

Introduction

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, Sibte 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-Qajiri 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-‘Allama 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 Muslim[3](#) 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 mustafīḥah 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.

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