and guide them to the true saying, truthfulness of the concerned matter, authenticity of relation (of narration) and their incorrectness, irrespective of whether they confirm his sayings or not.

Perhaps he talks to preachers, inviters (towards the Divine path), clergymen and guides as well, and reveals to them the correct path and an easier way of reaching their objective, whether they act upon it or not. He may visit the helpless, needy, sick and afflicted people, and inform them of the way to fulfil their needs, heal their sick, and attain ease and comfort, whether they accept it from him or not.

The Mahdi (a.s.) undertakes all these affairs without being recognized, or it is possible for him to undertake them, and he is far from being stingy in doing good to others. So how is it possible to say: How do people benefit from the hidden Imam?

Yes indeed, how many questions on the fundamentals and branches of religion has he answered; how many worldly or religious difficulties has he saved people from; how many sick people has he healed; how many distressed ones has he rescued; how many lost ones has he guided; how many thirsty ones has he given to drink and how many weak ones has he held by the hand!

This book and other books which have been written by reliable scholars (who did not know each other and were living in different places and different times) contain such evidences which bear testimony to the truthfulness of what we have written. A person, after going through the particulars and contexts of these kinds of evidences will gain certainty in the veracity of some of them.

The Mahdi's deputies during the period of his occultation

The Mahdi (a.s.) has disappeared from the view of the people – even from the view of his Shi'a and friends – due to fear from his enemies and in order to safeguard himself for achieving the objectives decreed by God. The Mahdi (a.s.) is awaiting the Divine Command just as the Shi'a are awaiting him.

I can say: Had it not been for his submission to the divine command and his contentment with divine destiny, he would have perished out of grief and sorrow for the distressing events that he has witnessed and witnesses. However the Mahdi is from the Ahl al-Bayt. 'They do not precede Him in the Divine Command and they act only according to His command'. (ref. 21:27)

His honored grandfather would say: "Whatever is the pleasure of Allah, is the pleasure of us, the Ahl al-Bayt".

The Mahdi is concealed from the view of the people, even his Shi'a, but his pure heart is filled with grief and sorrow. He (a.s.) shows the true path to the Muslims, particularly the Shi'a, and sets before them a

clear path to the truth which, if followed, they would achieve salvation in this world as well as the Hereafter.

وَأَنْ لَّوِ اسْتَقَامُوا عَلَى الطَّرِيقَةِ لَأَسْقَيْنَهُمْ مَاءً غَدَقًا

And that if they should keep to the (right) way, We would certainly give them to drink of abundant water (72: 16)

The Holy Prophet recommended adhering to the *Thaqalayn*, the Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt. They are the gates of salvation and the keys to guidance and holding fast to them would become a source of every good.

As far as the Holy Qur'an is concerned, by the Grace of Allah it is available amongst us. If we are unable to reach the Ahl al-Bayt, yet they have left their knowledge and insight amongst us such that it is possible for each one of us to acquire and learn from it. If you do not believe in this matter, you may refer to the books on traditions especially the four earlier books and the three later ones.⁴

In fact, you may refer to the prayers and benedictions which have come down from the Ahl al-Bayt especially the *Sahifah al-Sajjadiyah* which has been narrated with the most authentic chains of transmission from Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (a.s.) It is called the *Zabur* of the ﷺ-Muhammad and it contains great knowledge and insight.

If we are unable to reach the Ahl al-Bayt, yet their sciences, gnosis, ethics and conduct have been written about and safeguarded in books. So, along with the Holy Qur'an, it is necessary for us to hold fast to them too.

Holding fast to them does not mean that we have to catch hold of their hands. Rather it means that we have to act upon their sayings and follow their path. This too is possible and feasible for each and every person. Therefore, there cannot remain any excuse for any Muslim with regards to holding fast to the Ahl al-Bayt, and none can say: The twelfth Imam was hidden and so we could not hold on to him.

Of course, the chain of transmission of these reports and supplications, and their narrators, their denotations, their apparent meanings, common, special, compendious, explanatory, all that which is opposite to them, and such other matters should be considered.

Our master the Mahdi (a.s.) has left behind among the people various reports and traditions from his father and forefathers. In addition to this, various correspondences and epistles have come down from his holiness. Moreover, out of his grace and compassion, he appointed deputies and representatives for the people during the period of minor occultation and it was obligatory for them to refer to these deputies (in spiritual and material affairs of this world and the hereafter). In the period of major occultation too, it is

necessary to refer to them, and rely on and trust in them.

The Mahdi's deputies during the minor occultation

During the period of minor occultation, the deputies of the Mahdi who were allowed to visit him and for whom special epistles were issued were only four:

(1) Shaykh Abu 'Amr 'Uthman ibn Sa'id al-'Amri: He was first appointed to the post of deputyship by Imam 'Ali al-Naqi and then retained in the same post by Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.). Still later on, 'Uthman ibn Sa'id undertook the Sahib al-Zaman's affairs, and replies to various problems and signed statements (from the Imam) were issued through him.

(2) When 'Uthman ibn Sa'id passed away, his son Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Uthman succeeded him and he became his father's vicegerent in the Imam's affairs.

(3) When Muhammad ibn 'Uthman passed away, this lofty position was transferred to Abu al-Qasim al-Husayn ibn Ruh. He was from the family of Bani Nawbakht.

(4) When al-Husayn ibn Ruh passed away, Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Samari succeeded him.

None of these four deputies undertook the post of special deputyship without an explicit nomination for it by Imam of the Age himself, and a clear statement by the preceding deputy. The Shi'a would not have accepted the sayings of these four deputies but for the various evidences which each of them had at hand which substantiated their sayings.

When Abu al-Hasan al-Samari's death approached he was asked about his successor. He took out for them a signed statement (*tawqi'*) written by the Mahdi (a.s.) himself. The contents of this *tawqi'* are as follows: –

“In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful,

O 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Samari! May Allah increase the reward of your brothers on account of losing you. You will die within six days. So prepare yourself for the inevitable. Do not appoint anyone as your successor because your demise will mark the beginning of the major occultation. I will not emerge but after Allah's permission, and that will be after a long period of time when the hearts of the people will become hardened and the world will become full of injustice, tyranny and oppression.

There will be some from my Shi'a who will claim to have seen me. Indeed anyone who makes such a claim before the coming out of Sufyani and the call from heaven announcing my reappearance, is a liar and an imposter. There is no might nor strength except with Allah, the All-high, the All-mighty”.

The Mahdi (a.s.) had other deputies too (other than the afore-said four deputies) in such places as Baghdad, Kufa, Ahwaz, Hamadan, Qum, Rayy, Azarbaijan and Naishabour etc.

Signed letters (from Imam of the Age) would be sent to them and they in turn would transfer wealth to his eminence. These deputies were many in number – perhaps a hundred, but they could not visit the Imam. As a matter of fact, the four afore-said deputies acted as the mediators between them and Imam (a.s.).

The Mahdi's deputies during the major occultation

The afore-said minor occultation has come to an end and the second occultation i.e. the major occultation, has started and nobody but Allah knows its termination. The special deputyship has been changed to general deputyship but with specific conditions and stipulations. It is not out of place to mention here some of the traditions which have come down from the Imam of the Age and his honored fathers in this regard.

Al-Kashi narrates: A *tawqi'* (signed letter) was sent for Qasim ibn 'Ali with the following contents: "There is no excuse for any of our friends to doubt in what is narrated from us by our trusted scholars. This is because we have made them partners in our secret and we have entrusted our secrets to them...".

Shaykh Tusi in *Ghaybah*, Shaykh al-Saduq in *Kamal al-Din* and al-Tabarsi in *al-Ihtijaj* have narrated from Ishaq ibn Ya'qub that the Mahdi (a.s.) said:

"As for the new events that occur, refer in them to the narrators of our traditions for their verdicts, as they are my proofs over you, and I am Allah's proof over them..."

Al-Tabarsi in his book *al-Ihtijaj* has narrated from Abu 'Abd Allah Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq (a.s.) a lengthy tradition a part of which is as follows:

"If there is anyone among the jurists (*fuqaha'*) who is in control over his own self, protects his religion, suppresses his evil desires and is obedient to the commands of his master, it is then obligatory upon the people to follow him and these qualities are present only in few of the Shi'a jurists and not in all of them..."

Besides these, there are other traditions, which have been mentioned in their appropriate places. All these reveal that the Mahdi (a.s.) has not left the Muslims, particularly the Shi'a, without a religious authority and support. In this regard, he has followed the path of his fathers and (if you have doubt) you may refer to the comprehensive books written on this subject.

1. 'Amongst the houses I pass over the house of Layla. I kiss this wall and that wall. The love of the house has not captivated my heart, but the love of the one who was residing in it'.
2. The author of *Ithbat al-Wasiya* mentions the number of true believers to have been only eight.
3. Sura al-Nur, verse 55.
4. The four earlier books are: *Al-Kafi*, *Man la Yahzur al-faqih*, *Al-Tahdhib* and *Al-Istibṣar*. The three later books are: *Al-Wafi*, *Was'il al-Shi'a*, and *Al-Mustadrak*.

Preface

The events regarding the end of time which have been mentioned in traditions are of two kinds: Those which are signs of the Day of Judgment and the indications of its approach, and those which occur just before awaited Mahdi's emergence. However, majority of the Shi'a and Sunnis have combined together these two kinds in their respective literature and writings.

The second kind, which will occur before the Mahdi's emergence and uprising, are of two types:

Firstly, those that occur before the Mahdi's emergence and uprising. As such, the occurrence of such affairs and the non-emergence of the Mahdi will not prove the incorrectness of the traditions. This is because such traditions are not a sign or indication of his emergence. Rather, the object of mentioning such traditions is to state their occurrence just before the Mahdi's emergence.

Secondly, those events which have been mentioned in traditions and which shall occur before the Mahdi's emergence may be subject to *bada'* (change) in which we Shi'a believe. As such, the non-occurrence of some of these events will be no proof of the incorrectness of such traditions.

For both of the afore-said events, certain proofs and evidences exist in some of the traditions. Thus, before anything else it should be first clarified whether the events which occur belong to the first category or the second one. Thereafter, the state of the narrators of the second kind and the context, which proves the correctness or the incorrectness of traditions, should be reviewed.

Introduction

If anyone ponders over the traditions mentioned by learned scholars in this chapter, he will realize that these traditions are either correct *sahih* (correct), *dha'if* (weak), *musnad* (hadith with the chain of transmitters) or *mursal* (lacking the mention of the first transmitter). Rather amongst them are traditions, which are incorrect from the viewpoint of history and context.

However we have restrained ourselves to *sahih* (correct) and authentic traditions or *hasan* (good) traditions from the viewpoint of the chain of transmission. We have mentioned only those traditions which happen to be authentic and for which we could find a context. Otherwise we have restrained from mentioning them.

Similarly we have restrained ourselves to those types of traditions where credibility and conscience adjudge the possibility of their verification and occurrence. Or those traditions where reason and exigency do not adjudge their impossibility and unattainability.

Indeed, the occurrence of some of the miracles and extraordinary customs have come down in some of the traditions and if their chain of transmission happens to be correct it is not permissible for us to reject them. Those extraordinary things are affairs related to metaphysics commonly called miracles (*mu'jizah*)

and wonders (*karamah*) and Allah possesses power over all things.

The call from the heavens

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* has narrated a tradition in Section 3, Chapter 4 from Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali who said:

“If you see a fire for three or seven days from the east, then expect the *faraj* (deliverance) of ﷺ—i—Muhammad, if Allah wills.”

The Imam (a.s.) continued: “Then a caller from the heavens shall call out the Mahdi's name in such manner that it will be heard in the East and West. None shall be asleep but that he will wake up, none shall be lying down but that he will sit up and none shall be sitting but that he will stand on his two feet in fear. May Allah shower His Mercy on the one who hears that call and answers it, for it is the voice of none other than the trusted Spirit (Jibra'il).

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* on page 414 has narrated from the book *al-Durr al-Munadhdham* as such: ‘Among the signs of the Mahdi's emergence is a caller who shall call out: “Know that the “Master of the Age” has emerged”. After this, none shall be lying down but that he will arise and none shall be standing but that he will sit...’ till the end of the report.

Heavenly signs

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* in section three, chapter four has narrated from Hafiz Abu Bakr ibn Hammad and he from Ibn 'Abbas: “The Mahdi shall not emerge until certain signs appear with the sun”.

In the same section and chapter of the afore-mentioned book, its author narrates from Hafiz Na'im ibn Hammad and he from Kuthayr ibn Murra al-Hadhrami who said: “The signs of events in the month of Ramadhan are a kind of heavenly signs and after that people shall dispute with each other. When you come across those, signs, procure food for yourself as much as you can”.

Again, in the same section and chapter of the afore-said book, its author narrates from *Al-Fitan* of Hafiz Na'im ibn Hammad and he from Ka'b al-Ahbar who said: “Before the Mahdi's emergence, a star will rise in the East with a luminous tail.”

Eclipse of the sun and moon

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* in section one, chapter four narrates from *Al-Fitan* of Hafiz Abu 'Abd Allah Na'im ibn Hammad and he, from Yazid ibn al-Khalil al-Asadi who said: ‘I was in the presence of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.). He mentioned two of the signs which would occur before the emergence of the Mahdi and which have not been witnessed from the time of the fall of Adam. One sign is that there

shall occur an eclipse of the sun on 15th of Ramadhan and the other that the moon shall be eclipsed at the end of Ramadhan.

A person said: “O son of Messenger of Allah! No, in fact the sun is eclipsed at the end of the month and the moon during the middle of the month”.

Imam Abu Ja’far al-Baqir (a.s.) said: “The one who says these words knows better (than you) that right from the time of Adam’s fall till today these two signs have not occurred...”

The author of *Is’af al-Raghibin* too has narrated the same tradition.

Discord and hypocrisy among the people

The author of *Iqd al-Durar* in section one, chapter four has narrated from Imam al-Husayn (a.s.):

“The matter that you are awaiting i.e. the emergence of Mahdi (a.s.) shall not occur until some of you disavow each other, some of you bear testimony against each other and some of you curse each other.”

The narrator says: I asked: “Will there be any good in this matter”?

The Imam (a.s.) replied: “All good will be at that time when the Mahdi emerges and he will put an end to that”.

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* narrates on page 491 from the book *Arba’in* of Hafiz Abu Na’im al-Isfahani that ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) said: I asked the Messenger of Allah (S):

”O Messenger of Allah! Is the Mahdi from our progeny or from other than us”?

The Holy Prophet (S) replied: “Rather he is from us. Religion will be completed by him just as it commenced from us. People shall be delivered from seditions through the Mahdi just as they were delivered from polytheism through us. Through the Mahdi (a.s.) Allah will unite their hearts after the enmity of sedition, just as He united their hearts through us after the enmity of polytheism...”

The author of *Is’af al-Raghibin* on page 151 has narrated from Ahmad and al-Mawardi a tradition from the Messenger of Allah (S) as follows:

“Glad tidings be to you about the Mahdi. He is from the Quraysh and from my progeny who shall emerge at the time of discord and strife amongst the people...”

Cruelty and oppression

Ibn Hajar in *al-Sawa’iq* narrates (on page 99) from Abu al-Qasim al-Tabarani that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“After me, shall come the Caliphs. After the Caliphs will come the rulers, after the rulers will come the kings, and after the kings will come the tyrants. Then a man will emerge from my Ahl al-bayt who shall

fill the earth with justice as it was filled with injustice...”

The author of *Is'af al-Raghibin* has narrated (on page 148) a similar tradition from al-Hakim.

Anarchy

The author of *Iqd al-Durar* in Section 3, Chapter 9 has narrated from Hafiz Abu Na'im in his book *Sifah al-Mahdi*, who narrated from 'Ali ibn Hilal who has narrated from his father as such:

‘At the time when the Messenger of Allah (S) was departing from this world, I went in his presence. He narrated for me a tradition where he concluded as such: “O Fatimah, I swear by the Lord who appointed me with the truth that Mahdi of this nation shall be from al-Hasan and al-Husayn.

“Allah shall send the Mahdi at a time when the world will be in chaos, when seditions will prevail, when means will be cut off and when each will commit aggression against the other. No old one will have mercy on the young, and no young will have respect for the old,. Then Allah, the Exalted, will send one who will conquer the forts of deviation and covered hearts. The Mahdi shall rise for the religion at the end of time just as I rose for it in the beginning. He shall fill the world with justice as it was filled with oppression”.

Killing and Death

The author of *Iqd al-Durar* in section one, chapter four narrates from 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Awdi who narrates from his father who narrates from his grandfather that 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) said:

“During the Mahdi’s time there will be the red death and the white death. Locusts will appear during season and also out of season, like the colour of blood. As for red death it is the sword, and white death is the plague”.

In the same section and same chapter of the afore-said book, its author narrates from the *Sunan* of Imam Abu 'Amr 'Uthman ibn Sa'id al-Muqri and the *al-Fitan* of Hafiz Abu 'Abd Allah Na'im ibn Hammad, a tradition from Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) who said:

“The Mahdi shall not emerge until one-third (of the people) are killed, one-third die, and one-third remains.”

Calamity and Tribulation

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* narrates from *Mishkat al-Masabih* and *al-Mustadrak* of al-Hakim, saying: It is an authentic hadith from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri who said: The Holy Prophet (S) mentioned a calamity that would befall this nation such that a person will fail to find any shelter from the oppression.

“Thereafter Allah will send a man from my progeny and my Ahl al-Bayt who will fill the earth with equity and justice, just as it was previously filled with cruelty and tyranny...”

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* in section one, chapter four, has narrated from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) who said:

“The Mahdi shall not emerge but after prevalence of severe fear among the people, when they will be afflicted with earthquakes, seditions and calamity, and before that, the plague and the sharp sword between the Arabs. There will be great dissension among the people, when differences in religion will prevail amongst them, and when people's condition will so change that they would wish for death, day and night... (until he said): “The Mahdi shall emerge at the time of hopelessness and despair. Blessed is he who is present at the time of the Mahdi's appearance and joins the ranks of his helpers. Woe be to the one who opposes him and his commands”.

In the same section and the same chapter of the afore-said book, its author narrates from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“After me, seditions (disasters) will arise the deliverance of which would not be possible. In those seditions, wars and sporadic fighting will occur. Thereafter, more severe seditions will arise such that if seditions would calm down in one place, the same would continue in another place. Things would extend so far that there would remain no Arab house and no Muslim who would not be affected by it. It would be then that a man from my progeny will emerge”.

This tradition has been narrated by Hafiz Abu Muhammad al-Husayn in his book *al-Masabih* and by Hafiz Abu 'Abd Allah Na'im ibn Hammad in his book *al-Fitan*. There exists an evidence too for this tradition in the book of Sahih al-Bukhari.

Ibn Hajar in *al-Sawa'iq* (page 97) has narrated from the *Sahih* of Hakim Abu 'Abd Allah that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“At the end of time, severe calamity shall befall my nation – such severe calamity which was never heard of before and which people will fail to find any shelter from. At that time Allah will appoint from my progeny, my Ahl al-Bayt, a man who will fill the earth with equity and justice just as it was filled with cruelty and tyranny...”.

A Sayyid from Khurasan

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* in chapter five narrates from Hafiz Abu 'Abd Allah Na'im ibn Hammad who narrates from Sa'id ibn Musayyab that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“From the East will emerge black flags of the Bani 'Abbas and whatever Allah wishes will take place. Afterwards, men with small black flags will rise and will battle with a man from the progeny of Abu

Sufyan. They will prepare the ground for and return obedience and submission to the Mahdi”.

In the same chapter of the afore-said book, its author narrates from Na’im ibn Hammad (from his book *al-Fitan*) that Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiya said:

“A flag will emerge from Khurasan. Then another flag will appear, with white garments. At their vanguard will be a man from the Banu Tamim who will pave the way for the Mahdi’s rule. Between his appearance and his handing the people over to the Mahdi will be a period of 72 months. The man from the Banu Tamim will be called Shu’ayb ibn Sālih...” (until he said): “It will be then that people will wish for the Mahdi and seek him”.

Again, in the same chapter of the same book, its author narrates from Na’im ibn Hammad and he from Shurayh ibn ‘Abd Allah, Rashid ibn Sa’d and ‘Umar ibn Habib, from their shaykhs who said:

“The people of the East will swear allegiance to a man from the Bani Hashim who shall emerge among the people of Khurasan, with a man from the Banu Tamim in their vanguard... “ (until he said): “If immovable mountains confront him, he will destroy them. He will encounter the cavalry of Sufyani and will defeat them. He will kill them in a mighty battle. He will continue to expel them from one town to another until he will defeat them in Iraq.

“Thereafter an incident shall occur between them as a result of which Sufyani will gain victory and the Hashimi man will flee to Mecca. Shu’ayb ibn Sālih (who is one of the leaders of the army of Hashimi) will secretly escape to Bayt al-Maqdas. When the Mahdi reappears, the Hashimi man too will emerge.

The killing of al-Nafs al-Zakkiyah

The author of ‘Iqd al-Durar in section one, chapter 4, narrates from Hafiz Abu ‘Abd Allah Na’im ibn Hammad (from the book *al-Fitan*) that Ammar Yasir said:

“When al-Nafs al-Zakkiyah will be killed a caller will call out from the heavens: “Be aware that your ruler is so and so – meaning the Mahdi – who shall fill the earth with truth and justice.”

In the same section and the same chapter of the afore-said book, its author narrates from Hafiz Na’im ibn Hammad (from the book *al-Fitan*) who in turn narrates from Ka’b al-Ahbar who said, when mentioning the events that would occur before the appearance of the Mahdi :

“Plundering of Medina will become lawful and al-Nafs al-Zakkiyah will be killed.”

Again in section 3 and chapter 4 of the afore-said book its author narrates from Imam al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali (a.s.):

“There will be five signs for the Mahdi:

(1) Al-Sufyani (2) Al-Yamani (3) The call from the heavens (4) The sinking of the land of Baydā’ (5) The

killing of al-Nafs al-Zakkiyah.

The uprising of al-Dajjal

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* in chapter 5 narrates from al-Bukhari and Muslim, and they in turn narrate from Ma'adh ibn Jabal that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“A part of my Ummah will continue to fight for the truth and will gain victory over their enemies until the last of them will fight Dajjal”.

One tradition mentions him (S) as saying: “A group from my Ummah.”

In section 3, chapter 9 of the same book, the author narrates from the book *al-Mustadrak* of Hakim Abu 'Abd Allah (who reckons the chain of transmission of this tradition to be correct according to the criteria set by Muslim) who narrates from Jabir ibn Samura from Nafi' ibn 'Utbah who said: I heard the Holy Prophet (S) saying:

“You will battle with the people of Arabian Peninsula and Allah will grant (you) victory over them. Thereafter you will battle with the Persians and Allah will grant (you) victory over them. Then you will battle with Dajjal...”.

In section 2 chapter 12 of the same book, the author narrates from Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Tha'lab who said:

“The reason why Dajjal is called Dajjal is because of his covering and falsification (of the truth). For example, when a sword is polished and plated it is said '*dajalat al-sayf*', and when the camel is coated with tar, it is said '*dajalat al-ba'ir*'.”

Again, in the same section and the same chapter of the afore-said book, the author narrates from al-Bukhari, from Anas ibn Malik, from the Holy Prophet (S):

“There is no Prophet who did not warn his people about the one-eyed, lying Dajjal”.

Ibn Hajar in *al-Sawa'iq* (page 99) has narrated from Abu al-Husayn 'Ajari who said:

‘Successive traditions related by numerous transmitters have come down from the Holy Prophet (S) regarding Mahdi's emergence: that he is from his Ahl al-Bayt, that he will rule for seven years; that he will fill the earth with justice; that he will emerge along with Isa and the latter will help him in killing the Dajjal...’.

The uprising of al-Sufyani

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* in section 2, chapter 4, narrates from 'Abd Allah ibn Safwan who said: Hafsa (wife of the Holy Prophet) informed me that she heard the Messenger of Allah (S) saying:

“An army will attack this House, until when it is on plain ground, the center row will sink in the ground while the first row would seek help from the last row. Then they will also sink and no one shall remain from them except the one who will inform about them”.

A person addressed ‘Abd Allah ibn Safwan: I bear witness that you have not lied about Hafsah and she too has not lied about the Holy Prophet (S).

This tradition has been narrated by Imam Muslim in his *Sahih*.

In the same chapter of the afore-said book, the author narrates from Imam Muslim’s *Sahih*, who in turn narrates from ‘Ubayd Allah ibn al-Qibtiya who said: “I approached Umm al-Mu’minin (i.e. Umm-Salamah, the wife of the Holy Prophet) along with Harith ibn Abi Rabi’ah and ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Safwan.

Both inquired from Umm-Salamah about the army which would sink into the ground – and that was during the days of Ibn al-Zubayr (governor of Mecca). Umm Salamah replied: ‘The Messenger of Allah said:

“A person will seek shelter in the House (Ka’bah), and an army will be sent to him (to attack him) and when it reaches the plain ground it will sink in it”.

I asked: “O Messenger of Allah, what of one who is unwilling (to be part of the army)”?

He replied: “He too shall sink with them but Allah will raise him on the Day of Judgment according to his intention”.

In one tradition, Abu Ja’far, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) says: By ‘plain ground’ it is meant Medina.

In section 3, chapter 4, of the same book, the author narrates from Hafiz Abu ‘Abd Allah Na’im ibn Hammad in *al-Fitan* from al-Zuhri who said:

‘When the Sufyani and the Mahdi will encounter each other for battle, a cry will be heard from the heavens:

“Be aware Allah’s friends are from the companions of so and so a person – meaning the Mahdi...”.

In section 2, chapter 4, of the same book, the author narrates from Na’im ibn Hammad and he from Khalid ibn Mahdan as saying:

‘Sufyani shall rise and he will be have three pipes in his hand. He will not play on it for anyone but that he will die”.

In section 2 chapter 4 of the same book, the author narrates from Hafiz Abu ‘Abd Allah Na’im ibn Hammad in his *al-Fitan*, and Hafiz Abu ‘Abd Allah in his *al-Mustadrak*. He said: This hadith has an authentic chain of transmission, although they (al-Bukhari and Muslim) have not reported it. He reports from ‘Alqamah who said: Ibn-Mas’ud said: The Holy Prophet (S) said to us:

“Be on your guard against seven calamities, which would occur after me:

The sedition which will come from Medina, the sedition which would arise in Mecca, the sedition from Yemen, the sedition which would approach from Syria, the sedition which would appear from the East, the sedition which would approach from the West and lastly the sedition which would arise from central Syria (al-Sham) which would be the sedition of al-Sufyani”.

Ibn Mas’ud said: ‘Some of you will perceive the beginning of these seditions while some of you will perceive the last part of it’.

Walid ibn ‘Ayyash said: ‘The sedition of Medina was the very one which appeared from Talha and al-Zubayr, the sedition of Mecca was the one from ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr; the sedition of Yemen ascended from Najdah’s side; the sedition of Syria appeared from the Bani Umayyah and sedition of central Syria is through this group’.

In section 2, chapter 4, of *‘Iqd al-Durar* its author narrates from Jabir ibn Yazid al-Ju’fi that Abu Ja’far Imam Muhammad al-Baqir addressed Jabir as such:

“O Jabir! Sit firmly in your place and do not move until you see the signs that I will relate to you... Three flags will set out from Syria: the red and white flag, the black and white flag, and the flag of Sufyani ... Sufyani will dispatch an army of seventy thousand men towards Kufa, and they will kill, crucify and take as captives its inhabitants. Meanwhile, men from Khurasan holding flags will march forward with swiftness. They are the companions of the Mahdi... Sufyani shall despatch troops towards Medina and the Mahdi shall escape from Medina to Mecca.

The commander of the Sufyani’s army shall be informed about Mahdi’s flight towards Mecca. Najdah ibn ‘Amir al-Hanafi will be one of the Khawarij who commands his army to pursue the Mahdi, but they will not find him... The commander of Sufyani’s army shall stop at *bayd* (plain ground between Mecca and Medina) and a caller from the heavens shall cry out: ‘O *bayd*! Destroy this group.’ Then *bayd* will swallow them up”.

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* (page 414) has narrated from the book *Al-Durr al-Munadhdham* as such:

One of the signs of Mahdi’s emergence will be the revolt of Sufyani. He will dispatch 30000 men towards Mecca and the earth will swallow them up in the plain ground (*bayd*) ...”

Ibn Abi al-Hadid in his commentary of *Nahj al-Balagha* (vol. 1, pg. 211) in discussing ‘Ali’s (a.s.) sermon on the unseen (*ghayb*) says: ‘Abu Dawud al-Tayalisi has narrated from Sulayman ibn Zurayq who narrated from ‘Abd al ‘Aziz ibn Suhayb who said: Abu al-‘Aliyah narrated to me and said: Mazra’, the companion of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib narrated to me that he said:

“An army shall advance until it reaches the plain ground (*bayd*). There, they will sink into the ground.”

Abu al-ʿAliyah said: I told Mazra': 'You are giving me news of the unseen'. He replied: 'Safeguard what I have told you, for a trustworthy one like 'Ali ibn Abi Talib has informed me'.

Ibn Abi al-Hadid says: The tradition of the army sinking into the ground has been narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim in their books of *Sahih* from Umm Salamah (may Allah be satisfied with her) who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah saying:

"A group will seek shelter in the Ka'ba until they reach *Bayd*' and then the ground would swallow them up".

I said: "O Messenger of Allah! Perhaps among them were some who were unwilling or forced (to go)." The Messenger of Allah (S) said: "The earth shall swallow them but they will be gathered..." or he said: "...they will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment according to their intentions".

Ibn Abi al-Hadid says: 'Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali (a.s.) was asked whether every plain ground was called *bayd*' and Imam replied: "Never. It is the *bayd*' (plain ground) of Medina".

Al-Bukhari has narrated a part of this tradition while Muslim has narrated the rest'.

The author of *Is'af al-Raghibin* on page 153 says: "It is mentioned in traditions that Sufyani will dispatch troops from Syria against the Mahdi and they will sink in the ground at *bayd*'. None will remain alive except the person who will give news about them. Sufyani will go towards the Mahdi with those who are with him, and victory will be for the Mahdi and Sufyani will be killed..."

The author says: I have not come across any reliable reports about the place of meeting of the two afore-said armies – perhaps it is between Kufa and Medina, and Allah knows best.

Traditions about the Mahdi in the al-Fusul al-Muhimma

Number of Signs of Mahdi's Emergence

The author of *al-Fusul al-Muhimma* (who is one of the Sunni authors) says in chapter 12:

Traditions have come down about the signs at the time of the Mahdi's appearance and the events which will occur before his uprising.

Among these signs and indications are:

(1) Sufyani's revolt (2) The killing of al-Hasani, (3) Discord amongst Bani 'Abbas about possession of kingdom

(4) Eclipse of the sun during mid-Sha'ban,

(5) An unusual eclipse of the moon during the end of Sha'ban contrary to astronomical calculations, since the eclipse of the moon only takes place on the thirteenth, fourteenth or fifteenth of the month.

That occurs when the sun and the moon face each other in a special form. The eclipse of the sun only

occurs on the twenty-seventh, twenty-eight or twenty-ninth of the month, when the sun and moon are come close in a special form,

(6) The rising of the sun from the West (7) The killing of al-Nafs al-Zakiyah among seventy pious people (8) The slaughter of a Hashimi man between the Rukn and the Maqam (9) The destruction of the wall of the Mosque of Kufa, (10) Black flags advancing from Khurasan,

(11) The uprising of al-Yamani (12) The rise of al-Maghrabi in Egypt and his becoming the ruler of Syria, (13) The Turks arriving at an island (*al-jazirah*) (14) the coming of Romans to al-Ramla

(15) The rising of a star in the East which would be like a sparkling moon, (16) That star would bend in such a manner that the two ends would almost meet (17) A redness in the sky that will cover the horizon (18) A fire that will appear in the East longitudinally, which will remain so for three or seven days,

(19) The Arabs will throw off their reins (20) The Arabs will seize lands (21) The Arabs would exit from the rule of Iranian kings, (22) The inhabitants of Egypt will kill their ruler (23) The destruction of Shām and three flags will advance towards it, (24) The entry of the flags of Qays and the Arabs into Egypt, (25) The (entry of) flags of Kinda into Khurasan (26) The entry of horses from some Arabs to the outskirts of Hira (27) The coming of black flags from the East

(28) A breach shall occur in banks of the Euphrates as a result of which its water would flow into the lanes of Kufa (29) Sixty liars will emerge with each of them claiming Prophethood for themselves (30) Twelve people from the progeny of Abu Talib will rise and each will claim Imamate for themselves (31) A high-ranking person from the partisans of the Bani ‘Abbas will drown near the bridge of Karkh in Baghdad,

(32) A black wind will blow in Baghdad (33) An earthquake shall occur in Baghdad where a greater portion of the city will collapse (34) Fear will encompass the inhabitants of Iraq (35) Death will swiftly overtake the people of Iraq, (36) The people of Iraq will face loss of life, property and fruits.

(37) Locusts will appear during the normal season as well as during off-season and they will attack plants and cereals (38) Harvests will be poor, (39) Discord will arise amongst non-Arabs and they will shed each other's blood (40) Slaves will disobey their masters and will kill them.

(41) Finally, it will rain successively for twenty-four times. The earth will be enlivened after its death and would throw out its treasures. After that, all types of calamities will be kept away from Mahdi's believers. At that moment they will realize that Mahdi has emerged in Mecca. As a result, they will move towards Mecca to help him, as is mentioned in the traditions.

Some of these events are sure and certain to occur while some others are conditional. Allah knows better what might take place. We have mentioned the afore-mentioned happenings as per the traditions.

‘Ali ibn Yazid al-Azdi narrates from his father who narrates from his grandfather that Amir al-Mu'minin

(a.s.) said: “When the Qa’im’s emergence shall draw near, red and white deaths will appear. There will be locusts during their season and off-season, the color of blood. Red death refers to the sword and white death refers to plague.

Jabir al-Ju’fi narrates from Abu Ja’far Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) that he told him:

“Remain firm in your place. Do not move until you see for yourself the signs I will mention. I do not think that you will perceive these signs. They are as such: Discord amongst the Bani ‘Abbas, a caller who will call out from the heavens, the sinking of a village in Syria (Sham) called al-Jubiyah, the Turks arriving at an island (*al-jazirah*), the Romans arriving in Ramla, great discord in every land until Sham will be ruined. The reason for its destruction will be the gathering together of three flags in it: the red and white flag, the black and white flag and the flag of Sufyani.

Traditions about the year and day of the Mahdi’s emergence

Abu Basir has narrated from Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Sadiq:

“The Mahdi shall not emerge but in an odd year i.e. the first, or the third, or the fifth, or the seventh or the ninth year.”

Again Abu Basir narrates from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (a.s.) who said:

“The name of the Qa’im will be called out on the 23rd night of the blessed month of Ramadhan. The Qa’im shall emerge on the day of Ashura – the day on which Imam al-Husayn was martyred. It is as if I am seeing the Qa’im emerging on Saturday, the tenth of Muharram, between Rukn and Maqam and someone standing in front of him calling out: Allegiance, Allegiance.

The the Mahdi’s helpers will go to him from all corners of the earth – which will be contracted for them – and they will give allegiance to him. Then, through him, Allah will fill the earth with justice just as it was previously filled with cruelty and oppression. Thereafter, the Mahdi will go from Mecca to Kufa and stop in Najaf from where he will send troops to the cities.

It has been narrated from Abdul-Karim al-Jath’ami: I asked Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Sadiq: “For how long will the Qa’im rule”?

The Imam (a.s.) replied: “Seven years. The days and nights during the Mahdi’s time will be so lengthy that one year of that time will be like twenty years of today and (seven) years of Mahdi will be equal to seventy years of your reckoning”.

In a lengthy tradition, Abu Ja’far al-Baqir (a.s.) said:

“When the Qa’im shall emerge, he will go to Kufa. He will expand its mosques, break every balcony overlooking the roads and destroy the wells and drain-pipes on the road-paths. There will be no innovation but that he will uproot it, and no Prophetic custom (*sunnah*) but that he will establish it. He will conquer Constantinople, China and the mountains of Daylam. He will remain so for seven years where

each year would be equal to ten years of your reckoning.

In another tradition Abu Ja'far al-Baqir (a.s.) said: – “Our Q^u'im will be aided (by Allah) through fear (of him in the hearts of the enemies). He will be supported (by Allah) through victory. The earth will contract for him, its treasures will emerge for him, and his dominion will extend from the East to the West.

“Allah will cause His religion to prevail over all religions, although the polytheists may dislike it (ref. 9:33). There will be no desolate ruin on earth but that the Mahdi will make it flourish. The earth will send forth all its vegetation, and during his time people will enjoy such blessings the like of which they had never enjoyed before”.

The narrator says: I said: ‘O son of the Messenger of Allah! When will your Q^u'im emerge”?

He replied: “At the time when men will resemble women and women will resemble the men; when women will ride on saddles; when people will cause their prayers to die and follow their carnal desires; when people will take usury, when shedding of blood will become something insignificant; when the trade and business of people will be based on usury; when people will openly commit adultery; when they will make towering constructions; when they will consider lies to be lawful; when they will accept bribes; when they will follow their desires; when they will sell their religion for this world; when they sever the ties of kinship, when they will hold under obligation the one whom they feed; when they will consider forbearance to be weakness and injustice to be a matter of pride; when their rulers will be evil and their ministers liars; when the trustworthy amongst them will be traitors; when the helpers amongst them will be unjust; when the reciters of Quran will be transgressors. Cruelty and oppression will become manifest, divorce will increase, immorality will become manifest, false testimony will be accepted and wine will be drunk. Men will mount men and women shall engage with women (in indecent acts).

Zakat (*fai'*) will be considered booty and charity a loss. The evil people will be feared for their tongues. Sufyani shall rise from Syria and Yemen; the plain ground (*bayd'*) which is between Mecca and Medina will sink; a boy from the progeny of Muhammad (S) will be killed between Rukn and Maqam. A caller will call out from that the truth is with the Mahdi and his followers.

It will be then that our Q^u'im will emerge. When he reappears, he will stand with his back against the wall of Ka'ba and 313 of his followers will gather around him. His first words will be this verse:

بَقِيَّتُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩﴾

What remains with Allah is better for you, if you are believers. (11:86)

Then he will say: “I am the ‘*Baqiyatullah*’ (God’s remainder), His representative and His Proof over you”. After that, no Muslim would salute him but in this manner:

Assalamu 'alayka ya Baqiyatullah fi ardhihi (Peace be upon you O God's remainder on the earth.)

When 10000 men gather around him, there will remain no Jew or Christian or any other who worshipped other than Allah, but that he will believe in him and confirm him. The only religion will be the religion of Islam, and everything worshipped on earth other than Allah will be burnt by a fire descending from the sky.

Some of the historians say: The Mahdi is the same awaited Qa'im. Traditions about the Mahdi's emergence substantiate each other. Traditions manifest the radiance of his light. It will not be long when the gloomy day and night of his occultation will turn into brightness and luminosity. Due to his emergence the desired dawn shall rise and the veil of darkness of the night will be set aside. He will emerge from behind the veil of occultation and the hearts will be filled with joy. His justice will reach the horizons and the luminosity of his justice will be brighter than the luminous moon.

Merits of awaiting for the Mahdi's appearance

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* (page 493) narrates from Khawrizmi's *al-Manaqib* from Abu Ja'far Imam Muhammad al-Baqir from his father from his grandfather from Amir al-Mu'minin that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“Awaiting for the *faraj* (deliverance) is the best act of worship.”

The author of *al-Manaqib* says: That is, awaiting the *faraj* by means of the appearance of the Mahdi. The author says: Many of our (Shi'ite) traditions corroborate the afore-mentioned tradition.

The word *intidhar* (awaiting) means the expectation of the occurrence of an affair and its realization. The reforms that result from awaiting the Mahdi's appearance, on an individual and on a social level, particularly for the Shi'a Imamiyah, are clear.

Firstly, *intidhar* itself is an important exercise for the soul, such that it is said: '*Intidhar* is severer than killing.' It is necessary to employ the mental faculties and direct the thoughts towards the direction of the awaited affair. This will, of necessity, cause two things: One that the mental faculty will increase in power, and the other that man will be able to gather and direct his thoughts to a single matter. These two affairs are amongst the most important things required by man for his subsistence and future life.

Secondly, the impact of misfortunes and calamities will ease for man, and their gravity lessened, because he knows that they will be removed and redressed. There is a vast difference between experiencing a misfortune from which man knows he will find relief, and one in which he does not know that. This is particularly so if there is a possibility that he will find relief in the near future, and the Mahdi by his emergence will fill the earth with justice and equity.

Thirdly, the necessary condition for *intidhar* is that man should love being amongst the companions and Shi'a of the Mahdi and in fact amongst his helpers. This requires that the Mahdi's Shi'a should strive to rectify his own self and make good his morals so that he can be worthy of being the Mahdi's companion and engaging in holy war for him. Indeed, this good fortune requires such ethics, which is scarce today amongst us.

Fourthly, just as *intidhar* becomes the cause of rectification of the self and rather the cause of rectification of others, it also becomes the cause of preparation of the rudiments for the Mahdi's victory over his enemies. The essential condition for this victory is that one should acquire knowledge and insight especially so when man knows that the Mahdi's victory over his enemies would take place through ordinary channels.

These were some of the effects, which would arise from the act of *intidhar* (awaiting) – if *intidhar* is done in its true sense. In addition to that, *intidhar* reveals good and pleasing qualities, which are as follows:

Firstly, it reveals the perfection of the intellect and the soundness of understanding because a *muntadhir* (i.e. an Awaiting) believes that an Imam should exist at all times and knows that the Imam of today is the Mahdi. Thus he believes in the unseen without having seen it, and in general, he believes in the Mahdi without having seen him.

Secondly *intidhar* discloses love for the establishment of truth and justice, the implementation of divine commands and ordinances, the execution of affairs on the basis of a correct and fundamental pivot, and every human being, in fact every existent being, attaining the perfection for which he has been created.

Thirdly, it reveals the sincerity of man's love and friendship towards the Ahl al-bayt and kin of the Holy Prophet (S), because it is by Mahdi's emergence that the Government of the Ahl al-bayt will be established, the act of command and prohibition will be at their liberty and their rights will be returned to them.

Fourthly, it reveals the goodness and sincerity of his belief in Mahdi and that he will fill the earth with equity and justice and that he is the Imam of the present time.

Fifthly, it reveals man's affection towards his fellow creatures and his desire for rectifying them because the goodness and prosperity, which would arise from Mahdi's emergence, would be experienced by all the creatures.

Most of the points we have mentioned that result from awaiting the appearance of the Mahdi and the good traits which are disclosed through it, have been mentioned in the traditions from our Imams. It pleases me to mention one of the traditions, in fact a part of a tradition:

In the book *Kamal al-Din*, Shaykh Saduq has narrated from Ammar al-Sab'ani a lengthy tradition in which Abu 'Abd Allah Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

“Worship (*ibadah*) during the reign of a wicked government has more merit and is better than worship during the reign of a righteous government. Moreover, the reward of worship in the first case is much more than in the second”.

Ammar said: I told the Imam: “May my life be sacrificed for you. We do not desire to be amongst the Qa'im's companions at the time of the emergence of truth, while we are today under your Imamate and your obedience, better in deeds than the people in the righteous government”.

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) replied:

“Glory be to Allah! Do you not wish that Allah, the Blessed, the Sublime, should manifest truth and justice in the lands, and improve the condition of the common people, that He should cause (people's) speech to harmonize and that He should bring together the divided hearts of people? (Do you not wish) that Allah should not be disobeyed on earth, that His divine ordinances should be established among His creatures, that truth should return to its people, so that they make it manifest until nothing of the truth is concealed out of fear of any of (His) creatures ...”.

Refraining from fixing the time of the emergence

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* (on page 456) has narrated from the author of *Fara'id al-Simtayn* who has narrated from Ahmad ibn Ziyad who has narrated from Di'bil ibn 'Ali al-Khuza'i, a tradition wherein Di'bil approaches Imam Ridha (a.s.) and recites his *taj'iyah* ode and refers in some places of his ode to the Mahdi. The Imam tells Di'bil:

“The Trusted Spirit (Jibra'il) has spoken through your tongue. Do you know who this Imam is... “ until he said: “he is who is awaited during his occultation and obeyed at the time of his emergence...¹. Then he said: “Regarding the time of Mahdi's emergence, my father has narrated from his forefathers from the Messenger of Allah who said:

“His likeness is that of the Hour (the Day of Judgment);

it will not come on you but all of a sudden (7:187).

The author says: In some of the traditions about occultation he (S) has said that the Mahdi will emerge like a 'brilliant star'. Yet some other traditions mention that God would set right Mahdi's affairs in one night. It appears that all these sayings refer to this fact that the Mahdi's emergence is unknown and none know of the time of his reappearance except for the One who has created him.

Verily, amongst the affairs which has greatly been emphasized in the tradition for us (i.e. the Shi'a) is the non-fixation of the time of Mahdi's emergence and leaving this matter to Almighty Allah.

Yet some traditions mention that those who ordain a time for his emergence are liars. It can be said that the philosophy of not fixing his reappearing at any time and in any year, month and on any Friday may

be due to the following:

Firstly, the divine *badʿ* (change) in its correct meaning in which we Shi'a believe is established. Verily, the will of Allah proceeds in all the Divine decrees and He implements a reverse in the order and brings change and alteration in His decrees. The time of the Mahdi's emergence too falls in the category of those incidents in which *badʿ* occurs as has been clearly stipulated in the Shi'ite traditions.

As a matter of fact, if the time of the Mahdi's emergence had been fixed and the matter of *badʿ* (too) would have played its role, then the very matter of (tradition of) emergence along with its narrator would have been subject to doubt and suspicions. Therefore the Imams (a.s.) have said: "We have not fixed the time of the Mahdi's emergence nor shall we do so in the future."

Secondly, refraining from ascertaining the time of emergence and leaving it to Divine discretion, and considering the possibility of the Mahdi emerging today or tomorrow, of necessity, creates an urge and desire in praying for his early reappearance, since his emergence may be linked to supplication (*duʿāʾ*) and insistence in request.

Thirdly, if the period of the Mahdi's emergence is known and the people are aware of this matter even though they may belong to the select few, then he would have to emerge. All the select and common people especially those desirous of this matter, would know him and his enemies would be prepared to kill him right from the beginning of his emergence. According to what is customary, it would not be possible that on the day of his emergence, his strength would be the same as the strength of his enemies.

Fourthly, when the affairs of the people are in the Imam's hands, he would be the pivot of the millstone of the Muslims and the focal point of their social body. Undoubtedly the Imam's occultation even though for a short period will bring the movement of that society to a standstill. However if the people bring faith in his emergence and have hope in his return, especially in the near future, it would then be possible for that society to protect itself and organize its affairs with that hope in mind.

Fifthly, awaiting for emergence at any period will bring an acceleration in the movement of reformation. A person who awaits the arrival of his companion will be bound to make speed in the preliminary preparations for his arrival lest his friend arrives suddenly and he may not have fulfilled his duty.

Truly if *intidhar* (awaiting) for Mahdi's emergence is sincere, and the time of his emergence is not fixed, it will indeed be regarded as two important factors for the salvation and prosperity of a society.

I wish that the author of *Tafsir al-Manar* would take back some of his words in this regard.

The Mahdi's emergence at the end of time

The author of *Is'af al-Raghibin* (on page 148) narrates from al-Hakim (from the book of *Sahih*) who

narrates from the Messenger of Allah (S) as such:

“At the end of time, a severe calamity shall overtake my Ummah... Allah will send a man from my progeny” or he said: “from my Ahl al-bayt, who shall fill the earth with equity and justice”.

Ibn Hajar in *al-Sawa’iq* (page 98) has narrated from Ahmad and Muslim who in turn have narrated from the Messenger of Allah (S) as saying:

“At the end of time, there will be a Caliph who will distribute wealth without any account..”.

The author of *Is’af al-Raghibin* has narrated the same tradition on page 149 of his afore-said book.

The author says: ‘Caliph’ in the above tradition refers to the Mahdi as per the context of some other traditions.

The author of *’Iqd al-Durar* in chapter 2, narrates from ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar who said: The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“At the end of time a man will come from my progeny whose name is the same as my name, and his agnomen the same as mine; he will fill the earth with justice just as it had been filled with tyranny”.

Also from the above source, in chapter 3, he narrates from Imam Abu ‘Umar al-Mada’ini who narrates from Abu Sa’id al-Khudri that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“At the end of time a youth with a handsome face and an aquiline nose shall rise from my progeny and he shall fill the earth with equity and justice just as it was previously filled with cruelty and tyranny”.

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda*, on page 430, narrates from the author of *Mishkat al-Masabih* who narrates from Muslim’s *Sahih* and Ahmad’s *Musnad*, from Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Ansari that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“At the end of time, there will be a Caliph who will distribute wealth without any account”.

Another tradition says: “At the time of the end of my Ummah, a Caliph will come who will distribute wealth without any reckoning”.

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda*, on page 436, narrates from the author of *Fara’id al-Simtayn* who narrates from ‘Ali ibn Hilal who narrates from his father that the Holy Prophet (S) said: “The Mahdi will come at the end of time and will fill the earth with equity and justice just as it was previously filled with cruelty and oppression.”

The author says: In most of our Shi’ite traditions as well as the traditions of our Sunni brethren the words (أَخِرُ الزَّمَانِ, *akhir al-zaman*) ‘the end of time’ has been used, and the occurrence of certain important events in it, the greatest of them being the emergence of the Promised Mahdi.

However the fact is that sometimes the phrase ‘end of time’ can be taken in its literal meaning, that is to

say before the Day of Judgment. Or else it may be taken to mean a part of a time in relation to an earlier or later time.

For example, we say: Muhammad ibn ‘Abd Allah (S) is the Prophet of the end of time (*ʿakhir al-zaman*). That is, the period of his prophethood and messengership, and his Shari’ah is later than that of the previous Prophets and Messengers. Thus in absolute terms, the Holy Prophet is the last Prophet which means that no Prophet comes after him, otherwise he will not be called the Last Prophet.

Sometimes the term ‘end of time’ is used to refer to the last period of the Holy Prophet’s Messengership, that is, if we divide the period of his Prophethood into portions, the last portion of it would be the ‘end of time’. This is what is meant in the Holy Prophet’s sentence: “The Ummah in which I am placed at the beginning, and the Mahdi is the middle, and ‘Isa at the end, will never be destroyed.”

Now that you have understood these meanings, it should be said that such sayings as: The Mahdi will emerge at the ‘end of time’ or that he is the Caliph of the ‘end of time,’ refer to the last meaning, which means that the period of time in which the Mahdi will emerge is the last of the periods of time.

The author of *‘Iqd al-Durar* (in chapter seven) narrates from Hafiz Abu ‘Abd Allah in his *al-Mustadrak*, who narrates from Abu Sa’id al-Khudri that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“The Mahdi shall emerge with the sword at the time of the end of my Ummah. Allah shall send rain, the earth will cause its herbage to grow, and he (the Mahdi) will bestow wealth in the right manner...”.

Al-Hakim says: This tradition is correct as far as its chain of transmission is concerned but Muslim and al-Bukhari have not narrated it.

The Mahdi’s qualities on the day of his emergence

The author *‘Iqd al-Durar* (in chapter three) narrates from Hafiz Abu Na’im, from the book of *Sifah al-Mahdi* of Abu Umamah who said that the Messenger of Allah (S) related a tradition in which he mentioned the Mahdi and some of what would occur before and after his emergence. A person from the ‘Abd al-Qays said: “O Messenger of Allah, who will be the Imam of the people on that day”?

He (S) replied: “The Mahdi from my progeny who would be then forty years of age...” .

Again, the author of *‘Iqd al-Durar* in the aforesaid chapter narrates from Hafiz Na’im ibn Hammad, in *al-Fitan* that Amir al-Mu’minin ‘Ali (a.s.) said in a tradition about Mahdi: “The Mahdi will rise when he is between thirty to forty years of age...” .

In the same chapter of the afore-said book its author narrates from Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Mada’ini and Abu Bakr al-Bayhaqi that Ibn ‘Abbas said: “I have hope that days and nights will not pass until Allah will appoint a youth from us, the Ahl al-bayt while trials have not befallen him and he too has not been

entangled in trials. He will establish the affairs of this nation just as Allah commenced the affairs of this nation through us. It is my expectation that the affairs would end too in us”.

The narrator said: I told Ibn ‘Abbas: “Are your aged ones helpless in this matter so that you have hope in your youth”? He replied: “Allah does whatever He wills”.

In the same chapter of the same book, its author narrates from Imam al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali (a.s.) as such: “When the Mahdi will emerge, people will deny him because he will have returned to them looking like a youth. The greatest trial is that their master will come to them in a youthful state, while they think him to be an old man..” ..

In section one, chapter four of the same book, its author narrates from Hafiz Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Hakim’s *al-Mustadrak* from Thawbān that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“Three offspring of a Caliph will be killed near your treasure...”. Then he mentioned a youth. He (S) said: “When you see him (i.e. the youth) swear allegiance to him because he is the Mahdi, the Caliph of Allah”.

Hakim says: ‘This tradition is an authentic one according to the conditions set by al-Bukhari and Muslim’.

In the seventh chapter of the same book, its author narrates from Hafiz Abu ‘Abd Allah Na’im ibn Hammad, in his *al-Fitan*, who narrates from Ishaq ibn Yahya ibn Talha that Tāwus said: ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab bid farewell to his family and said: “What is wrong if I spend the treasures of the Ka’ba on weapons and money given in the way of Allah”?

‘Ali said: “O Amir al-Mu’mineen! Refrain from such thoughts. You are not the owner of Ka’ba. The owner of Ka’ba is a youth from the Quraysh who will distribute the wealth of Ka’ba in the way of Allah at the end of time”.

The author says: There is no doubt that the apparent meaning of these traditions refers, undeniably, to the emergence of the Mahdi, and evidences and contexts too exist for them. Some of the traditions mention: The one who will see the Mahdi on the day of his emergence will reckon him to be a youth of forty or his age to be between thirty and forty. However it does not mean that this is his true age.

Place of the Mahdi’s emergence

The author of *‘Iqd al-Durar*, chapter two, section four, narrates from Jabir ibn Yazid al-Ju’fi a lengthy tradition from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir in which he mentioned some signs of the Mahdi’s emergence and the sinking of Sufyani’s army, until he said:

“Sufyani will dispatch troops to Medina and the Mahdi will flee from there to Mecca. News of the Mahdi’s flight will reach Sufyani’s commanders who will send an army in pursuit of him but they will fail to find

him until he enters Mecca, **fearful and vigilant** (28:21) in the same way as Musa ibn ‘Imran...”.

The author of *Is’af al-Raghibin* (on page 150) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“Discord will arise at the time of a Caliph’s death. A man will flee from Medina to Mecca. Some of the inhabitants of Mecca will approach him and will send him out, while he is unwilling, and will swear allegiance to him between Rukn and Maqam. An army will be dispatched in their direction from Syria, which will sink in the plain ground (*bayd*) between Mecca and Medina.”

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* (on page 431) has narrated from the author of *Jawahir al-‘Aqdayn* who has narrated from Ibn Dawud who has narrated from Imam Ahmad and Hafiz al-Bayhaqi the aforementioned tradition.

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* (on page 448) narrates from the author of *Fara’id al-Simtayn* who narrates from al-Hasan ibn al-Khalid, a tradition from ‘Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha (a.s.) in which he mentions the Mahdi’s occultation and that he is the fourth from his progeny, until he says:

“The Mahdi is the one about whom a caller will call out from the heavens and all the inhabitants of earth will hear the call: Be aware that the Proof of Allah has appeared in the House of Allah, so follow him as truth is in him and with him”.

The place of the Mahdi’s allegiance

The author of *‘Iqd al-Durar* (chapter two) narrates from Abu al-Hasan al-Majili who narrates from Hudhayfa ibn al-Yamān that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“If only a single day remains of this world, Allah will raise a man from my progeny whose name will be the same as my name and his character will be the same as mine and his agnomen is Abu ‘Abd Allah. People will swear allegiance to him between Rukn and Maqam...” .

In section two, chapter four of the afore-said book, its author narrates from Abu Dawud’s *Sunan*, Tirmidhi’s *Jāmi’*, Ahmad’s *Musnad*, Ibn Majah’s *Sunan*, al-Bayhaqi’s *al-Ba’th wa al-Nushur*, and some others who narrate from Umm Salama that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“At the time of a Caliph’s death discord will arise and a man from Medina will flee towards Mecca. Some of the inhabitants of Mecca will approach him and will send him out, while he is unwilling, and will swear allegiance to him between Rukn and Maqam...” .

The author says: What is mentioned immediately after this tradition indicates that person referred to is the Mahdi.

In chapter five of the afore-said book, the author narrates from Abu ‘Abd Allah Na’im ibn Hammad in his *al-Fitan* who narrates from ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas’ud a lengthy tradition mentioning therein Sufyani’s

uprising and the Mahdi's going from Medina towards Mecca and his allegiance, until he reaches to the point where he says: "The Mahdi will sit between Rukn and Maqam and will stretch out his hand. People will give allegiance to him and Allah will cast love for him into people's hearts".

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* (in chapter seven) narrates from Na'im ibn Hammad's *al-Fitan*, who narrates from Abu Hurayra who said: "The Mahdi will be paid allegiance between Rukn and Maqam, He will not awaken anyone who is asleep nor will he shed any blood".

The author says: It refers to the beginning of the allegiance.

Ibn Hajar in his book *al-Sawa'iq* (page 98) has narrated from Ibn Asakir who has narrated from 'Ali (a.s.) the tradition about Mahdi fleeing from Medina towards Mecca. He said: "Some of the inhabitants of Mecca will approach Mahdi and will send him out, while he is unwilling, and will swear allegiance to him between Rukn and Maqam..."

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* in section two and chapter four has narrated from Jabir ibn Yazid al-Ju'fi who narrated from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir about the Mahdi's flight from Medina to Mecca and says: People will swear allegiance to him between Rukn and Maqam. "O Jabir! The Mahdi is from the progeny of al-Husayn."

Preparation for the Mahdi's Triumph

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* (chapter five) narrates from a group of traditionists, among them Ahmad in his *Musnad*, Ibn Majah in his *Sunan*, Al-Bayhaqi Abu 'Umar al-Mada'ini, Na'im ibn Hammad, Abu al-Qasim al-Tabarani and Abu Na'im al-Isbahani who narrate from Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ibn Abi Talib that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

"The Mahdi is from us – the Ahl al-bayt. Allah will set right his affairs in one night."

Ibn Hajar in *al-Sawa'iq* (page 98) has narrated from Ibn Majah as such:

"A group of people will rise from the East and will pave the way for the Mahdi's rule."

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* (in chapter five) has narrated the same tradition from Ibn Majah and al-Bayhaqi.

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* (in chapter five) has narrated from Abu Na'im in his *Sifah al-Mahdi*, who has narrated from Thawban that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

"When you see black flags coming from the direction of East, hasten towards them even if you have to crawl over ice because the Mahdi who is Allah's representative will be amongst them".

The narrator said: Abu 'Abd Allah al-Hakim in his *Mustadrak* and Imam Abu 'Umar in his *Sunan* and Hafiz Na'im ibn Hammad in *al-Fitan* have narrated the contents of this tradition. Perhaps the saying: The

Mahdi who is Allah's representative will be amongst them means that the preparations for the Mahdi's rule would be in their hands just as the same was mentioned in the tradition of 'Abd Allah ibn al-Harith.

In the same chapter of the afore-said book, its author narrates from Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

"Black flags of the Bani 'Abbas will rise from the East, then there will be what Allah wills. Thereafter a group with small black flags will emerge and they will battle with a man from the progeny of Abu Sufyan and his companions and will return obedience and submission to the Mahdi".

The author says: Some of the traditions, which speak about the appearance of black flags from the East, refer to the call of the Abbasids and the uprising of Abu Muslim al-Khurasani. Other traditions indicate the uprising of a group from the East who would invite (the people) towards the Mahdi (a.s.) and the tradition of Sa'id ibn Musayyib which was mentioned before, refers to this account. The possibility, which we mentioned previously, about the traditions (in this regard) being fabricated, refers to the first type of interpretation. So do not be heedless about them.

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* (page 448) narrates from the book *Fara'id al-Simtayn* which narrates from Hafiz Abu Na'im that Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) said:

"Allah has placed fear in the hearts of our friends and followers. When our Qa'im, the Mahdi, will emerge, one person from our friends will be more courageous than a fierce lion and sharper than the point of a spear".

The author says: Undoubtedly, a group which loses its leader also loses its will-power and aim and rather its very progress, as against a group possessing a leader with an upright will-power, earnest aim and firm power. This is because such a state eventually leaves an impression on the conduct and morale of that group. It seems that the afore-mentioned tradition too refers to this very matter and the reason why God has set fear in their hearts is to protect them.

Events that will occur in the near future

How often this thought passes through some mind and rather how often it is pronounced though some tongue that if fear from enemies is the cause of the Mahdi's occultation then how would this fear be obviated considering that day by day various powers and arms are on the rise? How would it be possible for the Mahdi to face these powers and aims which have filled the land and sea and would tighten the sphere the day of his emergence without his having access to any of those weapons because of lack of adequate supporters and ample means?

In reply we say: It's possible that the incidents which are about to take place in this world and the probable events may actually occur which could be amongst the strongest means of Mahdi's emergence and a medium for doing away with his occultation until he emerges. In number he may become like one of the ruling powers and thereafter he would strive in strengthening and increasing his powers and

weapons.

Firstly, amongst the events which are not improbable is this that the moral and spiritual reforms perfection of training and literary and material sciences in some classes of people and rather in all of them will prevail over a special class. Thus when the Mahdi emerges and proclaims his plans and announces the Islamic teachings for which he would rise and that particular class witnesses his truthfulness, trustworthiness and resoluteness they would become submissive towards him.

They will assist him in jihad and become obedient to him and will give him the reins of the government. A large number of people would obey him and become submissive to him. The same had occurred for his great grandfather, the Holy Prophet (S) since a large number of people had brought faith in him due to his virtuous aim and objective just as the incident of al-Najashi (Negus) bears witness to this fact

Secondly: Before the Mahdi's emergence, multitudes of people will gather together and call the others towards him. They will take pledge (from them) for the victory of the day of his emergence. It is likely that the emergence of preachers in common gatherings and the distribution of those things for which Mahdi will rise, namely exercising of worldly, spiritual, social and individual reforms, are amongst the strongest means for the preparation of multitudes of people for the Mahdi's emergence.

As mentioned before, the main motive of awaiting the Mahdi's emergence is preparing and making ready the rudiments and necessities of his emergence. I can say, and it is not unlikely, that it is the Mahdi who is the one who strives behind every reformist who wishes to bring a reform. It has been mentioned previously that the Mahdi's occultation does not hinder him from undertaking such matters.

Thirdly: Break-up of the present world order and every city of the world into smaller states and every ruler of those states will possess independent powers until the Mahdi emerges. Cities and governments will have dispersed to such extent that the Mahdi too would be like one of them in power and preparedness. He will rise for that which Allah has appointed him and will strive for increasing and perfecting his own power.

Fourthly: The ruling powers will render the people completely submissive and obedient towards themselves and every society and rather every group, individual animal and vegetation will groan day and night due to such a life and state of affair. However he will become restless of the cruel and oppressive system while none would be able to see him. He will beseech and complain but only to his Lord.

Thus when the caller will call out between the heaven and the earth that Allah has obviated oppression from you, has made you successful, has set your freedom and deliverance in the Mahdi's hands and the Mahdi has emerged in Mecca, then multitudes of people will hasten towards him for the purpose of reform and their own goodness. In all probability, the meaning of the tradition which says that the Mahdi will not emerge but after the earth has become filled with cruelty and oppression is the same as what we have just said. In short, the Mahdi (a.s.) will emerge at the time when people and society will be in dire

need of a reformist.

Fifthly: The world wars will put the cities out of action and weaken the physical bodies and powers. Thereafter, the Mahdi (a.s.) will emerge while from the viewpoint of number and group, he will be similar to one of those (group of) people. Then, very soon he will swiftly strive to increase and perfect his own powers in addition to those powers and tools which he would avail himself of as booty.

Sixthly: Some of the Islamic sects will accept his call on the day of his emergence and will join the forces of his companions and helpers. They will fight for the Mahdi in the battlefield and will swear allegiance to him. In all respects, they will find confidence in him. Moreover Almighty God will confirm him through the angels just as He confirmed his great grandfather i.e. the Holy Prophet (S). He will confirm him by 'Isa ibn Maryam's (a.s.) descent, the details of which we shall God-willing mention later on.

These were incidents whose occurrence cannot be denied and history too guides us to the occurrence of such incidents and bears testimony to this fact that reformists have made use of similar means. Man is not aware of what might occur tomorrow. Verily the events which took place in the 14th century A.H. and 19th century AD bears witness to the possibility of occurrence of what we have mentioned. God is All-Aware of what has occurred and what is going to take place in the future.

The Mahdi's helpers

Ibn Hajar in *al-Sawa'iq* (on page 98) has narrated from Ibn 'Asakir that 'Ali (a.s.) has said: "When the Qa'im from the progeny of Muhammad (S) will emerge, Allah will gather together the inhabitants of the East and West. His friends will be from Kufa and the righteous men who would assist him (*abdul*) would be from Syria..."

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* (section two, chapter four) has narrated from Jabir ibn Yazid Ju'fi who has narrated from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) a lengthy tradition where he has mentioned in it some of the signs of Mahdi's emergence: the revolt of Sufyani, the Mahdi's escape from Medina to Mecca until he says: Allah will gather together for the Mahdi 313 of his companions..."

In the same book (section one, chapter four) its author narrates from Hakim Abu 'Abd Allah (from his book *al-Mustadrak*) that Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiya said:

We were in the presence of 'Ali (A). A person asked him some questions about the Mahdi. He (a.s.) replied: "Alas"! And he repeated the word seven times and then said: "The Mahdi will emerge at the end of time when those who would call out the name of Allah would be killed.

"Thereafter Allah will gather together a group scattered like clouds, and will bring their hearts together. They will neither fear anyone nor will they flee. Their number will be equal to the number of the companions of Badr. Neither the people of the past took precedent over them nor will the people of the future comprehend them. Their number will be equal to the number of the companions who crossed the

river with the Saul ...”.

The narrator says: Al-Hakim has said: This tradition is an authentic tradition according to the criteria of al-Bukhari and Muslim. However they have not narrated it.

In the seventh chapter of the same book, the author narrates from Abu ‘Amr ‘Uthman ibn Sa’id al-Muqri in his *Sunan* who narrates from Hudhayfa ibn al-Yaman that the Messenger of Allah (S) while narrating about the Mahdi and his emergence said:

“Righteous men (*abdī*) from Syria will hasten towards him along with their followers while noble men from Egypt too will join him. Yet other groups will proceed from the East until they reach Mecca and swear allegiance to him ...”.

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* (on page 449) has narrated from al-Kanji who in turn has narrated from Ibn al-A’sham al-Kufi that All (a.s.) said:

“Bravo! To the people of *ḥaḥliqan* because Allah has hidden treasures amongst them which are neither gold nor silver. Rather there are people there who have recognized Allah in the true sense and they will be the Mahdi’s helpers at the end of time”.

The author of *Is’af al-Raghibin* (on page 150) says: It is true that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“Discord will arise at the time of a Caliph’s death”. Thereafter he mentioned the Mahdi’s emergence at Mecca, the allegiance paid to him there, the sinking of Sufyani’s army at *baydī*’ (the plain ground) and then said:

“When people will witness this miracle from the Mahdi, the righteous men (*abdī*) from Syria and groups of people from Iraq will approach him and swear allegiance to him”..

The angels will assist the Mahdi

The author of *‘Iqd al-Durar* (chapter five) narrates from Abu ‘Amr ‘Uthman ibn Sa’id al-Muqri in his *Sunan* who in turn narrates from Hudhayfa ibn al-Yaman that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“Allegiance will be sworn to the Mahdi between Rukn and Maqam. He will proceed towards Syria with Jibra’il in front of him and Mika’il on his right...”

In section one, chapter four of the same book, its author narrates from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) a tradition wherein he mentions about Mahdi’s emergence and his allegiance between Rukn and Maqam and then says:

“Jibra’il would be on his right and Mika’il on his left ...”

Again, in the seventh chapter of the afore-said book, the author narrates from Abu ‘Amr ‘Uthman ibn Sa’id al-Muqri in his *Sunan* who in turn narrates from Hudhayfa ibn al-Yaman that the Messenger of Allah (S) while mentioning the Mahdi’s emergence and his allegiance between Rukn and Maqam said: “The Mahdi’s attention will be directed towards Syria while Jibra’il would be in front of him and Mika’il on

his left”.

Descent of ‘Isa ibn Maryam (a.s.)

Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (vol. 2 pg. 158) narrates from Abu Hurayra, that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: “How will you be at the time when Ibn Maryam will descend down amongst you and your Imam will be from you.”

Then the author of *‘Iqd al-Durar* (in chapter ten) has narrated the same tradition from *Sahih* of Muslim.

In chapter one of *‘Iqd al-Durar* its author narrates from Abu Na’im in *Manaqib al-Mahdi* who narrates from Abu Sa’id al-Khudri that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“The one behind whom ‘Isa, the son of Maryam, will pray is from my progeny.”

Also, in the same chapter of the same book, he has narrated a similar tradition from Na’im ibn Hammad in *al-Fitan* from ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbas.

The author says: Traditions in this regard are abundant and this saying is an authentic saying in which the renowned ones believe. The Sunni scholars too believe in this saying. The saying in some reports and books that the Mahdi will follow ‘Isa ibn Maryam, are isolated and unworthy of attention.

The author of *Is‘af al-Raghibin* (on page 159) has narrated from Shaykh Muhyi al-Din al-‘Arabi from his book *al-Futuhāt* as such:

‘The Almighty God will make ‘Isa ibn Maryam descend over the white minaret which is on the East of Damascus supported by two angels one on his right side and the other on his left. People at that time would be engaged in their evening prayers. When ‘Isa will descend, the Imam will offer his place to ‘Isa who in turn would go ahead and recite (the congregational) prayers with the people’.

After narrating this tradition the author of *al-Futuhāt* says: ‘This saying that ‘Isa will recite prayers with the people at the time of his descent, is inconsistent with the past traditions saying: The one who will recite prayers with the people is the Mahdi’. Thereafter he says: ‘The saying that people would be engaged in evening prayers at the time of Isa’s descent is inconsistent with what is mentioned in historical accounts which say that people would be engaged in morning prayers at the time of Isa’s descent.

Ibn Hajar in his *al-Sawa’iq* on page 99, says: What is apparent is this that the Mahdi’s emergence will take place before Isa’s descent; and it is said: after Isa’s descent.

Abu al-Hasan al-‘Jari says: There are abundant traditions with successive transmission from al-Mustafa (S) about the Mahdi’s emergence: that he is from the Ahl al-bayt of the Holy Prophet, that he will rule for seven years, that he will fill the earth with justice, that he will emerge along with ‘Isa (a.s.) and ‘Isa will

assist him in killing Dajjal at the Gate of Ludd in Palestine, and that he will lead this nation and 'Isa will pray behind him.

Ibn Hajar says: 'Abu al-Hasan's statement that the Mahdi would lead the prayers and 'Isa would stand behind him is a matter which is substantiated by traditions just as we have mentioned before. However al-Taftazani's statement that 'Isa would lead the Mahdi because of the former being more superior than the latter, and so 'Isa is more preferable and worthy, is without any evidence.

'This is because the Mahdi's Imamate (leadership) for 'Isa means that 'Isa will descend from the heavens so that he remains as a follower of our Holy Prophet and remains governed by his Shari'ah (religious laws) and does not possess any independence for his own Shari'ah. Moreover the matter that 'Isa will follow someone from this nation (i.e. the Mahdi) even though 'Isa may be more superior than the Imam whom he follows, is so explicit and clear that nothing remains concealed from this matter.

Besides, we can gather together these two sayings and say: 'Isa will first of all follow the Mahdi in order that he manifests his motive (i.e. following the Islami path) and after that Mahdi will follow 'Isa so that he has had acted upon the essence of the principle.

Author says: Ibn Hajar's objection and reply to al-Taftazani's views is a matter to think about just as the same is not concealed from our respected readers.

The author of *Is'af al-Raghibin* (on page 163) says: In the book of *al-Kashf*, Suyuti has narrated in various ways that after his descent, 'Isa would live for a period of forty years. Again Suyuti in his book *al-A'lam* says: As explicitly mentioned by the scholars 'Isa will judge as per the Shari'ah of our Holy Prophet (S). Traditions have come down in this regard and a consensus too has been agreed upon.

The author says: Traditions in this regard are numerous and in the third chapter of this book traditions have already been mentioned on this matter and the words of al-Kanji.

The blessings of the Mahdi's emergence

The author of *Iqd al-Durar* (in chapter five) narrates from Hakim Abu 'Abd Allah in his *al-Mustadrak* that 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas said: "During the Mahdi's time the wild and ferocious animals would live in peace and the earth would throw out its buried treasures".

I asked: "What are the earth's buried treasures"? He replied: "Pillars of gold and silver".

Al-Hakim says: This is a tradition whose claim of transmission is correct but which has not been narrated by Muslim and al-Bukhari.

The author says: What is apparent is that the earth's buried treasure refers to its mines.

In the seventh chapter of the same book, its author narrates from al-Hakim in his *al-Mustadrak* who

narrates from ‘Uthman ibn Sa’id al-Muqri in his *Sunan* who narrates from Hudhayfa ibn al-Yaman that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“The inhabitants of the heavens and the earth, the birds, the beasts and the fishes in the sea will become rejoice at the Mahdi’s existence. During the period of Mahdi’s rule, water will be found abundantly, springs will flourish everywhere, the earth will multiply its vegetation, and treasures will be extracted from the mines...”

In the seventh chapter of the afore-said book, the author narrates from al-Hakim from his *al-Mustadrak* who narrates from Abu Sa’id al-Khudri that the Messenger of Allah (SA.W.A) said:

“A severe calamity whose severity had never been heard of before will befall my Ummah from their rulers, so much so that things will turn miserable for them and the earth will become fraught with cruelty and oppression. The believers will fail to seek any place to shelter for themselves. It will be then that Allah will raise a man from my progeny who will fill the earth with justice and equity just as it was filled with tyranny and oppression.

The residents of the heavens and earth will be pleased with the Mahdi. The earth will not store its grain but emit it out and the sky too would not store drops of its rain but would descend it down. The Mahdi would rule over the people for seven, eight or nine years. Allah would destine welfare and blessing to such extent that those living would wish the dead to become alive”.

Al-Hakim says: This is a tradition whose claim of transmission is correct but which has not been narrated by Muslim and al-Bukhari.

Again in the same chapter of the aforesaid book, its author narrates from Abu Na’im’s *Manaqib al-Mahdi* and al-Tabarani’s *Mu’jam* who narrate from Abu Sa’id al-Khudri that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: “During the Mahdi’s era my Ummah will enjoy such bounties which they had never enjoyed before. The sky will descend rain upon them while the earth too would not hold back anything from its vegetation but that it would send it out”.

In the same chapter of the afore-said book, its author narrates from Abu Sa’id al-Khudri that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“The Mahdi will emerge from my Ummah. Allah will send him as the saviour of the people. My nation will live in pleasure due to the Mahdi’s existence. Due to him, the animals too will live a laudable life. The earth will send out its vegetation. The Mahdi will distribute wealth in a just manner”.

In the eighth chapter of the afore-said book, its author narrates from al-Tabarani’s *Mu’jam* and Na’im ibn Hammad’s book *al-Fitan* who narrate from Abu Sa’id al-Khudri that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“During the Mahdi’s era, my nation will enjoy such bounties which they had never enjoyed the like of before. The sky would descend rain upon them while the earth would not neglect anything from its

vegetation but that it would expel it out. Wealth at that time would not have any value such that a man would rise and say: “O Mahdi, grant me wealth,” and he would reply: “Take...”

In the same book, he narrates from Abu Na'im al-Isbahani's *Sifah al-Mahdi* who narrates from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“One who will act upon my Sunnah (ways) will emerge. The sky will send down its bounties and the earth too would throw out its blessings. The earth will be filled with justice just as it was filled with oppression”.

Ibn Hajar in *al-Sawa'iq* (page 97) narrates from Hakim in his *Sahih* that the Messenger of Allah (S) said in a tradition in which he mentioned the Mahdi:

“The inhabitants of the heavens and the earth love him. The sky will send down its rain and the earth will throw out its vegetation and will not keep it in store... Allah will favour the inhabitants of the earth with so much blessings and bounties that those alive would wish the dead ones to be alive”.

The Mahdi's actions and invitation

The author of *Iq'd al-Durar* (chapter seven) narrates from Na'im ibn Hammad from his *al-Fitan* who narrates from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) who said:

‘When corruption will be rife, the Mahdi will emerge in Mecca at the time of night prayers (*'isha*). He will have with him the Holy Prophet's banner, his sword, his shirt and certain other signs, and light and eloquence of speech. As soon as he finishes reciting the night prayers he will call out in a loud voice: “O people! I remind you of that moment when you will be standing before your Lord, for He has perfected the proof, sent the Prophets, revealed the Books, commanded you not to associated partners with Him, to safeguard the obedience and submission of Allah and His Prophet.

“Whatever the Holy Quran brings to life, you too strive to bring to life and whatever the Holy Qur'an dooms to death, you too strive for the same. Be the companion and ministers of the Mahdi in God-wariness, because the world is near annihilation and has bid farewell. I call you to Allah and His Messenger, and to act upon His Book. Keep away the falsehood and enliven the Holy Prophet's Sunnah (practice)”.

The Mahdi will emerge swiftly and suddenly like the autumn cloud along with three hundred and thirteen men equal to the number of the companions of Badr. At night he will be busy in worship and in the day he will be like a roaring lion. Allah will make the Mahdi victorious in the land of Hijaz, and he will set free those of the Bani Hashim who are imprisoned at that time. People with black flags will enter Kufa and will approach the Mahdi for swearing allegiance to him. The Mahdi himself will send his armies to different corners of the world for the purpose of receiving allegiance. The oppressors will be vanquished and the inhabitants of the cities will surrender to the Mahdi...’

In the same chapter of the afore-said book, its author narrates from Abu Na'im in his book *Sifah al-Mahdi* who in turn narrates from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: "Someone from my progeny will emerge who will be acting upon my Sunnah. Blessings will descend down from the sky and the earth too will throw out its bounties. The earth will be filled with justice and equity just as it was filled with tyranny and oppression".

In the same chapter of the same book, its author narrates from 'Abd Allah ibn 'A'aa: I told Imam Muhammad al-Baqir: "Inform me about the Qa'im".

He replied: "I am not the Qa'im and the one whom you refer to is not the Qa'im".

I asked: "How will be the Mahdi's ways and policies"? He replied: "Just like the ways of the Holy Prophet".

In the same book, he narrates from Na'im ibn Hammad who narrates from 'A'isha that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: "The Mahdi is from my progeny. He will fight as per my Sunnah just as I fought as per the revelation".

Ibn Hajar in his *al-Sawai'q* (page 98) and the author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* (page 433) have narrated a tradition with almost the same contents.

The author of *Is'af al-Raghibin* (page 161) says: Muhyi al-Din al-'Arabi in *Futuh al-Makkiyah* says: The Mahdi will act by virtue of Divine inspiration since the Holy Prophet's canons will be revealed to Mahdi by inspiration just as this tradition indicates:

المهدي يقفو اثري لا يخطئ

"The Mahdi will follow in my tracks and he will not err".

Thus the Holy Prophet (S) has informed us that the Mahdi is the follower of the Holy Prophet (S) and not an innovator. Besides he has informed us that the Mahdi is infallible in his judgment. Thus it is known that analogy (*qiyas*) is forbidden to him in the presence of explicit injunctions which Allah has bestowed on him through inspiration. In fact, some researchers reckon analogy to be forbidden for all the divine men since the Holy Prophet (S) can be witnessed for them. When the divine men doubt in any tradition or command they refer to the Holy Prophet and he in turn directly acquaints them with the truth. The Master of the affairs is needless of following any of the Imams other than the Holy Prophet.

The Mahdi's Virtuous Way

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* (chapter five) narrates from Abu 'Amr Uthman ibn Sa'id al-Muqri (from his book *Sunan*) who narrates from Hudhayfa bin al-Yaman that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“The inhabitants of the sky and the inhabitants of the earth, the birds, the beasts and the fishes will rejoice at the Mahdi’s emergence”.

In the seventh chapter of the same book, its author narrates from Abu Na’im’s *Sifah al-Mahdi* and Imam Ahmad’s *Musnad*, from Abu Sa’id al-Khudri that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: “I give you glad tidings about Mahdi.....the inhabitants of the earth and the heavens will be pleased with him”.

In the third chapter of the same book, its author narrates from Na’im ibn Hammad’s book *al-Fitan* that Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah said: A person approached Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) and said: “Accept these five hundred dirhams as Zakat (alms) on my wealth”.

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) replied: “You may give those five hundred dirhams to your Muslim neighbours and to your Muslim brethren who are in distress”.

Thereafter Imam (a.s.) said: “When the Mahdi from our Ahl al-Bayt rises, he will distribute wealth equally and will treat the people with justice”.

In the same chapter of the same book, the author narrates from Abu ‘Amr al-Muqri (from his book *Sunan*) and Hafiz Na’im ibn Hammad’s *al-Fitan*, that Ka’b al-Ahbar said: I find the Mahdi’s name in the scrolls of the Prophets. His rule is neither unjust nor oppressive”.

Ibn Hajar in his *al-Sawa’iq* (page 98) narrates from al-Ruyani, al-Tabarani and others that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“The Mahdi is from my offspring.... the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth and the birds in the air are pleased with his caliphate..”.

On page 99 of the same book, he has narrated from Ahmad and al-Mawardi a tradition with similar content.

The Mahdi’s noble moral traits

The author of *‘Iqd al-Durar* (chapter three) narrates from al-Harith ibn al-Mughira al-Nadhri: I told al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali: “How should we recognize Mahdi”?

He replied: “By his calmness and dignity”.

In the same book, he narrates from Hafiz Abu Muhammad al-Husayn ibn Mas’ud in *al-Mas’abihi* that Ka’b al-Ahbar said: “The Mahdi will humble himself for Allah like an eagle with its two wings.”

In the eighth chapter of the same book, he narrates from Na’im ibn Hammad’s *al-Fitan* from Tawus as such: “Amongst the signs of the Mahdi is this that he would be strict with his officials, generous with wealth and kind to the indigent”.

In section three, chapter nine of the same book; he narrates from Na’im ibn Hammad’s *al-Fitan* that Abu

Ru'bah said: "The Mahdi will show kindness to the poor and will caress them".

Again in section three, chapter nine of the same book he narrates from al-Husayn ibn 'Ali (a.s.):

"When the Mahdi emerges, there will be nothing between him and the Arabs and Quraysh except the sword. For what reason do they make haste in Mahdi's emergence? I swear by Allah that the Mahdi will not wear but coarse and rough clothes and his food will only be bread made of barley, and death will be hidden beneath his sword".

Religion will be completed with the Mahdi

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* (chapter one) narrates from a group well-versed in traditions namely Abu al-Qasim al-Tabarani, Abu Na'im al-Isbahani, Abu 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Hatim and Abu 'Abd Allah Na'im ibn Hammad and others that Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) said: I asked the Holy Prophet: "O Messenger of Allah! Is the Mahdi from us or from other than us"?

He replied: "No, he will be from us. Allah will complete the religion through the Mahdi just as He commenced it through us".

In the seventh chapter of the afore-said book, he narrates from the previous narrators that 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) said: I asked the Holy Prophet:

"Is the Mahdi from us, progeny of Muhammad, or from other than us"? He replied: "No, he will be from us. Allah will complete the religion through the Mahdi just as he commenced it through us".

In the same chapter of the same book, its author narrates from Hafiz Abu Bakr al-Bayhaqi who narrates from Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ibn 'Ali Talib (a.s.) that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: "The Mahdi is from our progeny. Religion will be completed with him just as it commenced with us".

Ibn Hajar in his *al-Sawa'iq* (page 97) has narrated from Abu al-Qasim al-Tabarani that the Messenger of Allah (S) has said: "The Mahdi is from us. Religion will be completed with him just as it commenced with us".

The author of *Is'af al-Raghibin* (page 148) narrates from al-Tabarani that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: "The Mahdi is from our progeny. Religion will be completed with him just as it commenced with us."

The Jews and the Christians

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* (chapter seven) narrates from Na'im ibn Hammad (from the book *al-Fitan*) that Sulayman ibn 'Isa said:

"It has come down to me that it is at the hands of the Mahdi that the Ark of the Covenant will be taken out from the Lake Tiberias. The Ark will be carried and placed in front of Bayt al-Maqdis. When the Jews will witness it, they will surrender".

In the third chapter of the same book, the author says: In some of the traditions it is stated: The reason why he is called Mahdi is because he will show the way to the books of the Torah and he will extract them from the mountains of al-Sham. He will invite the Jews towards the books and a great number of Jews will submit themselves to the books of the Torah.

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* says: – Abu 'Amr al-Mada'ini in his *Sunan* has said: “The reason why he has been called the Mahdi is because he will direct the way to the mountains of al-Sham and extract the books of the Torah from it. He will argue with the Jews by means of Torah and a congregation of Jews will surrender to him”.

The author *Is'af al-Raghibin* (page 153) says:

“The Mahdi will extract the Ark of the Covenant and the books of Torah from the cave of Antioch and mountain of al-Sham respectively. He will argue with the Jews by means of Torah and a large number of the Jews will surrender to him”.

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* narrates (on page 476) from the author of *Mishkat al-Masabih* who narrates from Abu Hurayra that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“By Allah, 'Isa ibn Maryam will descend and will judge with justice. He will destroy the cross and kill the pig. He will nullify the *jizya* (poll tax), set free the young camels and will not ride upon them. He will eradicate enmity and will destroy grudge, hatred and jealousy”.

The author says: That he will nullify the *jizya* perhaps refers to this point that all the people at that time would be following the religion of Islam, just as destruction of the cross too is a metaphoric remark in this regard. Eradication of enmity, grudge, hatred and jealousy too may mean that these will be obviated between the Jews and Christians by the blessings of 'Isa ibn Maryam's descent.

Manifestation of the religion of Islam

The author of *'Iqd al-Durar* (chapter two) narrates from Abu al-Hasan Rib'i al-Maliki who narrates from Hudhayfa ibn al-Yaman that the Messenger of Allah (S) while speaking of the Mahdi, his agnomen and place of allegiance says:

“Allah will restore the religion by means of the Mahdi and will produce victories and triumphs for him. Then there will be none left on the face of the earth except for those who say: There is no god except Allah (*la ilaha illa'llah*)...”

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* narrates (on page 476) from Shaykh Muhyi al-Din al-'Arabi from his book *al-Futihat al-Makkiyah* (chapter 366) in a discussion on the Mahdi and his ministers:

“The Mahdi will emerge when religion would be on the decline. The one who would not accept will be

killed and the one who would engage in debate with him will be defeated. He will so reveal the realities of religion that had the Holy Prophet (S) been alive, he too would have judged in the same manner. He will eradicate the (false) religions from the face of the earth. Then, except for the pure religion, no other religion would remain over the earth”.

The Mahdi's reforms

The author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* narrates (on page 486) from the book *al-Manaqib* which narrates from 'Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha who narrates from his forefathers, from the Messenger of Allah (S) who, while mentioning the virtues of his household and his Mi'raj (ascension to heaven) said:

'I asked: "My Lord, who are my legatees (*awṭiyya*)"? I heard a call saying: "O Muhammad, your legatees are those whose names have been written on the enclosure of My throne."

I looked and saw twelve lights, on each light was a green cover with the name of one of my legatees written on it, the first of them being 'Ali and the last of them the Mahdi.

I asked: "My Lord, are they the legatees after me"?

I heard a call saying: "These are My friends, chosen ones and proofs upon My creatures after you. They are your legatees. I swear by My Glory and Majesty that I will cleanse the earth from its tyranny by the hands of the last of them who is the Mahdi. I will make him conquer the East and West. I will make the winds subservient to him, and will make the clouds submissive to him. I will grant him power through some means and will help him with My troops. I will assist him through My angels until he gains power over My government and gathers the people towards My *tawhid* (monotheism). Thereafter, I will perpetuate his rule and I will make the days follow one another between my friends until the Day of Judgment”.

Again, the author of *Yanabi' al-Mawadda* narrates (on page 486) from Abu al-Mu'ayyad Muwaffaq ibn Ahmad al-Khawrazmi with his chain of transmission from Abu Sulayman, the shepherd of the Prophet (S) who said:

I heard the Holy Prophet (S) saying: 'The night when I was made to ascend to the heavens...' then he (S) mentioned a part of the tradition about his ascension (*mi'raj*) and its virtues and about the virtues of his Ahl al-Bayt and his twelve legatees, and said: 'I heard a cry: "O Muhammad! Would you like to see your legatees"?

I said: "Yes". I was addressed: "Look towards the right of the Throne (*'arsh*)".

As soon as I cast my glance, I saw 'Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan, al-Husayn, 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, Muhammad ibn 'Ali, Ja'far ibn Muhammad, Musa ibn Ja'far, 'Ali ibn Musa, Muhammad ibn 'Ali, 'Ali ibn Muhammad, al-Hasan ibn 'Ali and Muhammad al-Mahdi ibn al-Hasan who appeared amongst them like a brilliant star.

Later, I was addressed: “O Muhammad! They are My Proofs upon My servants. They are your legates and the Mahdi who is the avenger of your progeny is amongst them. I swear by My Glory and Majesty that the Mahdi will take revenge from My enemies and will assist My friends”.

The author of *‘Iqd al-Durar* (section one, chapter four) narrates from Abu Na’im’s *Sifah al-Mahdi* from Hudhayfa ibn al-Yaman that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“Woe to this nation because of its oppressive rulers. How they kill the believers and create fear in them leaving aside those who obey them. A God-fearing believer will be conciliatory to them in speech, but will flee from them in his heart. Whenever Allah wills to restore the might of Islam, He will destroy the oppressors. He is Powerful over what He wills in setting right a nation after it has gone corrupt”.

Thereafter the Holy Prophet (S) said: ‘O Hudhayfa! If there remains not more than a day from the life of this world, then Allah will prolong that day to such an extent that a man from my progeny will appear and rule. He will conduct important affairs and will manifest the religion of Islam. Allah does not break His Promise and He is quick in reckoning”.

In section three, chapter nine of the afore-said book, its author narrates that Amir al-Mu’minin ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib while mentioning the Mahdi and his reforms said:

“There is no innovation but that the Mahdi will uproot it and there is no Sunnah (practice) but that he will enliven it”.

In the seventh chapter of the same book, he narrates from a congregation of traditionists namely Abu Na’im al-Isbahani, Abu al-Qasim al-Tabarani, Abu ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Hatim, and Abu ‘Abd Allah Na’im ibn Hammad who narrate from ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib that the Messenger of Allah (S) while mentioning that the Mahdi is from the progeny of Muhammad and Allah will complete the religion through him, said:

“Through him people will be delivered from dissension, just as they found deliverance from polytheism through us. Through him, Allah will reconcile their hearts after the enmity of dissension just as He reconciled their hearts through us after enmity of unbelief”.

In section three, chapter nine of the same book, he narrates from ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Aa as such: I asked Imam Muhammad al-Baqir: “When Mahdi emerges what course will he take”?

He replied: “He will destroy what was before him (of the heresies), just as the Holy Prophet (S) did, and he will recommence Islam in a new and fresh manner”.

In the same section and the same chapter of the afore-said book, the author narrates from ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib:

“There is no innovation but that the Mahdi will eradicate it, and there is no Sunnah (practice) but that he will establish it...”

In the third chapter of the afore-mentioned book, he narrates from Abu Bakr al-Bayhaqi’s *al-Ba’th wa*

al-Nushur, Ahmad ibn Hanbal's *Musnad* and Abu Na'im's *Sifah al-Mahdi*, who all narrate from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

"I give you glad tidings about the Mahdi. He will emerge amongst my nation at the time when they will be in discord and convulsion. Then, he will fill the earth with equity and justice just as it was fraught with tyranny and oppression... The Mahdi will fill the hearts of Muhammad's nation with riches and make them free from want. His justice would embrace all of them..."

In the seventh chapter of the afore-mentioned book, he narrates from Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (a.s.): "The Mahdi will dispatch his chiefs to various cities for establishing justice amongst the people. The wolves and sheep shall graze together. The children will play with the snakes and scorpions without being harmed the least. Evil will vanish and goodness will remain. People will plant 1 *madd* (about 750 grams) and will harvest 700 *madd* (about 525 kilograms), as Allah, the Exalted said:

كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلٍ فِي كُلِّ سُنْبُلَةٍ مِائَةُ حَبَّةٍ ۖ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ ۖ

..as the parable of a grain growing seven ears (with) a hundred grains in every ear; and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases (2:261)

"Adultery, wine-drinking and usury will be uprooted. People will devote themselves to worship, divine laws, religion and congregational prayers. The life of man will lengthen, properties held in trust would be returned back, trees will bear fruits, blessings will multiply, the wicked will be perish, the virtuous ones will remain and those having a grudge against the Ahl al-Bayt will cease to exist".

In the third chapter of the afore-said book, the author narrates from Na'im ibn Hammad's *al-Fitan* from Ja'far ibn Yasir al-Shami, that during the Mahdi's era, restitution of wrongs would reach such an extent that if something belonging to someone is hidden under a person's tooth, he would remove it and give it back to its owners.

His conquests and the extent of his rule

The author of *Iqd al-Durar* (chapter three) narrates from Abu al-Hasan al-Maliki who narrates from Hudhayfa ibn al-Yaman that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

"If there remains not more than a day from the life of this world, Allah will raise a man from my progeny whose name will be the same as my name and his character will be the same as my character. Allah will revive the religion through him and will establish victories for him. None will remain on the face of the earth but those who say:

There is no god but Allah (لا اله الا الله).”

In the first chapter of the afore-said book, its author narrates from Abu ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Jawzi in his *Tarikh* who narrates from ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbas that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“Four persons ruled over the entire earth – two of them from the believers and two from the unbelievers. The two believers were Dhu’l Qarnayn and Sulayman (a.s.) and the two disbelievers were Bakht al-Nasr and Nimrod. Soon, a man from my Ahl al-bayt will become the owner of the entire earth”.

The author of *Is’af al-Raghibin* (on page 150) says: It has come down in traditions that the Mahdi will become the owner of the east and the west.

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* narrates (on page 447) from the book *Fara’id al-Simtayn* from Sa’id ibn Jubayr who narrates from Ibn ‘Abbas that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“There will be twelve Caliphs and successors after me who will be the Proofs of Allah upon His creatures. The first of them is ‘Ali and the last of them is my son, al-Mahdi. Then the Spirit of Allah, ‘Isa ibn Maryam will descend and will pray behind the Mahdi. The earth will be illumined by the light of its Lord and the Mahdi’s rule will extend to the east and the west”.

On the same page of the same book, he narrates from the book *Fara’id al-Simtayn* which narrates from Abu Umamah al-Bahili that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“The Mahdi will extract the treasures and will conquer the cities of the polytheists and infidels”.

The author of *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* narrates (on page 487) from the book *Fara’id al-Simtayn* which narrates from Sa’id ibn Jubayr who narrates from Ibn ‘Abbas that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“If not more than a day remains from the life of this world, Allah will prolong that day until the Mahdi who is from my offspring will emerge... The earth will be illumined by the light of its Lord, and his rule will extend to the east and the west”.

Duration of the Mahdi’s caliphate and rule

Diverse traditions exists on the period of the Mahdi’s caliphate and rule and the duration of his life especially those traditions which have come down from our Sunni brethren.

Abu Dawud has narrated that the Mahdi shall rule for a period of seven years. Al-Tirmidhi has narrated that the Mahdi shall rule for a period of five, seven or nine years. Ibn Majah too has narrated the same. Al-Hakim has narrated in *Is’af al-Raghibin* that the Mahdi shall rule for seven or nine years. However Ibn Hajar has mentioned only seven years (and not nine) for the Mahdi’s rule.

It has been narrated from al-Tabarani and al-Bazzaz that the Mahdi shall live for seven, eight or a maximum nine years. It is narrated from Mawardi and Ahmad that he shall live for five, seven, eight or

nine years and after him there will be no goodness left. Some of the traditions mention the Mahdi's rule to extend for twenty years just as the author of *'Iqd al-Durar* has narrated from Abu Na'im and al-Tabarani. Moreover the author of *'Iqd al-Durar* has narrated from Na'im ibn Hammad that the Mahdi would survive for forty years. However, traditions which mention the Mahdi's life to last for seven years are more.

Some traditions mention that he shall rule for seven years where each year would be equal to twenty years of our reckoning. That is to say, in each year, Mahdi will conduct the reformatory tasks and Islamic teachings for a period of twenty years. Some traditions mention that he would rule for ten years. The sayings of 'Ulama' (learned scholars) in this regard are diverse. Some have said: Doubt has arisen from the narrator and the proof of this view is the statement of al-Tirmidhi who says: "It is due to the narrator's doubt."

The author of *Is'af al-Raghibin* (page 155) says: Most of the traditions mention the Mahdi's rule to last for seven years and with regards to seven to nine years it is doubtful.

One tradition mentions his rule to last for six years. Ibn Hajar says: The matter on which traditions are in agreement with each other is this that the Mahdi will undoubtedly rule for seven years. He has also narrated from Abu al-Husayn al-Bujiri that abundant and authentic traditions indicate that the Mahdi will rule for seven years.

The author says: Abu al-Hasan al-Bujiri's saying is more apparent and well-known. In this saying, there exists a great virtue for Mahdi and it is this that within this short period, he will rise for the religions and worldly reforms just as his forefather, the Holy Prophet (S) rose for a period of eight years i.e. from the second year of Hijrah.

The author of *Is'af al-Raghibin* (page 156) says: One tradition mentions the period of the Mahdi's rule to be more than what was mentioned. Another tradition states that the Mahdi would rule for forty years. Another tradition mentions twenty-one years and yet another tradition mentions fourteen years.

Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani in *Al-Muntazar al-Mahdi* says: Traditions mentioning the seven-year period of the Mahdi's rule are more in number and more well-known. Assuming the correctness of all the traditions, we can conclude from all of them as such: Traditions which mention forty years refer to the period of his rule. Traditions which mention seven, eight or nine years refer to the last degree of manifestation of his rule and power. Moreover, traditions, which mention twenty or fourteen years, refer to the average limit of the rule.

The author says: The reason for the differences in traditions may be that the reality of this matter and the duration for which the Mahdi will rule should not be known, just as the time of his emergence is concealed and unknown, in order that one's attention is drawn towards all sides and he longs for the Mahdi's victory and long stay till the maximum period of time, although the probability of the seven-year period is stronger.

1. A **ṭāʾīyah** ode is one which ends with the letter **ṭā**.

The number and Place of Mahdi's Helpers

Asbagh ibn Nubatah says: Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (a.s.) recited a sermon and mentioned therein something about the emergence of the Mahdi and his helpers. Abu Khalid Halabi or Kabuli said: "O 'Ali, inform us something about his qualities."

He replied: "From the viewpoint of character and creation, he resembles the Holy Prophet (S) the most. Should I inform you about his helpers"? They said: "Yes, O Amir al-Mu'minin."

He replied: "I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) saying: 'The first of them would be from Basra and the last of them from Yamamah'. Thereafter he began to count the Mahdi's companions. People were crying and 'Ali (a.s.) was saying:

Two persons from Basra, one person from Ahwaz, one person from Mina, one person from Shushtar, one person from Duraq, four persons namely 'Ali, Ahmad, 'Abd Allah and Ja'far from Baastan, two persons by the names of Muhammad and al-Hasan from Amman, two persons – Shaddad and Shadid from Siraf, three persons – Hafas, Yaqub and 'Ah from Shiraz, four persons Musa, 'Ali, 'Abd Allah and Ghalafan from Isfahan, one person by the name of Yahya from Abdah, one person by the name of Dawud from Maraj or A'raj, one person by the name of 'Abd Allah from Karaj.

One person by the name of Qadim from Burujerd, one person by the name of Abd al-Razzak from Nahawand, two persons – 'Abd Allah and Abd al-Samad from Dainul, three persons – Ja'far, Ishaq and Musa from Hamadan, two persons – whose names are similar to the names of Holy Prophet's Ahl al-bayt from Qum, one person by the name of Darid and five others whose names are similar to the names of *Aḥḥab al-Kahf* from Khurasan.

One person from Ḥmul, one person from Joijan, one person from Herat, one person from Balkh, one person from Qarah, one person from A'ane, one person from Damaghan, one person from Sarkhas, three persons from Saiyar, one person from Sayah, one person from Samarkand, twenty-four persons from Ḥaliqan – They are the same ones about whom the Holy Prophet (S) said: In Khurasan, treasures can be found which are not gold or silver; but they are men whom Allah and His Prophet will gather together.

There will be two persons from Qazvin, one person from Fars, one person from Abhar, one person from Birjan, one person from Shakh, one person from Sareeh, one person from Ardabil, one person from Murad, one person from Tadammor, one person from Armani, three persons from Maragha, one person from Khu'i, one person from Salmas, one person from Badices, one person from Nasur, one person from Barkari, one person from Sarkhis, one person from Munaijerd, one person from Qaliqala.

Three persons from Wasit, ten persons from Baghdad, four persons from Kufa, one person from Qadisiya, one person from Surah, one person from Serat, one person from Nael, one person from Saidah, one person from Juijan, one person from Qusur, one person from Anbaar, one person from Akbarah, one person from Hananeh, one person from Tabuk, one person from Jaamedah, three persons from Abadan, six persons from Hadisah Musel, one person from Mosul, one person from Maqlasaya, one person from Naseebbeen, one person from Arwan, one person from Faraqeen, one person from Aamed, one person from Ra's al-'Ayn.

One person from Raqqah, one person from Haran, one person from Bales, one person from Qabeeh, one person from Tartus, one person from Qasr, one person from Adneh, one person from Hamari, one person from Arar, one person from Qures, one person from Antioch, three persons from Halab, two persons from Hamas, four persons from Damascus, one person from Syria, one person from Qaswan, one person from Qaimut, one person from Sur, one person from Karaj, one person from Azrah.

One person from Aamer, one person from Dakar, two persons from Bait al-Maqdis, one person from Ramalich, one person from Bales, two persons from Acca, one person from Arafat, one person from Asqalan, one person from Gazah, four persons from Fasath, one person from Qaramis, one person from Damyath, one person from Mahaleh, one person from al-Iskandariya, one person from Barqah, one person from Tanjah, one person from Mranjah.

One person from Qirwan, five persons from Sus Aqsa, two persons from Qirus, three persons from Jamim, one person from Qus, one person from Aden, one person from Alali, ten persons from Medina, four persons from Mecca, one person from Ta'if, one person from Dair, one person from Shirwan, one person from Zubaid, ten persons from Saru, one person from Ahsah, one person from Qatif, one person from Hajar and one person from Yamamah.

'Ali (a.s.) said: The Holy Prophet (S) counted them to me until they became 313 in number, the same as the companions of Badr. Allah will gather them from the East and West and place them near the Holy Ka'aba by the wink of an eye. When the people of Mecca will witness this, they will say:

"Sufyani has gathered us around himself". After coming in contact with the people of Mecca they will see a group gathered around the Ka'ba and the darkness and gloom will have departed from them and the dawn of hope ascended and they will tell each other:

"Salvation" (perhaps meaning to say that we have found salvation). The noble people will watch and their rulers go in deep thought.

Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) said: "As if I am seeing them – their appearance, height, physique, face, beauty and clothes are all one and the same. As though they are in search of something which they have lost and are now thoughtful and perplexed over this matter until a person who resembles the Prophet the most in creation and appears before them from behind the curtain of the Ka'ba. They will ask him: "Are you the Mahdi?" He will reply: "Yes, I am the Promised Mahdi".

Thereafter the Mahdi will address them as such: Swear allegiance to me with regards to forty qualities and enter into a covenant with me with regards to ten qualities.

Annaf said: "O Ali what are those qualities?

He replied: They will swear allegiance that they will not steal, commit adultery, kill someone unjustly, defame the honor of a respectable person, abuse a Muslim, swarm a house, mount on a thin and weak animal, decorate themselves falsely (wear gold), wear fur, wear silk, wear clogs, obstruct the path for anyone, commit injustice to the orphans, play trick and deceit anyone, eat the wealth of the orphans, indulge in homosexuality, drink wine, commit treason in trust, breach the promises, hoard wheat and barley, kill someone who seeks refuge in him, pursue the defeated one, shed blood unjustly and embark on killing the injured one. Moreover one should wear coarse garments, consider the ground as ones pillow, eat bread made out of barley, be satisfied with whatever meagre he receives, participate in 'Jihad' (holy war) the way it should be done, smell musk and other good fragrances, avoid impurity..."

Second Conclusion: References

Amongst the matters which are good and rather necessary to mention is the names of books and authors – the sources from which we have narrated the traditions in the book of *Al-Mahdi*. This is so that the rights of those authors are duly paid and rather, the respected readers gain self-satisfaction.

The following are the references of the book *Al-Mahdi*.

1. The book *Is'af al-Raghibin* is about the virtues of the Holy Prophet (S) and his Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.). It is written by Shaykh Muhammad Saban who died in the year 1206.
2. The book *al-Jami' al-Latif* is about the excellence of Mecca and the construction of the Holy Mosque. Its author is Allama Shaykh Jamal al-Din Muhammad Jar Allah ibn Muhammad ibn Nur al-din ibn Abu Bakr ibn 'Ali Zahira al-Qurashi al-Makhzumi. This book was written in the year 950 A.H. and was printed in the year 1276 A.H. in the printing-house of Dar Ihya al-Kutub al-'Arabiya.
3. Commentary on the *Nahj al-Balagha* – written by a leading personality in literature, language and history by the name of Shaykh 'Izz al-din Abi Hamid 'Abd al-Hamid ibn Hibat Allah al-Mada'ini, well-known as Ibn Abi al-Hadid who died in the year 655 Hijri. This book has been printed in four volumes in Dar al-Kutub al-'Arabiya in Egypt.
4. *Sahih al-Bukhari* – compiled by a leading traditionist Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Isma'il ibn Ibrahim ibn al-Mughira who died in the year 256 A.H. This book has been printed in the year 1312 A.H. in the publishing-house of Maymaniya in Egypt.
5. *Sahih Sunan al-Mustafa* – compiled by a leading traditionist Abu Dawud Sulayman ibn Asha'th al-Sijistani who died in the year 357 A.H.

6. *Sahih al-Tirmidhi* – compiled by Abu ‘Isa Muhammad ibn Surah who died in the year 278 A.H.. This book was printed in the year 1310 A.H. at Lucknow in India.

7. *Al-Sawa’iq al-Muhriqa fi al-radd ‘ala ahl al-bid’ wa al-zandaqa* – compiled by Shaykh Shahab al-din Ahmad Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, a resident of Mecca, against the people of innovation and heresy. He died in the year 974 A.H. This book was printed in Egypt in the year 1312 A.H.

8. *‘Iqd al-Durar fi Akhbar al-Imam al-Muntadhar* – written about the Awaited Imam by the great scholar Abu Badr Shaykh Jamal al-din Yusuf ibn Yahya ibn ‘Ali ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn ‘Ali al-Maqdisi, al-Shafi’i, al-Salmi, al-Dimishqi, who finished writing this book in the year 658 A.H. This is the best and the most comprehensive book I have seen of our Sunni brothers in this regard. I have not come across the printed script of this book and perhaps it has not yet been printed.

Yes, two copies of the said book are present in the library of our master Imam ‘Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha (a.s.). One of them had been written in the year 953 A.H.

Another copy of this book is present in the library of the leader of all leaders in traditions i.e. al-Mirza Muhammad Husayn al-Nuri al-Tabarsi (died in 1320), as is apparent from his book *Kashf al-Astar*.

Another copy too can be found in the library of our leader Sayyid Shahab al-Din al-Mar’ashi al-Husayni al-Najafi, as he himself has told me.

Yet another copy is present in the library of our master Abu al-Majd Muhammad al-Ridha al-Isfahani. This is the same copy on which we have relied and narrated from although it is not free of errors. In the book *Durar al-Musawiyah*, as we mentioned in the preface of this book, he ascribes the book *‘Iqd al-Durar* to Ali ibn Shahab Hamadani. However this is apparently a mistake because I have never come across anyone ascribing this book to the afore-said Sayyid. Yes, the book *Mawwadah al-Qurba* belongs to the afore-mentioned Sayyid.

From the last portion of the book *Yanabi’ al-Mawadda* and the book *Ghayah al-Maram* it appears that Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Kanji in his book *Al-Bayan fi Akhbar Sahib al-Zaman* and the book *Kifayat al-Talib fi Fadhḥ’il ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib* narrates some of his collections from the book *‘Iqd al-Durar*.

9. The book *al-Futuhāt al-Islamiyah* after *al-Futuhāt al-Nabawiyah* – written by the scholar Sayyid Ahmad ibn Zayni Dahlan a Mufti (expert in Islamic jurisprudence) of Mecca who died in the year 1304. This book has been published in two parts in the publishing house of Mustapha Muhammad in Egypt.

10. The book *al-Futuhāt al-Makkiyah* written by the mystic scholar and researcher Shaykh Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhyi al-din Muhammad ibn ‘Ali famous as Ibn ‘Arabi al-Haṭimi al-Ḥaṭṭi. Truly, this book is a useful book in its own field and I don’t think there exists another of its kind. This book has been printed in Egypt in Dar al-Kutub al-‘Arabiya al-Kubra publishing house.

11. The book *Kashf al-Dhunun ‘an ḥaṣṣi al-Kutub wa al-Funun*. As it can be judged from its name, this

book is majestic in its own field. It has been written by the scholar Mulla Katib Chalabi who died in the year 1067 A.H. This book was printed in Dar al-Sa'adah in two volumes.

12. The book *Mafatih al-Ghayb* which is a famous exegesis written by the research scholar Muhammad Fakhr al-Din al-Razi who died in the year 606 A.H. This book was printed in eight volumes in the publishing-house of al-Imira in the year 1308 A.H. The exegesis of Abu al-Sa'ud too has been printed in the margin of this exegesis.

13. *Mufradat al-Quran* – written by the research scholar Abu al-Qasim Husayn ibn Muhammad ibn Mufadhhdhal famous as Raghīb al-Isfahani who died in the year 502 A.H. This book has been printed in the margins of *al-Nihaya* of Ibn Athir in Egypt.

14. The book *Nur al-Absar fi Manaqib Ahl Bayt al-Nabi al-Mukhtar* compiled by the scholar Sayyid Mu'min ibn al-Hasan al-Shablanji who died in the year 1208 A.H. This book was printed in the year 1304 A.H. in Egypt in the 'Uthmani printing house.

15. The book *al-Nihaya fi Gharib al-Hadith wa al-Qur'an* which is on the subject of explanation of words used in the traditions and the Qur'an and is written by the research scholar and lexicographer Abu al-Sa'dat Mubarak ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Jazari, well-known as Ibn Athir who died in the year 606 AH. This book has been printed in four volumes in the publishing-house of al-Khayriyah in Egypt.

16. *Nahj al-Balagha* – compiled by Allama al-Sharif al-Radhi Muhammad ibn Abi Ahmad al-Musawi who was the chief of seekers of knowledge in Baghdad. In this book, he has collected the sermons, letters and aphorisms of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.). This book has been printed in three parts in one volume in the printing-house of al-Istiqamah in Egypt. Shaykh Muhammad Abduh who was the Mufti (passing judicial decrees) of Egypt, Shaykh Muhyi al-din Muhammad 'Abd al Hamid al-Mudarris who was the professor of Al-Azhar have written a commentary on this book.

17. The magazine "Huda al-Islam" which is printed weekly in Egypt under the guidance of Muhammad Ahmad al-Sayrafi and a number of scholars of Egypt have given their share of contribution to this magazine. Undoubtedly this magazine is a religious magazine and is rare in its own field. It was started from 1354 A.H and is still being published.

18. The book *Yanabi' al-Mawadda fi Mawadda Dhuway al-Qurba* – written by the mystic scholar Shaykh Sulayman ibn Khawaja Kalan al-Husayni al-Balkhi al-Qunduzi who died in the year 1294 A.H. This book was printed in the publishing-house of 'Akhtar'.

Links

- [1] <https://www.al-islam.org/user/login?destination=node/46063%23comment-form>
- [2] <https://www.al-islam.org/user/register?destination=node/46063%23comment-form>
- [3] <https://www.al-islam.org/person/sayyid-sadruddin-sadr>
- [4] <https://www.al-islam.org/organization/naba-organization>
- [5] <https://www.al-islam.org/person/jalil-dorrani>
- [6] <https://www.al-islam.org/library/prophethood-imamate>
- [7] <https://www.al-islam.org/library/sunni-shia>
- [8] <https://www.al-islam.org/library/imam-al-mahdi>
- [9] <https://www.al-islam.org/feature/introducing-ahlul-bayt>
- [10] <https://www.al-islam.org/feature/resources-further-research>
- [11] <https://www.al-islam.org/feature/responses-misconceptions>
- [12] <https://www.al-islam.org/feature/shia-beliefs-explained>
- [13] <https://www.al-islam.org/person/imam-al-mahdi>