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4. The Shia and the meaning of Mahdism

As he earlier proceeded, here too he proceeds on the same basis of the materialistic aspect. The historical causes, social trend and the political ground to him is the reason for the belief of the Shia in Mahdism. Political defeats and victories, in his view, have a part in the buildup of this belief. It is quite easy to deny what is not seemed or to doubt what is not found in a material search. In religious studies, a belief is a fundamental. First to avoid the belief and then to search is to first become blind and then to set out on sightseeing.

In such a way even the prophet hood and even the presence of God can be discussed in order to deny or can be put to question so as to obviate its credibility. To believe wrong could be the consequence of social causes or of the illiteracy. The real belief is above these things because it is in the root of human nature. There were many who claimed to be Mahdi. Their claim did not gain ground because they were after a political end. These interpretations, deviations and analyses do not touch the root but show the prejudice.

God, revelation, and prophet hood is a fact; there is a motive in man to accept this fact. Since it is so, on the other hand, persons have lied and have claimed to be God or a prophet.

Between those two can there be a parallel?

The matter of Mahdism was told by the Prophet (S). His associates and companions heard it. It is a fact foretold by the Prophet (S). Here it attains authenticity. It has been utilized for personal gains towards a political end. But it is not true that this issue was the product of events which later took the shape of belief and immuned its object with a sin, that is, 'Ma'soom'. Events, happenings or incidents sometimes guide a man towards truth.

For example, Abraham the prophet, that great believer in the oneness of God, educated the people to believe in one god in a very odd and at the same time very efficacious way¹. As the night fell and the stars glittered, he said it is god. When it disappeared he was disappointed and said,

“I do not like that which vanishes.”(6:76)

He made it clear that the star is not god. Then in the next stage the moon ruled the sky with its serene and silent light. Abraham said;

“This is god.” (6:77)

The moon too disappeared. Abraham again became disappointed and said that he could not love what does not stay. Then in the day when the sun shone brightly, Abraham said;

“This is god.” (6:78)

But in the evening the sun too disappeared. Here Abraham shouted;

“The sun is not god. I worship the God who never disappears.”

Yes, incidents can lead to facts. But the truth of a belief is never the effect of a cause and nor is it a second grade fact.

If we persist in our denial under some pretext or the other, the philosophy of true religions and their schools shall confront us. As time lapsed people became more ardent towards Ali and his offspring, and the Shia ideology penetrated deeper and deeper into the hearts; this we can say as a fact. But that the very ideology, the very religion, the Shi'ism, the occultation of Mahdi, all was a consequence of events or a product of age or a built up structure, is wrong to say and not correct.

It purports to say that evidence matters not. The Prophet (S) had more than once told about the twelve Imams. He had foretold their names individually. He had also prognosticated (predicted) the conditions that would prevail in that time of each one of the twelve Imams. He foretold all these details when at the time only three of the future Imams existed.

All heard this and recorded it. Along the passage of time the Imams too ended at twelve as the Prophet had foretold. As such there remains no margin of doubt nor room to surmise. No one can say that it was made-up. Anyone with some information of history and a scant knowledge of traditions and a fundamental knowledge of Islam will not believe what the writer has argued. For example, the Prophet (S) had predicted that Ammar would be martyred. In fact, Ammar was killed by Mawiyah. There are several such examples.

Then, what is correct to do? To lay aside such method of analysis and to search the tributes and particulars of Mahdi in traditions and the narration that have descended to us so as to find out whom these qualities correspond and specifications apply to. Destinations are pawned in the right roads. A journey is in the mortgage of a path. If the path is wrong the journey shall ever wander.

1. For the whole story, refer to Quran, 6:74– 83.

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