

## WHY OCCULTATION ?

The Almighty Allah has bestowed the human beings with a superiority and has kept the rest of the creation under him. He says, 'I have created man with the best parts. Whether it is the earth or atmosphere, sea or the mountain, forest or the desert, man not only has superiority upon all these but they are subservient to his commands and power. But Allah has also said that when I turned around this man, I found him to be the worst of the creation.

To show the superiority and specialty of man he has been given the freedom of will and with it, complete guidance. In this way the path for him was laid out that he may not misuse his freedom and be led astray by the instigation of the Satan. By giving him intellect and reasoning he was made capable of discerning the good and the bad. And the chain of 1,24,000 Prophets was initiated so that they may show man a way of life to remain away from the evils so that he may remain safe from his enemies and be forewarned of their designs. And that the worldly fallacies do not hinder the progress of his spiritual self. Among those prophets some possessed medium age and some were given a long life. Some were recalled (died) at a young age.

There are even some who were first made apparent to the people then the curtain of occultation was put upon them. There were some prophets who were apparent for some few selected righteous people but were hidden from the common masses like Hazrat Khizr (AS.), Hazrat Idris (AS.) etc. Allah is the Ultimate Power. He is the Knower of the Unseen worlds. He Himself is aware of the calls of His justice. He is the one who made man His lowly creation aware of His Lordship and made him submit to His mastership and described him with His Own qualities. When the chain of the Prophets came to an end by the coming of the seal of the Prophets, the greatest among the messengers, Mohammad al Mustafa (S.A.W.) then His morals, His commandments and His book were protected by his successors.

The chain of successors shall remain till the end of the world. This is guaranteed by Allah Himself. Since the vicegerent is appointed by Allah therefore the divine in the persons who were to hold the post of Imamah. History is a witness that while some Prophets were given a long life, others lived for a shorter duration. There were some who were apparent and some hidden from the eyes of the people, and still are concealed today. If the number of hidden Prophets from the 1,24,000 Prophets is few then the number of hidden Imams is also very less. Out of the twelve Imams, Eleven were openly carrying out their duties of protecting the commandments of Allah. Only one of the Imams has been concealed. The Holy Prophet (SAW.) has prophesied that eleven of the twelve Imams will protect religion in their own time amidst turbulent environs and murderous surroundings. And by the quality of their personality they constructed the minarets of light which will illuminate

the truth in the dark periods of history till the end of the world. Even among the Imams the different spans of life and duration of Imamatus is to be found. Just like it was in the case of Prophets. The age of Imam Hasan al Askari (A.S.) was only 28 years. His period of Imamatus was for six years from 254 A.H. to 260 A.H. After him the Imamatus of his exalted son began who was born in 255 A.H. And he is the last Imam.

His age was only five years then. And his long life is known only to Allah. When he will reappear he will fill the earth with justice and equity like it had been filled with injustice and oppression. Although even today he is the supreme ruler and we all live in the limits of his domain. The gates of these apparent and concealed rule are ghaibat (occultation) and Zuhoor (reappearance).

One thing is astonishing here, that the intellectuals are washed away in the torrents of thoughts. The human voice in them speaks out. Each and every person of this group knows that faultless people are being oppressed. They are dealt with cruelty. They are helpless and their pain and restlessness is apparent. Their plundered homes, the burning embers of hunger in their bellies, the whiteness spread on their eyes. The wretched children clinging to their mothers. Empty bowls in their hands, searching for their destination, where there is justice, there is equity. Where their talents are nurtured, where their voices are heard by someone, where there is a cool shade of peace.

From the cracks of the walls of all religions emerge these calls. And the progress of the caravan of the human beings continues towards its destination. The pathways of which are manifest, but the end of the journey not in sight. If this had not been the case then these efforts and these preparations all would have subsided. And no hope would have remained (the spirit of hope is one reason of occultation). It is a strange logic indeed. The three factors which are hidden are believed in viz. ·

*The human species especially the support of the oppressed ·*

*The hope of the ultimate destination. ·*

*The image of the liberator.*

But on reaching this point the belief is shaken down, where the question of the liberator arises. The so-called intellectuals insist that such a personality does not exist at all. It is only in Islam that this religion gives all the details of such a personality and also indicates the time and spatial dimensions of his existence. And he is recognised in a way like the sun is seen behind the clouds. The Muslim scholars in general and the Shia scholars in, particular have researched into the authenticity of this fact, from the historical as well as the traditional point of view and then believed in it.

And this belief is based on such a firm foundation that no one can forgo it. The fact is that the light of his holy self (Hazrat Mahdi) filters through the curtain of the divinely ordained occultation, illuminates the creation and imparts life to it. Here one question acquires paramount importance and is also raised with great prejudice and that is, who is the representative of Allah and the saviour of the downtrodden and oppressed people ? If he exists then why is he not seen by everyone,

why is he in occultation, why is the occultation so prolonged that it seems impossible, what are the reasons of all these?

First of all, we have already stated in the introduction that whatever was made necessary for the Prophets (AS.) the same things are also for the successors of the Prophets. History is replete with examples where the moment a Prophet raised his voice for propagation, all the unbelievers took up cudgels with him and conspiring with the tyrant rulers tried all means to put hurdles in his way. But the Prophets never gave up their mission. They kept on striving. They never wavered in their steps nor were they haunted by any doubts. Their firmness of purpose never decreased. There is no instance in history where these Prophets have been subdued by the power of the rulers or the opposition of the people. However if the adversities intensified, the Prophet either prayed for divine punishment, or bore the difficulties patiently till death, or were hidden from their people by Allah.

The event of Hazrat Musa (A.S.) leaving Egypt has been recorded in the Quran. Hazrat Isa (A.S.) was raised to the fourth sky. Hazrat Khizr and Hazrat Ilyas (A.S.) are present in this world itself but are not seen by everyone since ages.

If we study the history of Imam Mahdi (A.T.F.S.) and the background of his occultation, we shall find that its historical causes were the same as that of the various Prophets.

Samarra became the seat of power for Bani Abbas in 220 A.H. In 234 A.H. the Abbaside Caliph Mutawakkil sent Yahya bin Harsma to summon Imam Ali Naqi (AS.) to Samarra. Imam Hasan Askari (AS.) was also with him [(Imam Ali Naqi A.S.)]. He was only two years old. In 247 A.H. Mutawakkil was murdered while intoxicated. During these fourteen years, Imam Hasan Askari (AS.) faced great difficulties along with his father. There were restrictions on visiting the tomb of Imam Husain (A.S.). The signs of the grave were obliterated. Imam Hasan Askari and Imam Ali Naqi (A.S.) were in house arrest and were heavily guarded. Sometimes, Mutawakkil imprisoned them and at other times summoned them to his court. Sometimes he called them while he sat enjoying wine in their presence. And on their refusal to accept his offer of the intoxicants he cried in ecstasy.

Spies surrounded them. After the murder of Mutawakkil, Muntasir and later Mustaeen became the Caliphs. Mustaeen shifted the seat of his government to Baghdad. Later, he entered into allegiance with Motazbillah and Samarra again became the centre of Caliphate. A reign of terror was unleashed in the town of Basra. There were revolts in Khurasan and Ahwaz which were immediately suppressed. No hilace was safe for the common people. Imam Hadi (AS.) was martyred in the year 254 A.H. The duration of the Imamate of Imam Hasan Askari (AS.) was from 254 A.H. to 260 A.H. Walie-Asr and the Promised Mahdi was born in the year 255. All His age was only 5 years when Imam Hasan Al Askari (AS.) left this world.

Imam Hasan Al-Askari (A.S.) was poisoned at the order of Motamid in 260 A.H. and his duration of Imamate came to an end after six years. During this time the activities of the spies had intensified to such an extent that midwives used to enter the Imams house forcibly and

examine if any of his wives were pregnant. But like Allah had concealed Hazrat Musa (AS.) in the womb of his mother, Janabe Narjis showed no outward signs of pregnancy.

The spies were spread from the residence of the Imam upto the prison. Once Imam Hasan Askari (AS.) was in the prison of Saleh bin Vaseef (a Turk). Imprisoned in this place from before were some of his trusted companions Abu Hashim Jafri, Dawood bin Qasim, Hasan bin Mohammad Aqiqi and Mohammad bin Ibrahim Amri. A person by the name of Jami was also there. Imam warned his companions to beware of this man because he was a spy. On inquiry it was found that he kept a record of the daily happenings there. Thus spies were there in every disguise. Hazrat Askari (AS.) fell ill on the 1st of Rabiul Awwal. During these eight days the Caliph had posted a battalion of guards who kept strict surveillance on the visitors. Why did the Abbaside Caliph behave in such a manner towards the son of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.)? A tradition from the Holy Prophet (SAW.) says that whatever has happened in the Ummat of Musa (AS.) will occur in My Ummat. Like Firon knew that Hazrat Musa (AS.) will rise to put an end to his claim of divinity, in the same way the Caliph was time and again reminded by the narrators of hadith that the 12th successor of the Holy Prophet (SAW.) is to come and purify this earth from all injustice and oppression.

The prophecy of Holy Prophet (SAW.) has to materialise one day. The caliphs felt the imminent danger to themselves and took all the possible precautions.

When such a terror was spread everywhere the birth of Imam Mahdi (AS.) occurred in 255 A.H. [Like the concealed birth of Hazrat Musa (ASH). One of the divine duties of Imam Hasan Askari (AS.) was the protection of Hazrat Hujjat (A.T.F.S.) from the enemies. At the same time he had to inform his trusted followers that the Promised Mahdi has been born so that they could follow him in future even though he would remain concealed from them.

The conditions which had prevailed at the occultation of the Prophets were also present here. The reign of terror among the people, the strict surveillance of the ruler, the net of spies, discord in every area, the rising of the Imam at the centre of Caliphate, the movement of the armies, the oppressions upon the lovers of the household of the Holy Prophet (SAW.), The guards upon the residence of Imam (AS.). Like in the case of Prophet Musa (AS.) the divine command arrived for Hazrat Hujjat to go into occultation in order to protect his life.

### Occultation a divine plan

If we study the aspects of the occultation and reflect upon it, we can easily understand it as a divine plan. After this the reappearance of the Imam shall be the last part of this divine plan. It is mentioned in a tradition

There is no miracle of the Prophet which Allah will not manifest through Our Oaem so that the proof will be complete for the enemies and they have no avenue for excuses. **(Muntakhabul Athar, page 313)**

As time progressed and the numerous human schools of thoughts came into existence, the nefarious plans of the unjust authorities also evolved. After the Holy Prophet (SAW.), a time came when during the occultation, different types of conspiracies were hatched. Different types of wrong beliefs led astray the gullible public away from the right path. Instead of the true guides there was now an excess of the false ones-the Kaisaniyas, the Kazemiya, Ismailiya, Wahabism, Bahaism and Oadianism the list of the false movements seems endless. After suppressing the constructive missions the unjust and tyrannical instances began to fill the pages of history. Even after 12 centuries, all these are still rampant.

In the end the saviour will arrive to put an end to all this. The rule of Allah will stretch from the east to the west. No one would be qualified to oppose him and neither would anyone have any complaints.

### Divine promise

The divine promise throws light upon the reasons of the occultation which is an inseparable part of the plan. There is always an interval of time between a promise and its fulfillment. These are a few examples of the divine promises in the miraculous book (the Quran): ·

#### ***In Surah Nur Verse: 55***

**Allah has promised to those of you who believe and do good that He will most certainly make them rulers in the earth... ·**

#### ***In Surah Ambiya Verse:105***

**And certainly We wrote in the book after the reminder that (as for) the land, My righteous servants shall inherit it. ·**

#### ***In Surah Aale Imran Verse: 200***

**O those who believe remain steadfast, have patience, maintain cooperation and fear Allah. Perhaps you be successful. ·**

### **When the earth dies Allah again rejeunates it by His power.**

From the aforementioned verses, we conclude that Allah will make His representative and successor inherit the earth and bestow upon him a just and equitable Kingdom. He will revive the earth after its death and in the rule of this government there would be no difference between the strong and the weak. And those who have power will not be able to exploit the downtrodden people.

The promise of Allah is true. It would be surely fulfilled. But the various factors of the reappearance are being accomplished, which are going to be instrumental in the establishment of the divine government. Allah has bestowed a prolonged occultation to His Last Proof (Hujjat) so that the belief of the believers could be put to a test and all the opponents can try all their designs.

It is a naked truth that the floods of injustice and oppression is increasingly engulfing the whole world. But the seas of injustice and

oppression has not yet developed the power enough to break the boundaries and surround the earth. Or we can say that the caravans of utter darkness, along with their blackness, have yet to descend upon the earth. And only when the wrongdoers would have completed their oppressions to the utmost, that the secret aim of occultation would be revealed.

What would have happened if there had been no occultation ? The reply is simple. Hazrat Wali Asr (A.S.) would have become manifest and just like the previous Imams he also would have been martyred. The light of Allah was in the form of human creation and the evil ones were on its look-out. The result would have been that even the last proof of the Prophets and the Imams would not have remained on the earth. The result would have been either of the two. One, the earth would have perished. Or, the future generations would have complained that the argument of Allah has not been completed. Hence, the Almighty Allah has kept His proof in occultation so that on one hand the continuity of the world is maintained and on the other hand all the corrupt and evil people have an open field so that there is no scope for the complaint that the proof of Allah is not complete. At the time of the reappearance they will not have any arguments. And the propriety of divine justice shall be maintained.

Another reason for occultation as stated in the traditions of AhleBayt is if Imam-e-Zamaan (A.T.F.S.) had been manifested, then he would have had to live under pressure of some unjust ruler like his predecessors. The agents of the ruler would keep him constantly under surveillance. The open enforcement of the shariat was almost impossible. Thus Allah has appointed such a time for his reappearance where there does not remain any power to obstruct the Imam in his mission. He would have collected the necessary strength to subdue all opposition and every corner of the world would be clear of the evil elements. Imam Jafar Sadiq (A.S.) Says in one of his utterances:

***The master of this divine government has a concealed birth so that when he is to reappear he will not have any pressure from any oppressor. (Muntakhabul Athar, page 288)***

As far as the necessary preparations of this government are concerned Allah will create the favourable conditions overnight. For it is actually the government of Allah. Hazrat Mahdi (A.T.F.S.) Is only the representative of Allah in this regard.

One of the reasons that is evident from the traditions of AbleBayt is that the occultation is to be prolonged till all the practices of the prophets and their methods are accomplished in Hazrat Mahdi (A.T.F.S.). Sudair asked Imam Sadiq (A.S.) 'O son of the Prophet why it is like that (the occultation is prolonged) ?' Imam replied, ***"Allah will not order the reappearance till all the practices of the Prophets, which the prophets had during their occultations are not acted upon fully. O Sudair it is obligatory for him (Qaem) to fulfill all these things.***

Allah says:

***That you shall most certainly enter one state after another. (Inshiqaq: 19). (Behaarul Anwaar vol.52 page 90)***

That means all those practices were before you when will all this be accomplished is known to none except Allah. That is why to predict the time of reappearance is prohibited.

Some other reasons of the occultation are deduced from the traditions of AbleBayt. But to go into the details and the depths of these and to say anything for sure would be nothing but to deceive ourselves. The actual causes of the occultation and the wisdom behind it is known only to the Creator and those divine personalities who have been bestowed with divine knowledge. The infallibles (A.S.) have been ordered not to explain these divine secrets.

This could be explained by the example of the incident of Hazrat Musa and Hazrat Khizr (A 5) When H Khizr made the hole in the boat, killed the boy and repaired the wall he did not inform of his main intention behind his actions, till it was time for Musa to separate from him. At the time of departing he told H. Musa the actual reasons. This concept could be explained in the light of the tradition related from Imam Sadiq (A.S.) by Al-Fazl Hashmi which is as follows:

***'The occultation of the master of this affair is a must, during which the sinful people will be involved in doubts.'***

*I asked Imam, "May my life be sacrificed for you, why is it?"*

***He said: "Even we have not been permitted the exposition of this affair." I inquired, "What is the wisdom behind the occultation ?" He said, "The wisdom behind this occultation is the same that was for the occultation of the previous prophets. The actual reason will be revealed only after the reappearance. Like Hazrat Khizr did not explain the reason for making a hole in the boat and killing the boy and repairing the wall till it was time for Musa (AS.) and him to separate***

***O Son of Fazl, this affair is one of the affairs of Allah. And its secret reason is one of the secrets the knowledge of which is exclusive to Allah only. When we have expressed the belief in the wisdom of Allah we have to agree that whatever he says or does is also having wisdom. Even though the actual reasons and the cause may not be evident upon us." (Behaarui Anwaar vol.52 page 91)***

As far as the obvious reasons of occultation as given in the traditions are concerned one is that during the occultation the belief in Imam (AS.) and his obedience is put to test. In a lengthy tradition Imam Jafar as Sadiq (AS.) tells about the signs of reappearance and concludes thus:

And these signs will appear after a long occultation so that Allah could test as to who believes in him and obeys him during it (the Ghaibat).  
**(Muntakhabul Athar Chap.35hadith:1)**

Another reason of occultation is also our bad deeds and the atmosphere of irreligiousness. Our society is satisfied upon the prevailing un-Islamic conditions and considers them to be truly Islamic. Then where is the scope for any prophet or Imam in such a society. It would not be

inappropriate to compare this with the situation of Kufa. Ali (AS.) was calling the people to Jihad against Moawiya and the people were exhibiting their cowardice by making excuses of the summer and winter seasons and looking for a favourable season. The result of this was that the Master of the most pious had to accept the cup of Martyrdom. The same is the condition of our society which, Imam Baqir (A.S.) states in his tradition. Marwan Anbari says that a letter from Imam Baqir (AS.) arrived where Imam had written:

***"When Allah disliked the company of the people for us he removed us away from them."*** (Behaarul An waar vol.52 page 90).

Finally, it is to be mentioned that Imam-e-Zaman himself does not like, that the people should insist upon knowing the reasons for occultation because it is one of the divine secrets. According to Imam-e-Zaman (A.T.F.S.).

Allah the High and Mighty does not wish that we question about the (causes of) Ghaibat because it would be detrimental for us. If we know of the reason we would be aggrieved. One tradition in this connection is presented thus: Imam Mahdi (A.T.F.S.)

In a 'tawqee (epistle) through his second special deputy, Mohammad bin Usman says: "As far as the cause of occultation is concerned Allah, the Almighty says,

**0 you who believe! do not put questions about things which if declared to you may trouble you...** (Behaarul Anwaar vol.52 page 92)

It is clear from the above tradition that we should not indulge conjectures about the causes of occultation. However, we should accept as truth all that is informed to us by the infallible Imams and we should be satisfied with it. Only Allah is aware of the divine affairs. Hence we should consider this occultation as a bounty and a respite which is given to us, so that we can perform good deeds and correct our mistakes. Then, when the reappearance of Imam is ordered by Allah our love for the Imam would benefit us. If the reappearance occurs during our lifetime we would then be given the honour to be among the helpers of Imam (A.T.F.S.) in his mission against the enemies of Islam. We could accompany the Imam (A.S.) when he avenges the death of the martyrs of Karbala, for whom we mourn and shed tears, year after year.

Let us then resolve that we shall pray night and day for the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (A.S.). We shall do everything which takes us nearer to the Imam (A.S.). And avoid all such acts which would take us away from our Master Imam Mahdi (AS.). So if we ponder upon this we would realise that there is no one who cares for us except this benevolent Imam. We should not dissatisfy him with our deeds. Because if our Imam (AS.) turns away from us (disregards us) then we shall have no shelter.