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DIVINE SAVIOR

A Brief Biography of Imam al-Mahdi.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ
الرَّحْمَنِ
الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of **God**, the
Compassionate, the **Merciful**

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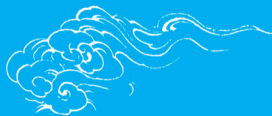
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Translated by

Muhammad-Reza Fakh-Rohani



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Needless to say, it is only me who should be blamed for any mistake in the present work, not the others mentioned above.



Translator's Preface

First and Foremost, I have to be thankful to Allah for He has granted me with the opportunity to translate the present work from Persian into English.

The audience of this booklet are our Muslim brethren who cannot avail themselves of the related literature in Persian and/or Arabic. I hope they will find it convenient, informative, and easy to read.

Finally, I would like to request of all the readers to let me know of their suggestions and constructive criticisms; they can reach me at PO Box 37185-744, Qum, Iran, or, alternatively, at the address of the publisher.

Muhammad-Reza Fakh-Rohani

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UNSEEN, YET WITH US:

A Brief Biography of Imam al-Mahdi

Introduction

Familiarity with the Imam of the Age, Imam al-Mahdi, is the best and safest way to attain a knowledge of God. This is well phrased in a passage of Imam al-Hadi's al-Ziyarat al-Jami'a al-Kabira, "One who seeks God should start with you; and one who recognizes His Oneness, should accept your [the Infallible Imams'] words; and one who wishes to move toward Him should turn to you [the Infallible Imams]."¹

Hence, familiarity with him is a step toward loving him; and this leads on to the love of God. This is explicitly phrased in al-Ziyarat al-Jami'a al-Kabira as, "One who loves you, he indeed

1. "Al-Ziyarat Jami'a al-Kabira", cited in Mafatih al-Jinan, compiled by Sheikh Abbas Qummi.

loves God.”¹ It is through familiarity with him that one sets himself free from the bounds of ignorance, and attains a profound knowledge of Islam and the Quran, and hence he is rescued from ignorance. The Prophet’s hadith is explicit: “One who dies while he does not know his Imam of the Age, he dies in ignorance.”² Hence, knowledge of his station and personality is a firm ground for getting rid of ignorance and obscurity and reaching light and guidance. This is clearly expressed in a supplication as follows: “O God! Make that proof (hujja) known to me, for if thou do not do so, I would go astray in my faith.”³ In short, the Imam of the Age’s manner and cause cannot be studied except by gaining a knowledge of him; likewise, knowing Islam would be impossible without gaining a knowledge of himself. Hence, it would be impossible to attain

1. Ibid.

2. Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 22, p. 331, hadith No. 317.

3. Ibid., vol. 53, p. 187, hadith No. 18.



blessedness in this world and the world hereafter without cognizance of the faith.

We must gain knowledge of the Imam of the Age (peace be upon him), become familiar with his ideas and ideals, and be ready to assist him, for he is the only living Imam, always present and constantly aware of mankind.

He is the only living Imam - hence the link between God and the mankind in the world, a good offspring in the progeny of the prophets; he is the last Infallible Imam in the hierarchy and chain of the Infallible Leaders, viz. Imams.

His wonderful life, mysterious disappearance, miraculous long life, and finally his magnificent and gracious reappearance all lead not only to the most fruitful page in the history of mankind but to the most desired phase in the history of creation. That phase would be the time for the “Government of monotheism throughout the world”. We hope so!

The Birth of Light

In the dreadful political atmosphere of the city of Samarra, (now located in Iraq) which was due to the ignorance of the spies of the ‘Abbasid tyrannical hegemony, Imam al-Mahdi was born at dawn on Friday, 15th of Sha’ban in the year 255 AH / 868. He was born to Imam Hasan. al-Askari.¹

Right after his birth, he professed the Oneness of God and the Prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). On the seventh day, he recited the Quranic verse: Yet We desired to be gracious to those that were abased in the land, and to make them leaders, and to make them the inheritors (28:5).²

He was named Muhammad according to the

1. Bihar, vol. 51, pp. 3-4.

2. Ibid.

anticipation of prophetic testament as well as hadiths full of promise. This was so that he would not only by his appearance but also by his name and manner be a perfect reminder of the Prophet Muhammad. His title was thus chosen Abul Qasim. He was, on other occasions, entitled as Abu Ja'far, Abu Abdullah, and Abu Salih, however. Among his other famous titles, there are the following: al-Mahdi, al-Qa'im, Sahib al-'Asr, Sahib al-'Amr, Sahib al-Zaman, Baqiyyatul Allah, Hujjatul Allah, al-Mansur, al-Khalaf al-Salih, and al-Maw'ūd. These titles are cited in history books as well as in prayer books.

His Parents

In his lifetime, Imam Abu Muhammad Hasan al-'Askari was perennially faced with all sorts of difficulties and problems. Having been imprisoned, he was under constant control and confinement for twenty years during the time of the then Abbasid Caliphs. At the age of twenty-three, God granted him his only son. When his

son was born, he was so pleased with this certain occurrence of the Divine promise that he told those around himself, “The tyrants thought that they could kill me, so as to cut this lineage. What could they imagine of the Divine power?!”¹

The birth of Imam al-Mahdi brought about the most critical, challenging, and active of all periods in the life of Imam Hasan al-'Askari. Against all pressures exerted on him by the government and the spies dispatched around him, Imam al-'Askari made use of the safest ways and methods - with the assistance of his most reliable companions - to make his adherents aware of the birth of the twelfth Imam. He tried to make them familiar with him on various occasions.²

On his maternal side, Malika, Imam al-Mahdi's mother, was a noble woman on two sides. Joshua,

1. Ibid.

2. The methods of introducing the birth and imamate of the Imam of the Age were so carefully and prudently planned that even today the opponents cannot deny them. Cf. *Muntakhab al-Athar*, pp. 322-41, for a list of sixty five Sunnite writers and scholars who admit it.



her father, was the son of the Roman Caesar, and her mother was a descendent of Saint Simon, a legatee of Jesus Christ. Such a noble lady had the honour to give birth to Imam al-Mahdi.

Earlier it had been planned that she would marry to one of the Roman nobles, who was a relative of the Caesar. When this did not come to pass, she dreamt of the Prophet Muhammed. (peace be upon him) and had the honour of converting to Islam. She cleverly tried to include herself among the Roman captives so as to get to Baghdad, then the capital of the Abbasid dynasty. There Imam al-Hadi (peace be upon him) had Bishr ibn Sulayman buy her and bring her directly to the Imam's house. It was at the Imam's house where she was married to Imam Hasan al-'Askari. Her titles were Narjis, Susan, Rayhana, and Sayqal.¹ She was so noble and great in chastity, pure in matters of belief, good conduct, and pleasing behaviour and manner that Lady Hakima, herself the daughter, sister, and aunt of Imams, respected

1. Muntakhab, p.32.

her greatly. She was thus of special station before Imam al-Hadi.

Prior to this happening, Imam Ali, Imam al-Sadiq, and Imam al-Jawad, foretold about her, mentioning her as *Khiyarat al-'Ima'* (The best of slave-girls) and *Sayyidat al-'Ima'* (The lady of slave-girls). She passed away in the year 258 AH / 871.

During her pregnancy, of which there was no sign, save on the last night when Imam Hasan al-'Askari asked Hakima to remain with the Imam, because: "The God Almighty will make you delighted by the birth of His proof positive."¹

The Beginning of His Imamate

When the eleventh Infallible Imam of Muslims, Imam Hasan al-'Askari, was cruelly poisoned at the age of 28 and was martyred by the tyrant Abbasid Caliph, Imam al-Mahdi was five.² He then became the next Imam.

1. Ibid., p. 323.

2. Al-Mufid, Al-Irshad, p. 383.

It is no wonder that his imamate began in his childhood, for such matters are not strange especially in the light of the Divine miracles and the God given power bestowed on all Infallible Imams. It was not the only instance of such happenings, there is further widely accepted evidence in history. In line with the above, the life of the Christian apostle John is exemplary about whom the Holy Quran says: “And We granted him wisdom (apostleship) in childhood.” (Sura Mary, 12). Also, a reference is made to Jesus Christ’s speaking in the cradle; the Quran says: “Lo, I am God’s servant; God has given me the Book, and made me a Prophet” (Sura Mary, 30).

The Lesser Occultation

There were certain reasons which led to the concealment of Imam al-Mahdi’s birth from the view of the opponents and enemies; the very reasons contributed to his occultation and invisibility to people.

In the body of hadiths, Imam al-Mahdi is

compared with the Prophet Moses in the sense that the pharaohs used to kill all the pregnant women, infants, and boys in order to try to kill Moses. In the like manner, the tyrant Abbasid Caliphs were apt to commit any possible crime so as to kill the last Imam.

In the year 260 AH/ 873 when Imam al-Mahdi came out of his chamber to say the prayer over the dead body of his father, the Abbasid Caliphs planned to kill him. This was when he put his uncle Ja'far the Liar, aside when he was about to say the prayer instead of him.¹

Needless to say, Imam al-Mahdi had the authority to say the prayer and declare his imamate, such an authority was evidently not bestowed on his uncle Ja'far the Liar.

Obviously, the Almighty God has since veiled and shielded this last Imam beyond the curtain of occultation so as to keep him safe from the

1. Yanabi' al-Mawadda, p. 461. In some books it is recorded that Abū 'Isa b. Mutawakkil said the prayer at the Abbasid Caliph Mu'tamid.

danger of their conspiracies and plans to kill him. The Holy Quran points out that: “They desire to extinguish with their months the light of God; but God will perfect His Light, though the unbelievers be averse,” (Sura Al-Saff [The Ranks], 8).

The Made-up Story of the Underground

There is an underground place near the tombs of the Imams Ali al-Hadi and Hasan al-'Askari at Samarra, which was used as a special place for prayer by the three Imams, namely: Imam Ali al-Hadi, Imam Hasan al-'Askari, and Imam al-Mahdi. The site is therefore highly venerated. However, some biased Sunnite historians made up a story about Imam al-Mahdi's occultation in the Underground. They make fun of the Shiah saying that the Shiah expect the Imam to reappear from the Underground.¹

In response to their objection and conspiracy, the Shiite Ulema refuted their misconceptions of the case. To be brief and to mention only one - among

1. Some of such biased writes are Suwaydi, Ibn Hujr, Ibn Taymiyyah, and Abdullah Fasimi.

many of the answers given, the view of the late Ayatullah Allamah 'al-Amini is as follows:

...The rumour of the case of the Underground is even worse... The Shiah have never believed in the Imam's occultation in the Underground, nor did they make him do so. Never will the infallible Imam reappear from the Underground. But the case is that according to the traditions related he will rise up in Mecca right in front of the Kaaba. Nobody believes in the Underground story... I wish those who have made up the Underground story had said one and the same thing, while their different accounts make them defamed, invalid. One says that the Underground is at Hillah, another one says it is in Baghdad, still another one says it is at Samarra, and yet one another expresses his total unawareness of it.¹

Special Delegates

The Lesser Occultation lasted for sixty nine

1. Al-Amini, Al-Ghadir, vol. 3, p. 309.

years, right up to the year 329 AH / 940.¹ During this period, though Imam al-Mahdi was invisible to the public as well as to his enemies, he had four special delegates who transferred people's questions to him and his answers back to them. These four persons were 1) 'Uthman ibn Sa'id al-'Amrawi, 2) Muhammad ibn 'Uthman al-'Amrawi, 3) Husain ibn Ruh al-Naubakhti, and 4) Ali ibn Muhammad al-Samari.

1. Uthman ibn Sa'id al-'Amrawi

He had the honour of spending some time before and in the presence of Imam Ali al-Hadi (peace be upon him). Under the guise of an oil vendor, he could transmit Shiite literature from the Imam to his adherents. Since he had ably acted as deputy to the two previous Imams, Imam al-Hadi and Imam al-'Askari, he was selected as the first special delegate of Imam al-Mahdi. He passed away in the year 300 AH /912 in Baghdad and was buried there.²

1. Muntakhab, p. 358.

2. Al-Qurashi, Hayat al-Imam al-Mahdi, pp. 121-123; Bihār, vol. 51, p.344.

2. Muhammad ibn ‘Uthman al-’Amrawi.

After his father passed away, he received the honour of special delegacy of Imam al-Mahdi. Well-versed in Islamic studies, he wrote several books on fiqh and hadiths. He was also authorized by the Imam such that the Imam said of him: “Indeed I have reliance on him, and his writings are as those of mine”¹ He passed away in the end of Jamadi al’ula of the year 305 AH / 917.

3. Husain ibn Ruh al-Naubakhti.

Sometime before his death, at the instance of the Imam, Muhammad ibn ‘Uthman introduced Husain ibn Ruh al-Naubakhti to people as his successor. He was thus missioned to act as Imam’s next special delegate. He was very knowledgeable and pious. As related in histories, his disputations with others, signify his spiritual self-esteem and breadth of knowledge. He was so firm in his matters of belief that one of his contemporary scholars described him as such: ‘If the enemies cut

1. Tangih al-Maqal, vol. 3, p. 149.



him into pieces, he will never betray off the Imam to them.’ He held the post of special delegacy for twenty-one years and passed away in the year 320 AH / 932; he was also buried in Baghdad.¹

4. Ali ibn Muhammad al-Saymari.

To point out to his eminence, it suffices to mention that though such great figures of scholarship and piety as Muhammad ibn Ya’qub al-Kulayni, the author of *Al-Kafi*, were his contemporaries, it was only he himself who received the honour of special delegacy of the Imam of the Age. Just six days before his passing away, the Imam issued a letter in which he declared to the Muslims the commencement of the Greater Occultation period.² He breathed his last on 15th Sha’ban of 329 AH / 941.³

1. Marāgid al-Ma’arif, vol. 1, p. 25.

2. Bihar, vol. 51, p. 361.

3. Ibid., p. 360.

The Greater Occultation

All the sixty-nine year period of the Lesser Occultation served as an introductory step toward the Greater Occultation. This short chapter in history was aimed at making people ready to endure the Greater Occultation.

The Greater Occultation, so far taking eleven centuries, is different from the previous one in the following respects:

1. It has lasted much longer.
2. Nobody has been authorized or entitled as the special delegate of the Imam.
3. In this period, only fully qualified faqihs - whose characteristics are mentioned in the hadiths from the Imams al-Sadiq, al-Askari, and al-Mahdi (peace be upon them)¹ - are mentioned as the Imam's general advocates and are responsible for defending Islam and the Muslims' interests as well as safeguarding the practice of divine laws. This is expressed in the term *walayyat al-faqih*.
4. The end of this period depends on the ground

1. See the *Al-Hurr al-'Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'a*; Imam Khomeini, *Kitab al-Qada'*; *Walayat al-Faqih*; and *Kitab al-Bayi'*.



of people's general readiness for the universal divine government, to be ruled by the Imam.

5. No one, save God, knows the length of this period. This was not mentioned in any hadith, either. Consequently, those who claim to know the time of the Imam's reappearance, are apt to be all liars.¹

Some Rationals Behind the Occultation

The true reason of why the Imam of the Age (peace be upon him) is kept beyond the curtain of occultation is in itself a secret which depends on the Divine wise will.² Yet, what is mentioned in the body of hadiths may point to some of the reasons of occultation; they may also remind the

1. Muntakhab, p. 400.

2. Imam al-Sadiq says: "when we learn that God the Almighty and Glorious is Wise, we also admit that His acts and deeds are all wise, even though their reasons be unclear for us", Al-Saduq, Kamal al-Din wa Tamam al-Ni'mati, vol. 2, p. 482.

servants of God to take the right intended lessons. Some of such reasons as follows:

1. The Divine Tradition. Imam al-Sadiq says: “The traditions practiced in the case of the prophets will perfectly repeat in the case of our [the Ahl al-Bayt’s] Riser.”¹

2. Preservance of the Imam. Fear of his getting killed, which would mean the loss of his message and mission in practicing the government of Islam and the Holy Quran. Imam al-Sadiq says about him that, “He is anxious of himself to be killed.”²

3. Universal Readiness for the Islamic Government and the Abolishment of the Reign of Oppressors. Imam al-Mahdi himself says: “At the time of my reappearance, I will rise up without any oppressor’s commitment on me.”³

4. Testing People. The Holy Prophet says:

1. Ibid., 345.

2. Ibid., p. 481.

3. Muntakhab, p. 267.



“During the Occultation, nobody would be firm in the belief of his imamate save God test him in his faith.”¹

5. People’s Sins. Clearly, people’s sins act as dark clouds against the sun. Imam al-Mehdi compares himself with the sun when clouds cover it.² While the Imam’s existence is granting graces and light, what would these ‘dark covering clouds’ mean? Do they not signify people’s sins and ingratitude?

Characteristics of the Occultation

Although the case of occultation is discussed in the body or hadiths, one cannot get a clear picture of it. Hence the following selection of hadiths many point out some of its characteristics:

- 1.** He [Imam al-Mahdi] is like the sun when covered by clouds.³
- 2.** God makes a veil between him [Imam al-

1. Ibid., p. 101.

2. Al-Tabarasi Ihtijaj, p. 263. What would these ‘dark covering clouds’ mean? Do they not signify their sins and ungratitude?

3. Yanabi’, p. 477.

Mahdi] and people such that people may see him but do not recognize him.¹

3. He joins the hajj ceremony annually and says Amen for the prayers made by the believers.²

4. Though he is unseen in person, people never forget him.³

5. Many of those who are fond of him have had the opportunity and honour of meeting him. Hundreds of such memories and anecdotes are mentioned in many books, among them Bihar al-Anwar, Najm al-Thaqib, Jannat al-Ma'wā, Dār al-Salam, and 'Abqari al-Hisān.

6. He does not have a fixed dwelling place; he lives in deserts and around small towns.

7. He lives far away from the abodes of tyrants in such a way that he remains unknown and unrecognized by people. Like other people, he needs food, shelter and family.

8. He attends people's gatherings and walks in

1. Kamal al-Din, vol. 2, p. 351.

2. Muntakhab, p. 277.

3. Ibid., p. 272.



streets and districts.

9. Sometimes the Divine wise will may make his unseen, unnoticed presence at a place necessary.

Imam Ali al-Rida says: “He is unseen in person.”¹

and Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq says: “He in person is unseen to you.”² And sometimes it is suitable and

wise for him to be seen yet remain unrecognized.

Muhammad ibn ‘Uthman al-’Amrawi said: “He sees and and recognizes people, people see him

but do not recognize him, however.”³

Moral Merits

The Imam of the Age has all the merits of the prophets, apostles, and men of virtue. The virtuous and admirable morals of the Prophet, Imam Ali’s awe-inspiring characteristics, and the high virtues of Lady Fatima and other Imams all find expression in him. To get a better conception of him, the following characteristics are mentioned:

1. Bihar, vol. 51, p. 33.

2. Ibid., p. 32.

3. Ibid., vol. 51, p. 350.

1. Abundant Knowledge

Imam Ali says about him, “He is the most learned of you.”¹ Also Imam Muhammad al-Baqir says: “The knowledge of the Book of God the Glorious and the Traditions of his Prophet grow in and out of our [Imam] al-Mahdi’s heart in the same way as plants grow in the best way out of the ground. Hence, he who meets him should address him: Peace be upon you the Ahl al-Bayt of [Divine] mercy and of His prophet; Peace be upon you the source of knowledge and the abode of apostleship.”²

2. Abstinence, Piety and Inattention to Earthly Matters

In this regard, Imam Ali al-Rida says: “The clothing of our Riser is but rough, and his food is 38 but coarse.”³

1. Muntakhab, p. 309.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.



3. Dissemination and Practice of Justice Among People

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir says: “He treats people judicially, whether they are the good-doers Or sinners.”¹

4. Practicing According to the Prophet’s Tradition

The Prophet says: “He is a descendant of mine and his name is that of mine. God shall preserve my name and religion through his agency. He shall act and practice in my tradition.”²

5. Generosity

The Prophet remarks: “A man will go to him and say, ‘Grant me something. Do me a favour.’ Then Imam al-Mahdi shall provide him with the required property as much so he can take.”³

1. Ibid., p. 310.

2. Ibid.

3. Kanz al-ʿUmmal, vol. 6, p. 39; and Yanābiʿ, p.431.

6. Worshipping and Supplication

His very special types of prayers and modes of worshipping all signify his constant practice and insistence on them. Indeed all these religious acts signify the utmost degree of one's servitude hence closeness to God. In the same way, the Holy Prophet was ordered to say the night prayer (salat al-lay) so as to get ready for the mission of prophethood. This means that to shoulder great tasks and responsibilities, one should be deeply concerned with worshipping. By the same token, the dissemination of justice on a worldwide scale can be done only through constant prayers.

7. Bravery

Confrontation with all disbelievers and oppressors as well as defeat of all false powers requires bravery and stability. Such a person must be like Imam al-Husain, in battling with enemies, like Imam Ali in braveness, and like the Prophet in supporting his soldiers. Imam al-Mahdi is of course such a qualified person.



8. Patience

Generally, to measure one's patience, his difficulties and problems must be taken into consideration. The most patient people struggle against hard times for years; they also endure a lot of miseries and misfortunes. Undoubtedly, it would be out of the question to compare the difficulties which Imam of the Age has suffered with those of any other normal human being. Not only does the length of time demand patience, but the type of problems encountered require more patience. This leads us to conceive his patience in his task to lead the Muslims.

Prolonged Lifetime

The Imam of the Age has so far lived for hundreds years. He was born in the year 255 AH / 868. This prolonged lifetime may even last tens, hundreds or even thousands of years, too. Yet such a prolonged lifetime does not cause any wonder, the reasons are as follows:

- 1.** God has created man from nothing, so the

creation and existence of everything depend on His will. The Holy Quran is explicit: Verily, when He intends a thing, His command is, “Be”, and it is. (Sura Yasin, 82). Hence he has the ability to prolong the lifetime of any of his creations for thousands of years.

Likewise, it is mentioned in the story of Jonah in the Holy Quran that God detained him alive in the belly of a whale, while he had not repented. (Cf. Sura al-Saffat, 144).

2. There are many accounts of very old people in history books. They lived hundreds of years without any serious illness. It is also mentioned in the Old Testament that Zul-Qarnayn lived for three thousand years.¹ Likewise, according to the Holy Quran, Noah, at the time of the Deluge, had spent 950 years on earth. (Cf. Sura al-'Ankabut, 14).

3. Potentially, one cannot limit the lifetime of a

1. Muntakhab, p. 276.

living thing. Hence, if a person can live for 50, 150 or even 200 years, he can live even longer.

4. Science has proved that if a living thing receives its necessary nourishments, and is free from illness, it can live long. So it is quite reasonable to suppose that the Imam of the Age, through his God granted knowledge, knows how to live healthier hence longer.

Expectation

At last, the hardship of occultation of the Imam of the Age shall end, and the glorious days of the triumph of Islam will start. With this consideration, anyone who believes in the Imam of the Age and has accepted his own commitment to the Imam's leadership should always expect him. Such a person will never tire of improving his society.

In the body of hadiths, expectation of Imam al-Mahdi is regarded on a par with jihad in the cause of Allah, and even with jihad and martyrdom right in front of the Prophet Muhammad.¹ This

1. Bihar, vol. 52, p. 126.

signifies the high value of the expectation in the occultation period as well as the difficulties one may encounter and the great efforts it demands.

Such expectation does not mean indifference, and sitting still, rather it means fighting against all wrong doings and clearing the ground for a better, Islamic future.

Characteristics of the Expectants

A Knowledge of the Imam of the Age and Belief in Imamate

How can expectancy find expression, while the Imam is not yet recognized in person? Firm belief and conviction in such points of faith make up the basic characteristics of the expectants. It is quoted from Imam Ali al-Sajjad that: “those people of the period of occultation who believe in his reappearance are indeed superior to others.”¹

Piety and Good Morals

In Islam the yardstick for dignity, hence superiority,

1. Ibid, p. 122, hadith No. 4.



is only piety. The Holy Quran says: “Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most God-fearing of you.” (Sura al-Hujurat, 13). In the same way, the criterion for the value of belief is nothing except the nicety of morals. There is also a Prophetic hadith which says: “The noblest of you is the best of you in morals.”¹ It follows that the virtues of the expectation are only accessible to those of good morals and piety. Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) says: “One who aspires to be among the companions of our Riser, he should in his expectation behave in accordance to piety and moral values.”²

Adherence

One who expects the Imam, he should regard adherence to him a necessity; by adhering to him, he makes himself ready for his reappearance. Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) says: “Lucky are those of our adherents (shi’as) who

1. Ibid., vol. 77, p. 150, hadith No. 69.

2. Ibid. p. 140, hadith No. 50.

are expecting him during his occultation and are obedient to him in the time of his reappearance.”¹

Intimacy with Imam al-Mahdi’s Followers and Hostility with His Enemies

Clearly, one of the basic criteria of friendship for anybody is to check his friends and foes. The friend of the enemy and the enemy of the friend cannot be regarded as friends. Needless to say, everybody likes his friends’ friends and dislike their enemies. It follows that the expectants whose act of expectancy is an expression of their strong feelings toward the Imam shall love those who are his close adherents; they are enemies of those who are hostile toward him. The Prophet says: “Lucky are those who will be contemporary with the Riser of my Ahl-al Bayt and adhere to him during his occultation and before his rising up; they like those who like him, and are hostile.

1. Ibid. p. 150, hadith No. 76.



toward his enemies.”¹

Pre-Reappearance Signs

God the Almighty and Exalted has marked Imam al-Mahdi’s reappearance with certain signs. These signs which are for the purpose of preventing possible abuses can be categorized as certain and probable ones. The certain signs are those for which there are a great number of hadiths, for example, the rise of Sufyani and the slaying of the innocent soul.²

On the other hand, the probable ones are those for which either there are not certain and authorized hadiths, or they were not regarded as certain by any of the Infallible Imams. Examples of these include five eclipses of the moon and 50 fifteen of the sun.³ The same signs can be recategorized

1. Ibid., vol. 51, p. 72.

2. Muntakhab, p. 439.

3. Ibid., p. 440.

into the following three kinds:

1. Unnatural signs in the world and signs in people's social behaviour;
2. Natural incidents, such as successive eclipses in Ramadan, the rise of a great fire in the sky in the east, and the sunrise in the west; 3) Moral corruption such as the prevalence of unlawful, illegal sexual affairs, a great number of claimants of prophethood, and the slaying of five seventh of men in battles and wars.

It must be noted that if any one of them does not take place, this would not mean the postponement of the reappearance of the Imam. This is because God will solve the problem of his reappearance overnightly.¹

The Reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi

The Imam's reappearance will have certain stages and characteristics. They are, according to the relevant sources, as follows:

1. Ibid., p. 144



1. A celestial herald will announce the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi; everybody will hear it.
2. The Imam will set out his worldwide revolution from beside the House of God, at the Grand Mosque in Mecca.
3. There in Mecca, his 313 companions, all his best adherents, will join him by the Kaaba, the House of God; they will swear allegiance to him therein.
4. Jesus Christ will come down from the heavens to stand behind him in saying prayer.
5. He and his associates will move toward Iraq at his command.
6. The Sufyani army will fall to down in the earth at a place called Beida; the victorious army of Islam will take over the world.
7. The Imam will settle at Kufa, Iraq; he will make his capital there.

The Post-Reappearance Period

The picture of the golden and glorious days, following the Imam's reappearance, are variously sketched in the body of the relevant hadiths related from the Infallible Imams. Those days

will be characterised by the following:

1. Worldwide Dominance of Islam: Imam al-Sadiq says: “When our Riser comes up, there will be no territory except that the voice of giving testimony to the Only God and His Prophet are heard therein.”¹

2. Perfect Practice of Divine Rules: In explication of verse no. 17 of the sura al-Hadid (Iron), Imam Musa al-Kazim makes such a statement: “That God will enlive the earth after its death does not mean that He will enlive it by rain, rather God will motivate some men who will enlive the earth by practicing justice and the divine rules.”²

3. Refreshing the Quranic Knowledge: On the case of achievements of the Imam al-Mahdi’s revolution, Imam Ali says: “When people would interpret the Quran according to their wishes and desires, he will direct them toward and at the service of the Quran. He will then show you how the Book and the Tradition sank into oblivion,

1. Bihar, vol. 52, p. 340.

2. Mikyal al-Makārim, vol. 1, p. 81. 54.



and he will cause enlive their concepts enlive.”¹

4. Demolishing Cruelty and Practicing Justice: The Prophet says: “Al-Mahdi is my descendant. He shall have occultation, when he reappears, he will fill the earth with justice, just as it was previously filled with cruelty.”²

5. Reshaping Islam: Imam Muhammad al-Baqir says: “He shall do the same as what the Prophet did. He shall demolish previous wrong models, just as the Prophet demolished those of the period of Ignorance. He will reshape Islam.”³

6. Dissemination of Knowledge Among People: Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq says: “Knowledge consists of twenty seven words. All the knowledge brought out by the Prophets make up only two of them. When our Riser stands out, he will disseminate the other twenty-five words among people.”⁴

1. Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib, Nahj al-Baligha, Khutbah No. 134.

2. Yanābi, p. 448.

3. Mikyal. vol. 1, p, 57.

4. Bihar, vol. 52, p. 336.

7. Intellectual Growth: Imam Muhammad al-Baqir says: “When our Riser arises, God shall favour His people, organize and perfect their minds.”¹

8. Security and Comfort: It is narrated from the Book of the Prophet Enoch that at that time “The earth will be granted with security. There would be no anxiety for doing harm to one another, nor any fear from other people.”²

In the same way. Imam Ali also remarks that: “At that time, a woman shall peacefully travel from Iraq to Syria even on foot, while nothing and nobody will make her scared.”³

9. Unity, Intimacy and Love Among People: Imam All says: “When our Riser stands out, hostility shall go off.”⁴

10. Purification of the Earth from Committing Sin Thereon: Concerning the general manner of

1. Muntakhab, p. 483.

2. Bihar, vol. 52, p. 384.

3. Mikyal. vol. 1, p, 101.

4. Ibid.

people after the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq says: "People will not disobey the commands of God then."¹

The Last Word

Gaining cognizance of the Imam of the Age is such that it brings about responsibility. Seeking refuge in the love of the al-Bayt, considering piety, avoiding opposing the Imam, struggling for making the ground for his reappearance, standing firm in the path of loving him, praying constantly for his reappearance and trying for crystallization of his aims and objectives are among the duties that no Shiite Muslim will hesitate to carry out. Hence, it is improbable for a person to have knowledge of the Imam, and yet remain indifferent toward his aims and objectives.

1. Muntakhab, p. 91.

Bibliography

Abbreviations

AH Anno Hejira (Lunar)

AHS Anno Hejira (Solar)

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Knowledge of the Imam of the Age station and personality is a firm ground for getting rid of ignorance and obscurity and reaching light and guidance.

This is clearly expressed in a supplication as follows: "O God! Make that proof (hujja) known to me, for if thou do not do so, I would go astray in my faith".

We must gain knowledge of the Imam of the Age (peace be upon him), become familiar with his ideas and ideals, and be ready to assist him, for he is the only living Imam, always present and constantly aware of mankind.



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