

Chapter 5: Evidence relating to the birth of the 12th Imam, Sunni scholars and apostates

Evidence

More than 40 people had the honour of seeing the last Imam, during the lifetime of his father, the 11th Imam, Hassan al-‘Askari.

(1) Hakimah, daughter of the ninth Imam, Muhammad ibn ‘Ali al-Taqi, and the aunt of the 11th Imam, had attended Narjis’s delivery. Her evidence about the birth and growth of the last Imam, al-Mahdi, is on record. She was one of those who brought up the newborn secretly. Her nephew, Imam al-‘Askari, informed her about the future of his son, planned by God.

(2) Maryah and Nasim, two housemaids of Imam al-‘Askari, are among the witnesses who said that when al-Mahdi was born he prostrated on the ground, and with his index finger he pointed toward the heavens and said, “All praise is God’s, the Lord Cherisher of all the worlds. And blessings be on Muhammad and his family, who are purified.”

(3) Abu Basir, a servant of Imam al-‘Askari, said that once he found the newborn in the cradle and went forward and saluted the baby. The baby asked him whether he knew who he (the Imam) was. Abu Basir replied in the affirmative and said he was the son of his Imam. When the baby asked Abu Basir to get sandals, he was puzzled about how a baby in the cradle could speak so well. The newborn asked Abu Basir to question him about his spiritual status. He did and the baby replied, “I am the last successor and the last of the executors of the divine will, as is the case with all the vicegerents of God. It is through me that my family and the followers are delivered from calamity and trouble.”

(4) Abu Nasim Muhammad ibn Ahmad Ansari states that once he, together with a group of Mufawada, had gone to Samarra for an audience with the 11th Imam, Hassan al-‘Askari for enlightenment on religious matters. There he saw a boy of four. The Imam asked them to refer their inquiries to the boy which they did and he answered their questions satisfactorily. The Imam said, “He is al-Mahdi, the

established executor of the will of God.”

(5) Ali ibn Bilal, Ahmad ibn Hilal, Muhammad ibn Mo'awiyah, Hakeem and Ayub ibn Nuh went together to see the 11th Imam, al-'Askari. There were 40 people present. All were led by 'Uthman ibn Sa'id al-'Umari to the presence of the Imam where they saw the baby, with a face shining like the sun, sitting beside Imam al-'Askari. In answer to the questions of the successor of Imam al-'Askari, he would be the supreme authority after him.

(6) Sa'ad ibn Abdallah al-Qumi, who was carrying many letters for Imam al-'Askari, went to Samarra with a group of people and had his audience with him. They saw the boy with the shining face, on the right side of Imam al-'Askari. In reply to the question from the audience, he informed them the boy was al-Mahdi of Al-e Muhammad, the established executor of the will of God throughout the world.

(7) Abu Sahl Isma'il Nowbakti states, "I went to Abi Muhammad, Hassan ibn Ali (al-'Askari), when he was on his death bed. He ordered his wife, Saqil (another name of Narjis) to bring him the syrup of mustaki (a syrup made with gum). She brought it. The Imam's hand was shaking so the cup struck his fore-teeth and fell from his hand spilling the syrup. At the time the Imam told me, "Go inside the house. You will find a boy busy in his prayers. Tell him to come to me." "I entered," Isma'il says, "the residential quarters and found the boy engaged in prayers. I told him, 'Your father is calling for you.' His mother took the boy to his father. When the boy saw his father's teeth broken, he wept. Then the Imam asked the boy to help him drink the syrup. The boy brought another cup to his lips. The Imam drank a few drops and then breathed his last. The boy was the son of Imam Hassan al-'Askari, al-Mahdi, the supreme authority, representing God on Earth.

(8) Ahmad ibn Ishaq Qumi says once he went to the 11th Imam, with the intention of asking him about his successor. The Imam spoke before his question, and mentioned the name of his young son as his successor designate, the greatness of his status and the importance of the part which he would play in order of the divine vicegerency.

(9) Ya'qub ibn M'anfush states that once he went to meet the 11th Imam. He saw a child with the glowing face like the full moon sitting beside the Imam. he appeared to be a boy of eight or ten years old (though his actual age was less) with a broad forehead, bright features, white shining cheeks and a peculiar Hashimite black mole on the right side of his face. The Imam, pointing towards the child, told Ya'qub the child would be the next master of the faithful, the Imam and the supreme authority of the time after him.

(10) Abu Nasir says he entered the house of the 11th Imam (at Samarra) and met the last, the 12th Imam, the master of the time. He said, "I am the last in the chain of successors and the executors of the will of the Last Prophet, Muhammad."

(11) Abu 'Abdallah Satri says, "I was walking towards the garden of Bani Hashim (at Samarra), where I saw a child playing. I inquired about him and was told he was M H M D (abbreviation of Muhammad),

the son of Hassan al-‘Askari.

(12) ‘Abdallah, son of Ja‘far Himyari, narrates from Ahmad ibn Ishaq that he once saw a child and asked al-‘Umari about him. Ahmad replied the child was the master of the time, al-Mahdi, and the successor of the 11th Imam.

(13) ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim Mayhyar, who was the servant of the 11th and 12th Imam, said he was with the 12th Imam until the moment he descended into the basement apartment and then, as narrated before, he was pursued by the search party of the government. It was after this occasion in which the imam went into the first occultation.

Besides the people mentioned above, there were many others who had the honour of meeting him before and during the minor occultation. Their names are given in the following books: (a) *Kimal al-Din* – Sheikh Saduq, (b) *Bihar al-Anwar* – Allama Majlisi, (c) *Najm al-Thaqib* – Muhadith Nuri, (d) *al-Zaman al-Wasib* – Allama Heyeri, and (e) *Nur al-Anwar* – Haji ‘Ali Asghar Burujardi.

Muhadith Nuri has given the names of the people who had the opportunity of meeting the Imam.

(1) Ibn Tawus Raziuddin ‘Ali ibn Musa ibn Ja‘far ibn Tawus. He died in 664 A.H. This venerable divine of this time was the head of the Shi‘ah community in the seventh century. He is admired by Allama Hilli, an eminent scholar, who had met him. The Allama says Raziuddin (ibn Tawus) is credited with many spiritual wonders. He is the author of many valuable books. It is evident from his works he was in contact with the Imam.

(2) Al-Muqaddis Ardabayli – Mulla Ahmad ibn Muhammad of Ardabayl (d. 993 A.H./1585 A.D.). He was the celebrated Shi‘ah divine of his time and the leading *mujtahid* from Najaf. Shah Abbas Safavi, the king of Iran, was proud of having an epistle addressed to him by Ardabayli. The epistle begins with the following sentence, “‘Abbas-e Safavi ra‘ilm meedared,” i.e. “‘Abbas, the Safavi is informed.” The text of the letter is given by Professor Brown in the *Literary History of Persia*. Ardabayh is credited with many spiritual wonders and having had the honour of direct contact with the soul of the first Imam, ‘Ali, who sometimes used to order Ardabayh to contact the last Imam in the mosque of Kufa, three and half miles away from the shrine of ‘Ali. The anecdotes of Ardabayli are given in detail in *Qisas al-‘Ulama* by Tunkabuni Muhammad ibn Sulayman (d. 1302 A.H./1889 – 1890).

(3) Syed Muhammad Mahdi, son of Syed Murtaza Tabataba‘i of Najaf, known as *bahar al-‘ulum*, the ocean of knowledge was revered by all the contemporary Shi‘ah divines, including his teachers and seniors, and Sheikh Ja‘far al-Ghita, the eminent jurist of his time, considered it a matter of honour to clean with his turban the sandals of this divine. He was born in 1155 A.H. at Karbala and died in 1212 A.H./1797 A.D. at Najaf. Sheikh Muhammad Hassan, the noted jurist, author of *Jawahir al-Kalam*, describes *bahar al-‘ulum* as the master of wonders and miracles. There are numerous authentic evidences to his credit of having direct contact with the last Imam (vide *Qisas al-‘Ulama* by Tunkabuni and *Najm al-Thaqib* by Nuri).

There is a story of *Jazirat al-Khizra*, the Green Island, the present abode of the 12th Imam, which is not traceable at present by the usual means. However, the legendary nature of some of the stories evolved around the lives of godly men, do not justify the rejection of authentic accounts relating to their lives. It does not mean all the recorded miracles and wonders are imaginary or fabricated.

Sunni Scholars

The names of 50 distinguished Sunni scholars, who have faith in and confirmed al-Mahdi's birth, growth, occultation and reappearance, are given below:

1. Abu 'Abdallah Muhammad ibn Yusuf Ganji, Safi'i, is the author of *Akhbar-e Sahib al-Zaman* and *Kifayat al-Talib*, in praise of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. The author died in 658 A.H.
2. Sheikh Nuruddin 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Sabbagh, Malaki, resident of Mecca who has written *Fusul al-Muhimma* about the 12 Imams of the house of the Prophet.
3. Muhiuddin Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-'Arabi (known as ibn 'Arabi), Hanbali, in his celebrated book *Futuh* (ch. 366) gives a detailed account of the birth of al-Mahdi, son of al-'Askari and of his reappearance before the Resurrection Day.
4. Abu Muhammad 'Abdallah ibn Ahmad ibn Ahmad ibn Khashab, who is known as ibn Khashab, has given detailed account of the 12th Imam in his biographical work on the 12 Imams of the house of the Prophet.
5. Sheikh 'Abdallah Shi'rani (d. 905 A.H.), the celebrated Sufi, in his work *Yaqaqeet*, ch. 66 deals with the birth and occultation of the 12th Imam.
6. Sheikh Hassan 'Iraqi who accepts the 12th Imam, praises Shi'rani as a pious and learned ascetic, and narrates the story of Shi'rani's meeting with the 12th Imam.
7. Syed 'Ali, known as Khawas, the teacher of Shi'rani, also a believer in the 12th Imam, confirms what Sheikh Hassan asserts about the meeting of Shi'rani with the 12th Imam.
8. Nuruddin Abdul Rahman ibn Ahmad (known as Mulla Jami), in his book *Shawahid al-nabuwah* (the evidence of the prophethood of Muhammad) gives account of the birth of the 12th Imam and his statement is in complete accord with what the Shi'ahs record.
9. Ibn Hajr Macci, Shafi'i (d. 974 A.H.), in his well-known book *al-Sawaiq* has mentioned the 12th Imam as a boy of five at the time of the demise of his father al-'Askari and says God had gifted him with divine wisdom.
10. Muhammad ibn Mahmud (known as Khawja Parsa) in his book *Fasl al-Khitab* gives the account of the birth and occultation and reappearance of the 12th Imam.

11. Sheikh Abdul Haq Dehlawi, in his book *Jazb-e Qulub* narrates the statements of Hakimah, daughter of the ninth Imam who was asked by the 11th Imam, al-'Askari, to stay with Narjis, mother of the last Imam during the night at the end of which she gave birth to her son. Hakimah stated she was there when the baby was born, clean, circumcised and with glowing features. She took him to his father. He put his hand on the back of the baby and put his tongue in his mouth and performed all the customary rites of reciting *adhan* in the right ear and *iqama* in the left ear. Then he handed over the baby to her to carry him to his mother.

Hakimah state that afterwards she went to her nephew Imam al-'Askari and saw the baby dressed in yellow clothes. She found a fascinating halo round the child and it made her seek some information about the newborn. The Imam said, "Oh my aunt, behold, this newborn is the one whose birth we were awaiting and whose advent was prophesied by the all the vicegerents of God." Then she said, "I prostrated on the ground, thanking God for the good news." She used to call on her nephew from time to time. Once she did not see the baby and asked Imam al-'Askari about him. The Imam replied, "We have entrusted the baby to the one whom the mother of Musa (Moses) had entrusted her son."

12. Sayyid Jamaluddin Hussaini Muhaddith is the author of the celebrated book *Rawdat ul-Ahbab* is one of the reliable Waliullah Dehlawi, *Rawdat ul-Ahbab* is one of the reliable sources of reference. The author mentions the 12th Imam in the most reverential terms. He says, "The auspicious birth of the seal of the vicegerency and the precious form of the mine of guidance took place on the 15th of Sha'ban in the year 255 Hijrah at Samarrah." He described the Imam by the following titles: *Mahdi al-Muntazir* (the expected Mahdi), *al-Khalaf ul-Saleh* (the righteous successor) and *Sahib al-Zaman* (the Lord of the time), and narrates al-Mahdi was five years old when his father, al-'Askari, departed from this world, but the giver of all bounties, Allah, has bestowed on his bud the flowerbed of guidance the wisdom as he had bestowed on Yahya (John the Baptist) when he was a baby.

So the son of al-'Askari has attained the status of the Imam in his childhood (Rabi ul-Awwal 261 A.H. in the reign of Mu'tamad Abbasi). It was in the underground apartment of his residence at Samarrah that people saw him for the last time. Then the author narrates eloquently the account of the pleasure which the righteous devotees of the *Ahl al-Bayt* would have at the time of the appearance of the last vicegerent of God who would defeat all the wrongdoers and the unjust, and would make truth and justice prevail throughout the world.

13. Abdul Rahman Sufi in his work *Mir'at ul-Asrar* (the Mirror of Mysteries) states, "This is in remembrance of the sun of faith and might, the leader of all nations and religions, the purified successor of Ahmad, the Prophet, the rightful Imam, Abul Qasim, M H M D (the abbreviations of Muhammad), al-Mahdi, the son of Hassan al-'Askari. He is from the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* and he is the 12th. His mother's name is Narjis. His birth took place at dawn of Friday, the 15th of Sha'ban, 255 A.H., at Samarrah. The 12th Imam's name and *kunyat* (M H M D) are the same as those of the Holy Prophet. His holy appellations are Mahdi and Hujjat (the expected one). He was five years old at the time of the

death of his father. He occupied the seat of *Imamate* in the manner as the Almighty God bestowed upon Yahya, son of Zakariya, when he raised Jesus to the lofty state when he was a baby. Thus, the last one in the chain of *Imamate* was made an Imam by God in his childhood. His attainments and supernatural deeds are so numerous that it is not possible to relate them in this short sketch.”

14. Ali Akbar, son of Asadullah Maududi, a scholar of the later period. In his book *Makashafath* (Visions), which is a commentary on *Nafahat al-Uns* by Abdul Rahman Jami asserts the existence of the expected al-Mahdi as being the pole of guidance after his father Imam Hassan al-‘Askari, who was also the pole of guidance and *Imamate*.

15. Ahmad ibn Hashim al-Baladhuri is one of the great scholars and traditionists who also asserts the *Imamate* and occultation of the 12th Imam.

16. Malikul ul-‘Ulama Dulatabadi is a well-known scholar who in his work *Hidayat al-Sa‘ada* has confirmed the *Imamate* and the occultation of al-Mahdi.

17. Nasr ibn ‘Ali Jahzami Nasri is one of the reliable reporters of traditions whom Khatib of Baghdad has praised in his historical work, and Yusuf Ganji Shafi’i, in his book *Manaqib* has introduced Nasr as one of the masters of Bukhari and Muslim. Nasr asserts the existence of *Qaim-e al-Muhammad*, the one among the Imams of the house of the Prophet whose duty is to establish Islam throughout the world.

18. Mulla ‘Ali Qari, one of the great traditionists, in his famous work *Mirqat* mentions the celebrated statement of the Holy Prophet that after him there would be 12 successors as *khalifs* (caliphs). Mulla ‘Ali says according to the Shi‘ahs, the 12 *khalifs* mentioned here are the successive Imams of the house of the Prophet. Whether they are in power or not makes no difference, they are the rightful Imams. Later, he mentions their names, beginning with ‘Ali and ending with al-Mahdi. He says it is in accordance with what is stated in detail by Khawja Muhammad Parsa in his work *Fasl al-Khitab* and followed by Nuruddin Abdul Rahman Jami in his work *Shawahid al-Nabuwath* Mulla ‘Ali says both Parsa and Jami have mentioned the virtues, attainments and super-natural deeds of the Imams.

19. Kazi Jawas Sibti was a Christian but later became a Muslim. He wrote *Barahin-e Sibti* (proofs forwarded by Sibti). It is written in refutation of Christian writers. He narrates the prophecy from Ashaya (Joshua), concerning the coming of a godly man from the chosen branch of the chosen lineage of Adam who would be the seat of the divine spirit. In other words, he will be filled with the spirit of wisdom, sympathy, justice and knowledge and will be God-fearing. God would bestow on him a sound and glowing reason and make him firm in godliness. His judgment would be based not only on apparent evidence but unimaginable insight. The writer has refuted the interpretation of the said passage by the Jews and Christians, and states it is a clear prophecy about the coming of al-Mahdi, about whom the Muslims are unanimous in which his judgment shall not be based on mere hearing an external evidence, but he will have divine insight about everything and judge people according to what they really are in their hearts.

He further says his method of judgment is peculiar to him and has not been adopted by any Prophet or vicegerent of God. The Muslims are unanimous in which the Mahdi of the description shall be the descendant of Fatima, daughter of the Holy Prophet and his name, nature and features will be the same as those of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. But some Sunnis say the name of his father will be 'Abdallah and his mother's name will be Aminah, and the Ithna 'Ashari Shi'ahs firmly believe that he is the son of Hassan al-'Askari, in Samarra, during the reign of Mu'tamid-e 'Abbasi. He disappeared from sometime, and will reappear and judge the world by means of his deep insight. This view of the Shi'ah seems to be the real interpretation of the prophecy.

20. Shams al-Din Abul Muzaffar Yusuf known as Sibti ibn Jawzi, author of *Tadhkirat al-Khawass* (d. 654 A.H.), writes about the 12th Imam as follows, "He (al-Mahdi) is Muhammad ibn Hassan ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn us al-Riza" and tracing him to 'Ali, he further says, "His paternal appellation is Abu 'Abdallah and Abul Qasim: he (the 12th Imam) is the last successor (of the Prophet)," According to the writer he is the last Imam of the house, he is the "authoritative proof" of God (*al-Hujjat*), the master of the time (*Sahib al-Zaman*), and the expected one (*Muntazar*). Then the writer refers to the statement of Abul Aziz ibn Mahmud ibn Bazaz, who narrated from 'Abdallah, son of 'Umar, in which the Holy Prophet had said that during the last days of the world, a person will rise from among his descendants whose proper name and parental appellation (*kunyat*) would be the same as his and he would fill the world with justice which was as yet full of injustice.

21. Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Hassan al-Bayhaqi, the famous Shafi'i jurist (d. 458 A.H./1066 A.D.), has confirmed the birth of the son of al-'Askari and his being the expected Mahdi.

22. Sheikh Sadruddin, known as Hamavi (from Hama, a town in Syria), has written a book about the last Imam of the house of the Prophet. Sheikh Aziz ibn Muhammad known as al-Nasafi quotes from the book of Sadruddin Hamvi, "In the religions before the advent of our Holy Prophet Muhammad there was no name or appellation of *wali* or saint. The term then used was *nabi* or prophet. All godly people who were in close communion with God and who were the carriers of divine laws were called *anbia* or prophets.

In every religion the holy one was the law-giver and his successors who inherited his status and protected and preached his teachings were called Prophets. From Adam to Nuh, from Nuh to Ibrahim, from Ibrahim to Musa and from Musa to 'Isa (Jesus), all the successors in different religions were termed Prophets, but with the advent of the new religion and the new teachings brought by Muhammad, the last prophet, God selected 12 people from the house of Muhammad and made them the heirs of Muhammad and all that God had gifted him with the book, wisdom and the great kingdom. God let the 12 be in close communion with Him and He distinguished them with the privilege of having the status of *wilayat*. The famous saying of the Prophet, "The learned ones are the heirs of the Prophet" refers only to these 12 people.

The other saying of the Holy Prophet, "The learned ones from among my followers are the same as the

Prophets from among the children of Israel,” also refers to these 12. But the last *wali*, who is the last successor of the Prophet and is the 12th *wali* in the chain of *awlia*, is Mahdi, *Sahib al-Zaman*, his appellation and title should not be used for anyone else.” Nasafa continues to quote Sheikh Hamavi to the effect, the saints (*awlia*) in this world are not more than the aforesaid 12, and the 360 people, who are termed *Rijal al-Ghaib* (the invisible people), those incognito are not called *awlia* (saints). They are termed *abdals* (alterable saints).

23. Hussain ibn Moinuddin Maybudi, in his commentary on the collection of poems ascribed to Imam ‘Ali says, “I hope that by the grace of the giver of all bounties, our eyes will receive the light from the dust of the threshold of the 12th Imam and the whole structure of our personalities will be illuminated by the rays of the most universal and comprehensive sun of truth and reality. It is not difficult for God to respond to this prayer favourably.”

24. Sheikh Ahmad Jami, as quoted by Qanduzi, the author of *Yanabi al-Mawaddah*, and Qaze Nurullah, author of *Majalis al-Mu’minin*, has composed the following lines:

My heart is fine and bright with love of Haydar.
Next to Haydar, Hassan is our guide and leader.
Like a dog, I am lying down on
The threshold of Abul Hassan.
The dust beneath the shoes of Hussain
Is the eyeliner (*surmah*) for my eyes.
‘Abideen, the ornament of all devotees
Is like a crown on my head.
Baqir is the light of both my eyes.
The religion of Ja‘far is true and the path of Musa is right.
Oh loyal ones, “Listen to me praising the king of kings (Raza)
Who is buried in Khurasan.”
A particle from the dust of his tomb is the cure of all pains.
Leader of men of faith is Taqi, oh dear Muslims.
If you love Naqi in preference of all other people,
You have done the thing which is proper and right.
‘Askari is the light of the eyes of both Adam and the world.
Where can be found, in the world,
Such a chief in command like Mahdi?

The poets have composed poems to get silver and gold, but Ahmad Jami had done so because he is the devoted slave of the king of the saints (‘Ali).

25. Fariduddin ‘Attar of Nishapur, the celebrated Sufi saint about whom Rumi has said, “Attar has made tour of all the seven cities of love, and we are still stranded at the bend of the street and have not yet

covered it.” Qanduzi quotes the following lines from ‘Attar’s work: *Manifestation of Divine Attributes*:

Of the messengers of God, Mustafa is the last in the world.

Of the saints (*awliya*) in close communion with God,

Murtadha is manifestly the top.

All the issues of Haydar are saints.

All are made of the same light, God has declared that.

After giving the names of the Imams of the house, Attar continues:

There are hundreds and thousands of godly men

Of saintly status on Earth, who admire Mahdi

And pray for his advent.

Oh my God! Bring out Mahdi for me

From the veil of occultation so

The universal justice may become evident.

Mahdi, the guide, is the crown

On the head of all the pious ones.

Of the 12 saints of the House, he is the most shining one.

Oh the One with whom the chain of saints (*awliya*)

Of the time ends and is sealed, You are hidden from all.

Oh the soul of souls. Oh the One who is both evident and hidden

Behold Your slave, Attar is praising You.

26. Jalaluddin Muhammad of Balkh, known as Maulkavi Rumi, migrated from Tabriz to Qunya in Asia Minor, settled and died there in the year of 672 A.H. His *Mathnawi* is the unrivalled masterpiece of the loftiest presentation of Islamic thought in mystic garb. He is also the author of the lyrical work *Divan-e Shams Tabriz*. This work is the outburst of his extreme love and veneration for his mystic master, Shamsuddin Tabrizi.

Here is one of Rumi’s lyrics:

Oh Ali! Oh head and chief of the real men,

All of them salute you.

Oh ‘Ali, oh foremost of men, all of them salute you.

Tell the killer of the infidels, the religion and the religious one,

Tell Haydar, the doubtless warrior,

All drunk with love, salute you.

Tell the casket of the two precious gems.

Tell the zodiac house of the two shining stars

(Fatima, the daughter of the Holy Prophet).

Tell Shabbar and Shabbir,
Tell each of them, all drunk with love, salute you.
Tell ‘Abid, the ornament of religion.
Tell Baqir, the light of the religion.
Tell Ja‘far, the truthful,
Tell each of them, all drunk with love, salute you.
Tell Musa, the forbearer
Tell the learned one, buried in Tus,
Tell the straight one (who is holding the affairs firm),
Tell each of them, all drunk with love, salute you.
Tell Hadi, the chief in charge of religion,
Tell ‘Askari, the guided one,
Tell Mahdi, the guided saint,
Tell each of them, all drunk with love, salute you.
Tell the vernal breeze,
Tell the lucky one,
Tell shams of Tabriz, all drunk with love, salute you.

27. Sheikh Salahuddin Safdi (d. 764 A.H.) was the master of the mystic significance of the alphabets, and author of *Sharh-e Dai’yrāh* (the Explanation of the Circle). As quoted by Qanduzi in *Yanabi*, Safdi said, “The promised Mahdi is indeed the same 12th of the 12 Imams, the first of whom is our master, ‘Ali, and the last of whom is Mahdi.”

28. Sheikh ‘Amir ibn Basri has composed a eulogy called *Qasidah Tayya*. The composition contains theosophical lore, maxims, mystical points and matters of etiquette. It is divided into 12 pieces, each termed as a piece of light, the ninth piece is about the recognition of the master of the time, and the time of his reappearance. Of the pieces three lines are quoted here:

Oh Imam Mahdi how long will you be hidden?
Oblige us, oh our father with your return!
We feel sad the waiting time is prolonged.
For the sake of your Lord, bless us with your audience.
Oh the pole of existence! Hasten, oh our beloved!
Return so we may enjoy your sight.
Surely, it is a great pleasure
For a lover to meet his beloved after a long absence.

35. Hussain ibn Hamdan al-Husaini in his work *al-Hidaya* mentions the 12th Imam, the master of the time, as the son of the 11th Imam, Hassan al-‘Askari.

36. The well-known biographer, ibn Khallakan in his work *Wafyat al-A‘yan* has given a brief account of

the birth of the Imam.

37. Ibn al-Azraq, as quoted by Ibn Khallakan, asserts the existence of the 12th Imam.

38. Ibn al-Wardi, the historian, in his work asserts the birth of the son of al-'Askari in 255 A.H.

39. Syed Mumin Shablanji in his work *Nur al-Absar* gives the genealogy of Imam M H M D (abbreviation of Muhammad) as the 12th Imam, and his various titles and appellations.

40. Abul Fawz Muhammad Amin al-Suwaidi of Baghdad, the genealogist, in his work on the tribes of Arabs, *Sya'ak al-Dhab*, after mentioning the names of the 12 Imams of the house, confirms the existence of Mahdi, and he (Mahdi) was five years old when his father al-'Askari passed away.

41. Muafaq ibn Ahmad, known as *Khatib Khawarzum*, refers to other works in this connection and confirms it.

42. Syed 'Ali Hamdani in his famous work *Mawadat al-Qurba* asserts the existence of the 12th Imam.

43. Sheikh Muhammad Sabban Mesri in his work confirms the existence of the 12th Imam of the house of the Prophet.

44. Abdul Falah Abdul Hayi Nanbali in his work *Shuzarat al-Sahab* asserts the birth of Mahdi.

45. Al-Sayyid Nusaimi has mentioned the 12th Imam on the authority of al-Qanduzi.

46. Sheikh Abd al-Rahman 'Ali ibn Ahmad Bastami, as quoted by Qanduzi, confirms the existence of Hemdi, a descendant of Hussain and gives his brief description in eulogistic terms.

47. Sheikh Abdul Karim Yamani's poem in praise of the Mahdi has been quoted by Qanduzi.

48. Sheikh Sulayman ibn Ibrahim, known as *Khawajah Kalan* (the senior most), is from Qanduz in Balkh and a famous Sufi (d. 1294 A.H./1877 A.D.). He is the author of the famous book *Yanabi al-Mawaddah*, which is the outcome of his extensive research. He has established from important Sunni sources that love for the *Ahl al-Bayt* is the only right path, an Islamic way of life. He believes in the 12 Imams from the house of the prophet.

49. Qazi Fazlullah Rozbahan has written books against the Shi'ahs, particularly against Allama Hilli, the famous Shi'ah divine during the ninth century A.H., but believes in the existence of the 12th Imam as a blessing.

50. Rashiduddin of Delhi in his work *al-Imam al-Ithnan 'Ashar* (the 12th Imam) confirms the existence of the Imam, as the title indicates.

There are many other prominent scholars of the Sunni school who are firm believers in the 12 Imams in

general and the last one in particular. They believe in the same manner as the Shi'ahs believe.

In 1343 A.H. when the author of these lines himself had the honour of pilgrimage to the holy shrine of Mecca (the Ka'ba) and the holy mosque of Medina (Masjid al-Nabawi), the names of the 12 Imams of the house, along with the names of the first four caliphs, the four Imams of the Sunni school of *fiqh*, and some other Sunni religious leaders were found inscribed round the walls of the holy mosque. Once a Sunni scholar, who is a friend of the author, told me about his impression when during his pilgrimage he found the names of the 12 Imams there.

He said when he saw the inscription in the Holy Prophet's mosque, he thought it was quite natural to express the names of the Sunni religious leaders inscribed there, because the holy shrine had always been administered by Sunni rulers. With the exception of a few years of the Fatimid rule in the Hijaz during the fourth century A.H. No Shi'ah ruler had any domain over there or had the opportunity to insert the name of the 12 Imams. He reasoned the presence of the names of the Holy Imams was entirely due to their spiritual attributes. This is the force of knowledge and spirituality which kept their names alive in the hearts of the true Muslims in spite of a well-organized opposition.

Apostates

Besides the four recognized genuine deputies of the 12th Imam, a few apostates also posed as the nominated agents of the Imam during the minor occultation. But their apostatic and inconsistent views and practices on the one hand, and the epistles from the Imam repudiating them on the other, exposed them. The result was the heretical movement died in its infancy and could not form a separate sect. But their tactics set a pattern for the latter day claimants and imposters.

1. Muhammad ibn Nusayr al-Numayri

Muhammad ibn Nusayr al-Numayri tried to rival Muhammad ibn 'Uthman al-'Umari, the second deputy and claimed to be the nominated agent of the last Imam. But al-'Umari being the recognized deputy of the tenth, 11th and 12th Imams was too strong an opponent for a person like al-Numayri, who was already condemned by the tenth Imam for his heretical views and activities. Al-Numayri had claimed the tenth Imam to be God and himself to be a prophet sent by him. He believed in transmigration and incarnation and was accused of allowing marriages which were prohibited by Islam, and other obnoxious practices. He was a disciple of Muhammad ibn Musa al-Shari'i and Ali ibn Haska ibn Baba, one of his main associates who was also condemned and cursed by the tenth Imam, al-Naqi. He may be considered as one of the ring leaders of the ultra-Shi'ahs of his time (in the third and fourth centuries A.H.)

The origin of this particular sect can be traced back to the first half of the first century Hijrah. It was named Nusayri after Muhammad ibn Nusayr. The prevailing political conditions of the time provided an opportunity for such apostates to revive their un-Islamic creed. The ruling authority went all out to

suppress the Shi'ah faith. Imam 'Ali al-Naqi and his son, the 11th Imam, Hassan al-'Askari, were under house arrest at Samarra. Their devotees had few opportunities of having an audience with the Imams freely. The movements of both the Imams and their followers were strictly watched by the government, so these imposters could easily approach the credulous Shi'ahs and poison their minds with false claims.

When the Imams or their recognized deputies denounced their claims, the claimants interpreted the denunciation as a sort of *taqiya* (dissimulation). Nevertheless, the Shia faith in its true term was also so well-established at that time no one but the ignorant or self-interested people would care for such apostasies. Muhammad ibn Nusayr realized the failure of his attempt and tried to have an interview with Muhammad al-'Umari, the second deputy, but he was refused. Nusayr lived until 300 A.H., unnoticed by the Shias.

2. Hussain ibn Mansur al-Hallaj

Hussain ibn Mansur al-Hallaj of Baiza (a district of Fars) became a celebrated theosophist of the Sufi order. He lived in the second half of the third century A.H. and was sentenced to death at the end of 309 A.H. All his contemporary jurists of the Sunni and Shia schools of thought condemned him as a cheat pretending to follow the path of the Sufis. He claimed his scholarship in every science but he was ignorant of them all. He knew some occult art of alchemy. He was ambitious, bold and active against the rulers and used to embark upon great schemes to overthrow the government. To his followers he claimed to be God or His incarnation. He pretended himself before the rulers as a Shia and for the public he posed as a Sufi. He used bombastic terms of the Sufis which implied his being the incarnation of God. He was questioned by the authorities and the jurists several times.

He also claimed to be the agent of the Imam but this was repudiated and he was impeached by the 12th Imam through an epistle received by Muhammad al-'Umari. He was condemned by the unanimous verdict of the jurists and, therefore, hanged. For almost 200 years, the man continued to be mentioned by all biographers as an impious imposter until the celebrated Sufi saint, Sheikh Abu Hassan Kharraqani consecrated him among the Sufi saints of the first order. Ever since, he has become the hero of many Sufi legendary wonders. His slogan *An al-Haq* (I am the Truth) is presented by the Sufis as an example of the mystic experience of the union of the finite with the infinite. He became the exemplary hero of the mystic poetry of later periods.

“It is allowed and tolerated, if a tree says, ‘I am the Truth,’ why is it not allowed and tolerated if a fortunate man says, ‘I am the Truth.’” It is a translation of the Persian couplet in his appreciation. A legend narrates that when Hallaj was hanged, a few drops of his blood fell on the ground and they formed the letterings on the ground, “I am the Truth.”

To prove the saintliness of a person, according to the Sufis, there is no need for any evidence of his accomplishments, knowledge or piety. Such accomplishments are rather considered as hindrances to

saintly attainments. For proof of a person's saintliness, the dream or vision of a recognized saint of Sufi order is reliable. The time distance between the consecrated one and the consecrator is ignored. Let the Sufis have al-Hallaj elevated to whatever station they like, but he has no representative status on behalf of the 12th Imam or any previous Imams of the house.

3. Al-Shalmaghani

Muhammad ibn 'Ali, known as ibn Abi al-Azaqir, belonged to Shalmaghan, a village in the district of Waset. At the beginning of his career he seemed to be a true adherent of the Shia faith but he was ambitious. He expected Muhammad, the second deputy, to nominate him as the agent to the Imam after him. But contrary to his expectations and those of many others, he nominated Abul Qasim Hussain ibn Ruh Nowbakti as his successor, and the third deputy of the Imam. So jealousy for Nowbakti forced Shalmaghani to the wrong path. He was denounced and cursed in the epistle of the 12th Imam received by Abul Qasim Hussain ibn Ruh. For apostasy, he was sentenced by the jurists in 322 A.H.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/essence-holy-quran-eternal-light-mirza-mahdi-pooya/chapter-5-evidence-relating-birth-12th-imam-sunni>