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## 5. Mahdi, a term and a sense, and the false claimers

The word 'Mahdi' means one who is guided. Anyone guided by God is Mahdi. The word is common and general in its sense. According to the sense that this word reflects, all the apostles, messengers, and prophets of God were – the guided ones. If we term the Prophet (S) himself and Ali Bin Abi Talib and every other Imam as 'Mahdi' we have not committed a mistake. Of course, all of them were guided ones; so they were Mahdis.' Even this word (Mahdi) can be applied to those who were taught in the schools of the Prophet or the Imams.

For instance, the companions of Imam Husayn or of any other Imam or the particular ones among the Shia or any other Shia who attained the guidance or were guided to the path if called 'Mahdi' it is not an exaggeration. But, all know that it is confined and limited to one. When the Prophet (S) disclosed the tidings he did not mean it in a general sense. His words specify a particular one as he says to his daughter, Zahra (as); "Mahdi is from your sons; give the tidings." "Al–Mahdi is from my sons." "Al Mahdi is from the sons of Fatimah."

So, this is a title or a distinction for one particular person, extra ordinarily dear to the prophet (S) who has kept the members of his house and the Muslim in waiting for him.

The word 'Mahdi' embraces a range of sense that could be extracted from guidance. To show the way, to take to destination, or any other thing to which guidance could be applied; is among the meanings. This word also applies to other than human. The Quranic verse says:

## "Our Lord who bestowed to everything its creation then guided." (20:50)

In the research of this word it appears that it has been applied only to those whom God has guided and whose guidance over-flows in him. He has consumed the guidance to the extent that he can show the path to others. The guidance has so overtaken him that he becomes a prism reflecting it from every angle. His conduct, his character, his behavior, his word, and his life as a whole become a beacon for

others to be followed. In such a sense this word is generally applied to the apostles of God and the Imams.

As per the traditions that abound in this respect, Mahdi is the very same one whom the Prophet (S) has identified as having every good quality. He is the Redeemer from God and to do justice to all is his task, other synonyms too are his titles.

In case, Mukhtar or any other bestowed this title on Mohammed Hanafia is only to seek blessing out of it, and not in a trust that he was Mahdi.

There were reasons for the uprising of Mukhtar. Important of them was that Maitham Tammar in prison had informed him that he would escape from the prison of Ibn Ziad and that he would take the revenge of Imam Husayn's blood and that Ibn Ziad would be killed by him. The uprising that developed was on the ground and the pretext of revenge for the bloodshed of Imam Husayn.

This pretext brought together all those who were ashamed of their participation against Imam Husayn and, therefore, they wanted to amend their mistake or purge the stain from their record. They thought it obligatory on them to join the movement against Bani Ummayah. For this very reason Bani Ummayah could not crush the movement. Mas'ab on behalf of his brother Abdullah, who regarded himself a caliph, fought with Mukhtar and defeated him.

Abdullah Ibn Zubair after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn took the issue of Imam Husayn's blood as a pretext. The martyrdom of Imam Husayn was the greatest weak point of Bani Ummayah. This shows how distant they were from Islam.

Indeed, this fact cannot be denied that the title of Mahdi was misused. Under this brand personal interests have had been transacted. The writer has elaborated what we too admit, that is that the occultation of Mahdi and his reappearance again stood for some to take an undue advantage. Some claimed that Mohammed Hanafia would take reappearance. For the first time a trade was established with the capital of this belief. But the belief remains in its original entity.

It is an evergreen, which never loses its leaves, but is forever green. The prophet (S) first talked about it. Ali Bin Abi Talib has also spoken on it. Mawiyah too, according to the book "Malahem Wa Fitan" is reported to have discussed this issue with Abdullah Ibn Abbas. He on his part regarded Mahdi to be from Bani Ummayah.

In any case, it is not new that there have been persons who claimed themselves to be Mahdi and even a prophet. There have also been some that have claimed to be god! In our age we have seen the same from different movements, human rights, justice, democracy, social equality and so forth.

These are the ladders for some to climb to their political ends. In the past the belief of Mahdi too has served a ladder for many who have aspired a political elevation or a social altitude, to attain a station

higher than others. Anyway, these claims did not fool the people because they were fully aware that the qualities Mahdi has these claimers have not.

Generally the term of Mahdi remained open. Although Shia and non-Shia know the family root of Mahdi, There are some who still believe those claiming to be Mahdi even though Imam Mahdi's background is well known. Likewise, such allegations with regards to Mohammed Hanafia do not establish that Mahdism is a recent product. This belief is coeval with Islam. This belief held such a strong hold on the people that they became too enthusiastic, too zealous, and too staunch towards it.

They were ready to welcome and embrace him who could rescue them from tyranny and deliver justice. Therefore, the claims although met the acceptance of the people. In some cases, this claim furnished an avenue for various revolts and scattered uprisings.

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