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Characteristics of Shiite Belief about Mahdi and Questions Arose from this Belief

Mahdi the Twelfth Successor of the Prophet (S)

What has been analyzed until now in this book about "great universal peacemaker" and "revolutionary programs of Mahdi" was in two parts, one part in a general rational form and another part in a general Islamic form; but belief of Shiites which is being fed from the school of Ahl al-Bayt of Prophet (S) has some characteristics which will be studied in this chapter; these characteristics are:

- 1) Shiites believe that Mahdi is the twelfth successor of Prophet (S) and son of Imam Hassan Askari (as); His name is "Muhammad", his Kunya (honorific) is "Abolghasem" and his Laqabs are "Mahdi", "Sahib Al-Zaman" and "al-Qa'im".
- 2) "Mahdi" is alive now and according to the fact that he was born in the year 255 after Hijrah, now he is more than thousand years old.
- 3) "Mahdi" is hidden from the eyes while he is alive; which means, while he has a natural life but lives in this world unknown.

But other Islamic sects – except some of them – believe that he will born in End of Days, although he is from the dynasty of prophet; therefore, they don't consider an age with this long occultation for him; albeit, few Sunnis also consider him as son of Imam Hassan Askari(as).

Anyway, special belief of Shiites arise three questions:

First Question

It is the famous question of "longevity" which has been introduced from the past that how is it possible

for a human to live this much longer, while we have never seen that a person's age exceeds one hundred to one hundred and twenty years! How this old age can be proper to maximum ages, which we see around us?

Second Question

It is about the philosophy of this long occultation that why Imam and leader of Islamic society should be absent this much time, what is the secret of this matter?

Third Question

Which has close relation with the second question – although it is separated from that – is about the philosophy of existence of Imam (as) during the occultation; when the leader has no connection with his followers and the people of the world cannot see him and gain benefits of his leadership then which role can be considered for him? And in other words, during this time, his life is a personal and private life not social and in the position of a leader!

First, it is necessary here to mention the evidences of Shiites about these triple beliefs.

Then we can see that how is it possible to answer the above triple questions.

At the beginning, it should be considered that rational reason can never point a specific person about this matter, but the results of these reasons are always general.

Narratives of Sunnis about Mahdi are usually general; they only talk about "a person from the dynasty of prophet with laghab of Mahdi and the name of Muhammad (like the name of prophet of Islam)"; except some narratives which quote all characteristics of his father or forefathers and is compatible with Shiites belief, like the two following narratives:

1) "Sheikh Suleiman al-Qunduzi", who is one of Sunni scholars, quotes in famous book of "Yanabi al-Muwadda" from the book "Fara'id al-Simtayn" from Ibn Abbas that a Jewish man went to Prophet (S) and asked many questions and after hearing the answers, the light of belief shined in his heart and became Muslim; including:

"Who is your successor? Because any prophet should have a successor, as our prophet Moses (as) placed Joshua as his successor".

Prophet (S) answered this question:

My successor is Ali ibn Abi Talib and after him my grandsons Hassan and Hussein and after Hussein,

nine Imams from his generation

Jewish man asked Prophet (S) to say their names; Prophet (S) said:

When Hussein dies his one Ali; and when Ali dies his son Muhammad; and when Muhammad dies his son Ja'far, and when Ja'far dies his son Musa, and when Musa dies his son Ali, and When Ali dies his son Muhammad, and when Muhammad dies his son Ali, and when Ali dies his son Hassan and when Hassan dies his son Muhammad al-Mahdi al-Hujjah will be his successor; they are twelve persons (my successors) ...

Then he asked from the condition of their death and martyrdom and Prophet (S) said after some explanations:

My twelfth child will be occulted and won't be seen and the time will come for my followers that nothing remains from Islam but its name and nothing remains from Qur'an but its text; at this time, almighty God will give him the permission to rise and appears and renews Islam by him...

The Jewish man says some poems after accepting Islam that includes the names of the successors of prophet and he says about the last one of them:

The last one of them waters those who are thirsty (of truth and justice) and he is the expected Imam!

Again in that book, it is quoted from "Amir ibn Wathilah", who is the last one of the prophet's companions who died, from Ali (as) that Prophet (S) said:

Ali you are my successor, your battle is my battle, and your peace is my peace; and you are Imam and father of eleven Imams who are all infallible and pure; and he is "Mahdi" from them who fills the earth with justice.

But there are many narratives from Ahl al-Bayt about Mahdi(as) and the fact that he is the eleventh son of Ali(as) and the ninth son of Imam Hussein and the inseparable son of Imam Hassan Askari that

mentioning all of them takes too much time and it is out of the plan of our book which is based upon briefness; therefore, we mention a list of them and refer you to the book "Muntakhab al–Athar fi Ahwal al–Imam al–Thani Ashar" (a translation–like version of this book called "Promise of Pace and Security" has been also published from the same author) for more information.

Narratives about the father and forefathers of Mahdi (as) have been quoted in this book, which are mostly from Ahl al-Bayt including:

91 narratives about the fact that Imams and leaders of twelve persons and the first one of them is Ali (as) and the last of them is Mahdi (as).

And 94 narratives are quoted about that the last one of Imams is Mahdi (as).

And 107 narratives about that Imams are twelve persons and nine of them are from the sons of Hussein (as) and the ninth person is "al-Qa'im".

And 50 hadith about the names of all twelve leaders that the last of them is Mahdi and in this way, followers of this school specify Mahdi (as) with all his characteristics based upon the above several evidences.

But it is also necessary to mention that there are many ahadith in reliable and famous Sunni hadith resources about the twelve Imams and caliphs (generally) and as we said before, no logical interpretation can be found for these narratives except by accepting the Shiites' belief.

In some of these ahadith like hadith of "Sahih al-Bukhari" and "Sahih al-Tirmidhi" اثنی عشر امیرا4) (twelve emirs), and in "Sahih Muslim" اثنی عشر خلیفه (twelve caliphs) and in Sahih of Abu Dawood also اثنی عشر عشر خلیفه and in "Musnad Ahmad" اثنی عشر خلیفه are mentioned in tens of ways.

Is it possible to deny this much of ahadith from famous books!

Should we complete the twelve caliphs by adding Umayyad caliphs like Muawiyah, Yazid and Abd al-Malik, or by adding Abbasid caliphs like Harun, Al-Ma'mun and Al-Mutawakkil to the first four caliphs!

- 1. Yanabi al-Muwadda, page 440.
- 2. The same document, page 85 (printed in Istanbul).
- 3. Sahih al-Bukhari, page 175 (printed in Egypt) and Sahih al-Tirmidhi, vol. 2, page 45 (printed in Delhi).
- 4. Sahih Muslim, vol. 2, page 191 (printed in Egypt).
- 5. Sahih of Abu Dawood, vol. 2, Book of Mahdi, page 207 (printed in Egypt).

Who are these twelve caliphs whom prophet has named and has praised?

This is the question that – except the follower of Ahl al–Bayt who believe in twelve Imams – should find an answer for that; because no fair person can consider Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs – who deviated the Islamic government from its way and performed any kind of crime, oppression, transformation and distortion of concepts of Islam – as the successors of prophet and competent of being praised.

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