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Believers and Deniers of the Imam of the Time (a.s.)

All Islamic scholars are unanimous regarding the belief that Imam Mahdi (a.s.) shall indeed reappear and reform the world and destroy all oppression. The government of His Eminence (a.s.) shall be such a great success and achievement, as the mankind has never seen in the history so far.

The scholars of Islam have faith in it and consider it to be an inseparable part of religious belief. It is due to the widely related and authentic traditions narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) and the Imams of guidance (a.s.), sources of which we have already quoted in the foregone pages. Therefore there is no difference of opinion in the above-mentioned matter.

Rather the difference is regarding some other matters, for example in the birth and existence of His Eminence (a.s.). All Shias, without any exception and a large number of Ahle Sunnat scholars and historians believe that His Eminence (a.s.) is already born and exists in the present time. However some of them say that he shall be born in the future. We shall investigate this opinion of theirs.

Those Who Believe the Imam (a.s.) is Born and Exists

Shia Imamites are unanimous that the Awaited Holy Imam (a.s.) exists and that he has already taken birth and at present he is the Proof of Allah (SwT) on the Earth. The Almighty Allah (SwT) has kept him alive by providing all the necessities for survival and he is away from all weakness, old age and death, and nothing is difficult for the Almighty God.

The One Who has kept the stars and the planets rotating in their orbits in space and One Who has life and death under His control and has power over everything. He is the One Who had made the people of the cave asleep for 309 years and then revived them and kept them alive. He is the One Who kept Prophet Yunus (a.s.) alive in the whale's belly. When he sought forgiveness he was brought out. If he had not sought forgiveness he would have remained alive inside the whale till Qiyamat. Such types of examples are numerous in the Holy Quran.

Now we shall mention some statements of Ahle Sunnat scholars that are in consonance with the beliefs of the Shia Imamiyah.

Muhammad bin Talha Shafei

Muhammad bin Talha bin Muhammad Qarashi Nasibi says:

"Muhammad bin Hasan Khalis, son of Ali Mutawakkil, son of Muhammad Qane, son of Ali ar Reza, son of Musa Kazim, son of Jafar Sadiq, son of Muhammad Baqir, son of Ali Zainul Abideen, son of Husain Zaki, son of Ali Murtada, son of Abu Talib is the Mahdi, the Hujjat (Proof), the Khalaf Salih (the righteous successor) and the awaited one, peace be upon him."

This is the righteous proof (*Khalaf Salih*)
Allah indeed has helped him...

He also said: "As for the place of his birth, it is Sar-man-rai (and he was born) on the 23rd of Shaban 258 A.H."

These sentences prove the belief of Muhammad bin Talha in the existence of His Eminence, Mahdi (a.s.) on the basis of traditions and sayings of the Holy Prophet (S) regarding Imam Mahdi (a.s.).

Ibn Arabi

Muhyuddin Muhammad bin Ali known as Ibn Arabi Andulusi has explained the Imamate of His Eminence, Mahdi (a.s.) and his birth. He says, "Mahdi (a.s.) will reappear in the last age and the Messenger of Allah (S) has prophesied about him, and he is from the purified Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) and from the lineage of Muhammad (S).

Indeed the Imam is needful of a vizier.
And upon the two of them the whole universe rotates.

You should know that the Almighty Allah (SwT) has a Caliph who would reappear and fill the earth with justice and equity after it would have been filled with injustice and inequity. Even if a single day remains for the earth, the Almighty Allah (SwT) will prolong this very day till this Caliph, who is from the Progeny of the Messenger of Allah (S) and from the descendants of Fatima (s.a), reappears.

The grandfather of this Caliph is Husain bin Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) and his respected father is Hasan Askari (a.s.). He shall have the same name as that of the Holy Prophet (S) and people would pay allegiance to him between Rukn and Maqam. In appearance he shall be like Allah's Messenger (S) and in manners slightly less than the Prophet (S), because no one could be equal to the Prophet (S). The Almighty Allah (SwT) has said: 'Indeed you are having lofty manners.'

He is having an illuminated forehead and a raised nose. People would become fortunate through him

and he would distribute wealth evenly among the people and establish justice. There would be such prosperity during his time that when a man comes and asks him for monetary help he would be given as much as he could lift. In his tenure bad manners and evil traits shall be transformed into amicable mannerisms.

It would be seen that a person who was ignorant and cowardly at night would become knowledgeable, kind and brave in the morning and success, help and assistance would be surrounding him.

He shall be the helper and supporter of the weak and helpless people and dominating and strict for the oppressors.

He shall practically act upon what he preaches and teach the people what he acts upon. Through him, Islam would get respectability and revival. People who are cognizant of the Almighty and truth shall be surrounding him and they would help and assist His Eminence (a.s.). His Eminence, Ali (a.s.) shall descend from the heavens in such a manner that an angel would be at his right and another at his left; he would assist Imam Mahdi (a.s.) and he would break the cross and kill the pig."[1]

Ibn Sabbagh Maliki

Shaykh Nuruddin Ali bin Muhammad, popularly known as Ibn Sabbagh Maliki says, "The twelfth Imam is Muhammad bin Hasan (a.s.)." Then he mentions the date of his birth and the proof of his Imamate and also some traditions regarding His Eminence (a.s.), his occultation and the duration of his government etc.[2]

Ibn Athir

Ali bin Karam Muhammad bin Muhammad Shaibani, alias Ibn Athir Jazari says, "In that year, that is in 260 A.H., His Eminence, Abu Muhammad Hasan Askari Alawi (a.s.) passed away and he was the eleventh of the twelve Imams of the Imamiyah (Shias). He was the father of Imam Mahdi (Muhammad (a.s.)) who was born in the year 232 A.H."[3]

Shamsuddin

Shamsuddin Abu Muzaffar Yusuf bin Faza Ali, known as Sibte Ibn Jawzi has said, "Muhammad bin Hasan bin Ali bin Muhammad bin Ali bin Musa ar Reza bin Jafar bin Muhammad bin Ali bin Husain bin Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.), whose patronymic is Abu Abdullah and Abul Qasim, is the Caliph, the Proof, the Master of the time (a.s.), the Qaim, the Awaited one and the last of the twelve Imams (a.s.)."[4]

Abul Fida

Ismail Abu Fida writes, "Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) is one of the twelve Shiite Imams. He is the father of Muhammad (a.s.), the Awaited one who was born in the year 235 A.H."[5]

Shias do not believe that the Imam (a.s.) has disappeared into the basement, and in the same way they do not await his return at the basement, rather the Shias say that Imam (a.s.) is hidden from the eyes of people and he is in occultation. Shias await for the reappearance of the Imam (a.s.) at the House of Allah (Kaba) as we have already explained in the foregone pages.

Qirmani

Qirmani has written, “Imam Abul Qasim Muhammad bin Hasan Askari (a.s.) who was five years old when his father passed away was bestowed wisdom by the Almighty Allah (SwT), just as He had blessed Yahya (a.s.) with it. He is of medium height, elegant stature, beautiful hair, raised nose and illuminated forehead.”6

Ibn Khallikan

Ibn Khallikan has written in his biography of the Awaited Imam (a.s.) as follows, “Abul Qasim Muhammad bin Hasan bin Muhammad Jawwad (a.s.), is the twelfth of the twelve Imams and he was born on Friday, the 15th of Ramadan (15th Shaban) in the year 255 A.H.”7

Dhahabi

Dhahabi has mentioned regarding the birth of His Eminence, the Awaited Imam (a.s.) as follows, “An important event of the year 261 A.H. was the passing away of Hasan bin Ali bin Jawwad bin Reza (a.s.) who was one of the twelve Imams and the father of the Awaited Imam (a.s.), Muhammad bin Hasan.”8

Sirajuddin Rufayi

Shaykhul Islam, Abul Maali Sirajuddin Muhammad Rufayi has written, “His title was Naqi (Pure), Aalim, (Scholar), Faqih (Jurisprudent), Amir (Chief), Daleel (Proof) and Askari (one from the army cantonment)...He had five issues, Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.), Husain, Muhammad, Jafar and Aishah. But the Awaited Proof, the Wali of Allah (SwT), Imam Mahdi (a.s.) was (born) from Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.).”9

Shaykh Shablanji

The accomplished scholar, Shaykh Shablanji has mentioned, “This section is about the merits of Muhammad bin al Hasan al Khalis bin Ali al Hadi bin Muhammad al Jawwad bin Ali ar Reza bin Musa al Kazim bin Jafar as Sadiq bin Muhammad al Baqir bin Ali bin al Husain bin Ali bin Abi Talib. His mother is Ummul Walad, Narjis, Saiqal and also known as Susan and his patronymic is Abul Qasim and the Imamite Shias have given him the following titles: Hujjat10, Mahdi11, Khalaf Salih12, Qaim13, Montazar14 and Sahib-uz-Zaman15.

The most well known of these titles is Mahdi. His Eminence (a.s.) is a tall young man with a beautiful

face and hair that reaches to his shoulders. He has big eyes and a brilliant countenance."[16]

Sulaiman Ibn Khwaja

The great scholar, Shaykh Sulaiman bin Khwaja has given a lengthy explanation in which he has proved that the Promised Mahdi about whom the Messenger of Allah (S) has prophesied is the same Proof of God, Muhammad bin Hasan Askari (a.s.) and he has mentioned proofs and testimonies to support his belief. And it is interesting to note that this Shaykh was from the Hanafi school and he followed the Sufi religion.[17]

Abdul Wahhab Sherani

The mystic Shaykh, Abdul Wahhab Ahmad bin Ali Sherani says, "The birth of the Awaited Imam (a.s.) took place on the 15th of Shaban in the year 255 A.H. and he is alive and present, till the time he would reappear and Isa bin Maryam (a.s.) would also be with him. He is from the progeny of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.)."[18]

Khairuddin Zarkali

Khairuddin Zarkali has said, "Muhammad bin Hasan Askari Khalis bin Ali al Hadi (a.s.), Abul Qasim is the last leader of the twelve Shia Imams. Among the Imamites, he is known as the Mahdi, the Master of the Age, the Awaited one, the Proof and the owner of the cellar. He was born in Samarrah and when he was five years old, his father passed away. When he was nine, ten or nineteen years old he entered the cellar in the house of his father and he never emerged from it."

Ibn Khallikan says, "In the last age the Shias expect him to reappear from any of the cellars of Samarrah."[19]

However, as we have repeatedly mentioned, Shias never expect the Imam (a.s.) to reappear from a cellar of Samarrah; they believe that the advent of the Holy Imam (a.s.) shall be from the Holy Kaba.

Baihaqi

Baihaqi Shafei says, "People have differed regarding Mahdi. A group has stopped and entrusted his knowledge to its scholar and have the belief that he is from the progeny of Fatima (s.a), the daughter of the Messenger of Allah (S)." He further says, "His long age is not impossible like that of His Eminence, Isa bin Maryam (a.s.) and His Eminence, Prophet Khizr (a.s.)."[20]

Husain Kashifi

Husain, the compiler of Quranic exegesis says, "Muhammad bin Hasan (a.s.) is the twelfth Imam and his patronymic is Abul Qasim and he was born in Samarrah."[21]

Shuqrani

Shuqrani says, “The sixty-sixth discussion is about the conditions of the coming of the Final Hour as the Holy Prophet (S) has informed. All of them are true and all of them shall indeed occur before the Day of Judgment, like the advent of the Mahdi, then the Dajjal and the descent of Isa (a.s.), the advent of the creature (Daabba), the rising of the sun from the west and the breaking of the barrier of Gog and Magog. So much so, that even if a solitary day remains for the end of the world, all of them shall come to pass.”22

Salahuddin Safadi

Shaykh Salahuddin Safadi writes, “The Promised Mahdi is the same twelfth of the Twelve Imams (a.s.), the first of whom is the Chief of the Pious, Ali (a.s.) and the last is Mahdi (a.s.).”23

Muhammad Najjari

Hafiz Muhammad bin Muhammad Najjari, a prominent Hanafi scholar says, “Abu Muhammad (a.s.) is the father of Imam Mahdi (a.s.). His son is Muhammad known to the closest members of his family and his trusted relatives. Then he goes on to describe the circumstances surrounding his holy birth.”24

Sayyid Ahmad Zaini Dahlan

Sayyid Ahmad Zaini Dahlan in refutation of the belief of those who say the Abbaside Mahdi was the Awaited Imam (a.s.), says, “As the traditions and narrative reports prove and as the scholars have explained, the Awaited Mahdi (a.s.) has not reappeared till date and some of the signs of his reappearance have already occurred and some of them have yet to occur. And the clearest sign of him is that the Almighty Allah (SwT) will improve his affair on a Saturday and he would be from the Progeny of Fatima (s.a)...but it is certain that he would definitely reappear.”

These were some examples of the statements of Ahle Sunnat wal Jamat scholars that have been recorded and all of them clearly explain that His Eminence (a.s.) does exist and his reappearance is imminent.

The great traditionists, Shaykh Noori in his book, *Kashful Astar*, has mentioned forty Ahle Sunnat intellectuals and scholars who have expressed faith in His Eminence (a.s.), and considered his reappearance imminent. And the accomplished teacher, Haaj Ali Muhammad Ali Dokhiayyal has mentioned 144 books dealing mainly about the topic of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) and the interesting thing is that a majority of these books are written by Ahle Sunnat scholars.25

1. Futuhat al-Makkiyah, 3/429-430
2. Al-Fusulul Muhimma
3. Tarikh Ibn Athir, 5/373
4. Tadkiratul Khawas al-Aimma

5. Tarikh Abul Fida, 2/152
6. Akhbaarud Dawl, Pg. 117
7. Wafayatul Ayan, 2/457
8. Tarikh Dawl al-Islami, 5/115
9. Sihahul Akhbar
10. Proof
11. Guided one
12. Righteous Successor
13. One who rises
14. Awaited one
15. Master of the Age
16. Nurul Absar, Pg. 152
17. Yanabiul Mawaddah
18. Al-Yuwaqeet
19. Al Alaam, 6/309-310
20. Shab al-Eimaan
21. Rauzatush Shohada, Pg. 326
22. Al-Yuwaqeet wal Jawahir
23. Yanabiul Mawaddah, Pg. 471 quoted in Sharh Dairah
24. Faslul Khitab
25. Al-Futuhat al-Islamiyyah, 2/322

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