

The Divine And Islamic Basis Of Mahdism

Apart from numerous allusions in the Holy Quran itself which have been interpreted as direct references to the 12th Imam¹, there exist, in various chapters of the aforementioned "Nahjul Balagha", several clear and definite assertions made concerning the same subject². Likewise, in over 500 Hadith cited in Shi'ite and Sunnite sources from the Prophet and the Imams, Mahdism has been discussed with the greatest possible explicitness. From the gist of these collected narrations, it can be clearly understood that the whole question of Mahdism and the surrounding belief and expectation concerning the eventual appearance of the Concealed and Existing Imam, a member of the Household of the Prophet (S), is one of the most universally recognized and distinct points of debate in the Islamic world.

Below are a few of the above-mentioned Hadith concerning the promised Imam.

1. Hafez Abu Na'im, a celebrated member of Sunnite ulema has quoted from Abu Sa'id Khaduri that, "The Holy Prophet (S) said, 'A man from my progeny will appear on earth and act according to my tradition (Sunnah); God will bestow him with His grace and blessing from both heaven and earth, and he will fill the world with justice in the same way it had been filled with oppression and iniquity'."
2. Hafiz Abu Na'im, quoting from Gheiss ibn Jaber and his grandfather wrote that the Prophet (S) said, "After the appearance of tyrannical and unjust Caliphs, kings and princes, a man will appear from among my Household and fill the world with justice, just as it was previously filled with oppression and iniquity."
3. In the book 'Kafayat-ul-Asar', related from the book, 'Montakheb-ul-Asar', quoting from Abuzar Ghaffari that, "God's Prophet (S) pointed to Ali (a) and his children, Hasan (a) and Husayn (a) and said, "This brother of mine is the best Executor (of my will) and these grandsons of mine the most excellent of grandsons. Soon, from the House of Husayn (a), our Exalted Lord will produce religious leaders, and the Mahdi (Guide) will be of our community." I asked, "Oh, Prophet of God, what shall be the number of these Imams?" The same number as the Tribes of Israel.', he answered.
4. Yanabi' ul-Mawdodeh has related from Sheikh Kamaloddin who said, "The Prophet said, 'There is a vicegerent who, In the name of God, will appear on earth at a time when the world will be torn with tyranny and oppression, and thus fill it with justice and equity – he will divide (among men) with complete

equality, treat his subjects in a just and honest manner and in all disputes separate, Truth from Falsity. In his time. there will be not a single drop of rain in the sky capable of falling that will not do so. Likewise, there will not be a single plant on the face of the earth capable of growing that will not do so (an allusion to the concept of the greatest possible use and exploitation of natural resources).

He is the Imam Mahdi (atfs), and he will rise at God's order, banishing all religions from the surface of the earth, leaving nothing save the pure religion. He will be the ninth son of Imam Husayn (a) (i.e. ninth in succession to that Excellency).¹"

5. From the source of Jabir ibn Abdallah Ansari who has related that, "The Prophet of God said, 'A vicegerent shall appear at the End of Time and render all wealth and property Infinite and immeasurable'."

6. Salit affirms that Husayn ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib (a) said, "There are 12 Mahdis (Guides), the first of whom was the Amirul Mu'mineen, Ali ibn Abu Talib (a), and the last will be the ninth in my progeny, Imam Qa'im, who with his God-given right, will restore the earth to life after its apparent death. Thus, he will expose the Infidels and polytheists and will gain victory over the whole world.

For him there will be a long occultation during which a certain number of people shall stray from the True Path. Another group will remain faithful to their beliefs, but will do so while under oppression and torture. They will be constantly tested with jibes such as, 'if this claim of yours (concerning the advent of the Mahdi) is true. then when will it come to pass?' Let it be known that those who during this period of absence can offer resistance to this injustice and bear this torment and disbelief quietly and patiently, then they will be likened to those who fought in the retinue of the Prophet in the Holy wars (jihad)".

7. It is interesting to note that a considerable number of Sunnite ulema who, apart from being responsible for the narration of many of the relevant Hadith, have also allocated a considerable number of books and treaties which offer proof of the eventual rise and appearance of the Concealed Imam.

Among them are Abu Abdallah Mohammed ibn Yusef Ganji Shafe'i (the author of *Kashf-ul-Dhunun*), Sheikh Nooruddin Ali ibn Mohammad ibn Sabbagh Maleki Makki (author of *Fosul-al-Mohemmeh Fima 'refacto' A'emeh* – Important Chapters in Imamology), Mohioddin ibn Mohammed ibn Ali ibn Mohammed al'Arabi Hatam Tayy Andolosi Hanbali (Chapter 366 of the book '*Fotuhah*'), Sheikh Adib Abu Mohammad Abdollah ibn Ahmad ibn-Heshab, Sheikh Abdul-vahab ibn Ahmad ibn Ali Sha'rani...

In brief, Islamically, the whole concept of Mahdism, with its inherent hope and belief in the Concealed and Promised Imam, is a considerably old and deep-rooted one. It is not, however, an Iranian invention; nor is it a belief borrowed from the Zoroastrians (as orientalist such as the French Jew Darmsteter have argued). In the same way, it is not something which has been solely confined to Shi'ite beliefs. As can be witnessed, it has roots which can be quite clearly traced back to the personage and sayings of the Holy Prophet himself.

An interesting example of the deep-rootedness of this belief and the general acceptance and influence it has had among Muslims of all periods is the considerable number of "would be-Mahdis" who have, with noticeable recurrence, made fraudulent claims to that exalted position. They have appeared from the outset of Islam until the present day and throughout the Islamic world. Their actions have been linked by more or less one common aim – to rise up against the tyranny and injustice of the Caliphs and Kings of their respective periods and to implement religious reform.

Below is a list of names of some of the people who have appeared as the Promised Mahdi, and in some cases, the names of followers who attributed the title and position to their leaders;³

Abu Eshagh Abu Obideh Saghafi claimed to be Mahdi (after Mohammad Hanifeh in the first century A.H.) when, under the banner of "Avenger of Husayn" (may peace be upon him) he rose up with the assistance of Ebrahim ibn Ashtar; Abul Hasan Zaid ibn Ali, killed in a campaign against the tyrannical Umayyads, was recognized as Mahdi by his followers, who were convinced of his eventual re-appearance; Ebrahim ibn Mohammad ibn Abbas was acknowledged as Mahdi at Kufa in the year 104, when the people swore their allegiance to him and prayed alongside him; Abu Moslem Khorasani rose up against the Umayyads in Khorasan in 127 and later assumed the title of Mahdi; Abu Abdollah Mahdi had gold 'Hojjatollah' (proof of God) coins minted in his own name in Africa in the year 297.

Mohammad ibn Towmart Abu Abdollah Maghrebi al-Hasan claimed he was the Promised Mahdi in the Far West in 522, and participated in several important wars which followed; the famous Sudanese Mahdi rose during the 12th Century A.H. (1881 A.D.), taking Khartoum and subsequently the whole of the Sudan under the banner of the Promised Imam; Abbas al-Rifi rose up in the latter part of the 7th century and headed a revolt; Al-Sa'id Mohamad al-Junivari al-Hendi proclaimed himself Mahdi in the year 901, and gained the allegiance of many people; Musa al-Kurdi from Kurdestan, and a contemporary of Sultan Khoda Bandeh, was another claimant.

Abolkaram al-Dorrani amassed a following of some 60,000 as Mahdi in Bokhara and was later killed in the Mongol invasion; Gholam Ahmad Ghadiani appeared and made his claim in India shortly before the 1st World War; Mirza Taher Hakkak Esfahani was a pupil of Said Kazem Rashti, the latter who, having asserted his so-called rights as "representative of the Prophets", was engaged as counsellor to the Ottoman Sultans in Istanbul and after reaching a considerably high degree of fame and influence, proclaimed himself Mahdi, although he was later poisoned and died in the year 1300.

Seyed Ali Mohammed Bab, another of Rashti's students, came to the fore during the reign of Nasseruddin Shah, introduced himself as "Gate" or intermediary between man and the Imams and then proclaimed himself Mahdi, and sowed the seeds for what later became the Babi and Baha'i sects.

Essentially, this expectation and deep conviction in a Promised Savior, a World Avenger who will appear at the "end of time" and restore peace to a disrupted world, is a dominant feature of nearly all existing monotheistic religions. These faiths have usually given glad tidings of his coming. The Zoroastrians call

him Soashyant, Brahma or Ishnoo; the Jews await the arrival of the Mashi'i, or Promised Guide (Mahdi), King of Kings – believed to be of the generation of Isaac. The Christians, however, believe in the return of Christ and the Promised Messiah. Even in the religious scriptures of the Indians, with their numerous faiths and religions, the happy news of a Saviour has been given. As may be seen, all these indications given by other religions concerning the Promised Saviour are, according to Islam and Shi'ite ulema, in close coincidence with indications in Islam concerning Imam Mahdi.

This was, in a nutshell, an indexical look at a few religious scriptures and documents which contain material pertaining to the 12th Imam.[4](#)

Naturally, it is difficult to offer any definite proof or effective ratiocination on the subject for the reader who does not hold any religious beliefs; therefore, it is necessary to first fortify the basic pillars behind the belief in God, His Prophet and the Holy Book before we can embark upon such a topic.

Usually, a straight denial of any theory provides a comfortable short-cut for those in disagreement with it. As soon as they hear anything strange, or unexpected arguments which appear contrary to reason and intellect, immediately and without any due consideration to the background and basis behind that theory, they will nullify and then reject it totally. However, if such an unproved theory is found to be logical and applicable to current affairs and facts, something not possible at the time of its introduction, then at least there will be favourable ground for that doctrine and the acceptance of its ideas.

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ 1.

"It is He Who hath sent His Apostle with Guidance and the Religion of Truth, to proclaim it over all religion. (9:33)

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزُّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ

"Before this We wrote in the Psalms, after the Message (given to Moses): 'My servants, the righteous, shall inherit the earth.' " (21: 105)

These offer a definite promise of what will be the complete and final victory of Islam on earth, when its pious adherents will gain not only possession. but be endowed with Truth, security and material abundance. Also, in other Qura'nic 'surah' (Hajj, 22:41 & 22:42 and Nisa', 4:157) there are verses which, according to many commentaries, can be interpreted as references to the period which will be characterized by the appearance of the Promised Imam.

[2.](#) Among these are sermons 107 and 150 which are descriptions of state of the world at the 'End of Time!' and in chapters 138 and 181 in which Ali (a) discusses the Imam himself and the steps he will take in his task of world reform.

"The society will be engulfed by ravaging wars, overflowing with havoc and devastation. At first, the conquerors will feel elated over their successes and booties gathered therein, but it will all have a tragic end. I warn you of the wars of the future; you have no idea of the enormity of evil which they will carry. The Imam who will create a world state will make the ruling nations pay for their crimes against society. He will bring succor to humanity. He will remove the hidden wealth from the breast of the earth and distribute it equitably amongst the needy and deserving. He will teach you simple living and high thinking. He will make you understand that virtue is a state of character which is always a means between the two extremes and based upon equity and justice. He will receive the teaching of the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (may the peace of God be upon him and his descendants) after the world has ignored them as dead letters."

"He will protect and defend himself with resources of science and supreme knowledge. His control over these resources will be complete. He will know how supreme they are and how carefully they will have to be used. His mind will be free from the desires of bringing harm and injury to humanity. Such a knowledge to him will be like the property which was wrongly

possessed by others and for which he was waiting for the permission to repossess and use. He, in the beginning, will be like a poor stranger, unknown and uncared for, and Islam then will be in the hopeless and helpless plight of an exhausted camel who has laid down its head and is wagging its tail. With such a start, he will establish an empire of God in this world. He will be the final demonstration and proof of God's merciful wish to acquaint man with the right ways of life."

[3.](#) Quoting from M. Beheshti, 'Adyan va Mahdaviat'.

[4.](#) In the book 'Adyan and Mahdaviat ', a considerable number of examples and allusions on the subject have been related from the books of Zand, Shakmoni, Jamasebnameh, Vavang, Did, Basak, Patkil and Gatha – apart from glad tidings given in both the Old and New Testaments.

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