

Mahdi (a.s) The Twelfth Imam:

Some persons and things bear common characteristics which make them a part of one common category. Similarly some persons and things possess such exceptional attributes and qualities which give them an edge of peculiarity. It is only because of such peculiar and distinct characteristics that they are known and recognized. These peculiar characteristics form part of the philosophy among the philosophies of the world of creation which is the foundation of the permanence of the universal order.

1) The Popular Commonality:

It is a characteristic which is common in different people which means that they are found in every one. These characteristics are found in a majority of people at a time. For example there are so many Muslims in the world. Similarly walking, talking and laughing are common traits found in all and sundry. So many similar examples can be quoted of 'the popular commonality'.

2) The Distinct Peculiarity:

These are such characteristics which make a distinct difference between men or things. These distinguish one man or thing from another.

It is but evident that one man may possess innumerable peculiarities though to remember all of them may be quite an uphill task. Well it is possible that some distinct attributes may be remembered and with help of a standard criterion that person may be recognized and distinguished. For instance if a person's physical appearance is to be described, then his face, features, countenance, complexion, mane, eyebrows and stature will be described at length. If person's lineage or pedigree is to be explained, then her mother, grandfather, grandmother and grand parents are mentioned. Similarly, if a person's deeds or achievements are to be discussed, then his reformatory steps, wars and skirmishes, covenants and contracts, efforts and endeavors, historical incidents, manners and dealings are mentioned.

When his knowledgeable abilities are discussed, then his thinking, ideology, faith is mentioned. When his demeanors are discussed, then his character, man-nerisms, bravery, generosity, fortitude, self-control, humility, patience, justice and such other attributes are described and if the person concerned is had characterized then antonyms of all the above mentioned adjectives are ascribed to him. The more these attributes are explained, the better the persons would be recognized.

If a person intends to travel but neither decides his destination nor arranges his travel-kit properly then certainly he will not reach any where or even if he does manage to reach somewhere, then it will

certainly not he his desired destination. Indeed if the very same person decides his destination or arranges a proper travel-kit, then no doubt his journey will start and end well and finally he will reach his desired destination.

Similarly if a person **wants** to attain salvation, then he must select a savior who will salvage him from deviation and lead him to salvation.

Now the question arises who this saviour should be? How he should be? How to recognize him ? etc.

The answers to all such questions are furnished by Quran and Prophetic traditions in (in form of principles and guidelines which can help in the search of a saviour and thus achieve success and salvation in this world and the hereafter.

One of the easiest instructions is to find one guide and tread on the path shown by him while the responsibilities of deeds will be on his shoulders so that the person may attain enviable heights in both (the worlds. The Holy Prophet (S.A.) said :

"The one who desires to live and die like me and enter in the paradise which Allah has promised to me and is known as 'Khuld', then after me he should love All and his progeny who will come after him. Befriend them (Peace be upon them all) because neither they will allow you to forsake the path of salvation nor will they let you be on the path of misguidance."

(Quoted from the reference of 'Al-Muraje'at' viz Kitabul Kanz, Pg. 155, Tradition No. 2578)

"Obey Allah, obey the Apostle and those who are vested with authority."

(Nisa:59) [For the details and 'tafsir' of this verse refer

The Holy Quran has guided towards salvation by **exhorting** to obey Allah and **His Apostle** and those who are vested with authority. Allah and His Apostle are recognized but the problem arises in the recognition of 'Ulil Amr'. The Holy Prophet (S.A.) had solved even this problem by informing us of those signs through which 'Ulil Amr' can be identified. One of those signs is that they will be twelve in number. Some traditions and references are quoted in this regard as follows :

The Twelve Successors of the Holy Prophet (S.A.)

Jabir bin Samirah relates that once I visited the

Holy Prophet (S.A.) along with my father. I heard the Holy Prophet (S.A.) saying,

"This religion will not be completed unless twelve caliphs do not come to pass." Then he said something in a subdued tone, which I could not hear. I inquired from my father as to what did the Holy Prophet (S.A.) say. He replied:

"Islam will remain dominant until the reign of the twelve caliphs." In another narration, the words quoted are "The religion will remain powerful, dominant and protected until the era of the twelve caliphs," or according to yet another version, "The religion will remain established upto Qiyamat unless twelve caliphs will rule upon you while all of them will be from Quraish." The above mentioned tradition can be seen in

the following books of Sunni scholars :

1- 'Sahih Muslim' published from 'Darul Fur qan, Jame Masjid, Delhi, Vol. 2, Pg. 65.

2- 'Sahih Muslim' published from 'Darul Furqan', Egypt, 1348 A.H. Vol. 2, Pg. 191.

3-Sunane-Ahi Daud published from 'Darul-Ehya As-Sunnat-An-Nabaviyah, Part four 'The Book of Mahdi, Tradition No. 4289, 4280.

4- Al-Mojam-Al-Kahir of 'Allamah Tabarani', Pg.108. The noticeable point is that Sahih Muslim and Sunane-Abi Daud are enumerated amongst 'Sehah-Sitta', the six most authentic books of traditions as per the Sunni belief. The scholars of Ahle-Sunnat rank these books as the basic and original source of Islam after the Holy Quran. The remaining four Sahih books are 1) Sahihe-Bukhari 2) Sahihe-Tir-mizi 3) Sunane-Ibne Majah 4) Sunane-Nisai.

The Prophecies of the Holy Prophet (S.A.)

The Holy Prophet (S.A.) said :

"This religion will remain ever perfect and prestigious. After me there will be twelve successors. All of them will be from Quraish and will over-come their enemies".

(Tarikhul- Khulafa by Hatiz Suyuti, expired in 911 A.H.)

He was well known amongst Sunnis and Shias. One of his famous books is Tafsire-Durrul-Mansur'. Soon after quoting this tradition, he has added a remark; **"This tradition is quoted by Muslim and Bukhari and also by others".**

(Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 9, Pg. 81) the Holy Prophet (S.A.) said : "There will be twelve Emirs after me ."

Who is Mahdi?

After clarifying that there will be twelve suc-cessors after the Holy Prophet (S.A.), it remains to be clarified as to who is Mahdi, and which successor of the Holy Prophet (S.A.) he is first, second, third, fourth --- or twelfth ? The Holy Prophet (S.A.) had clarified even this point.

Abdullah bin Abbas related from the Holy Prophet (S.A.) that:

"I am the chief of the Messengers and AH bin Abi Talib is the chief of successors. Certainly after me, there will be twelve successors. The first of them being All and last of them will be Al-Qaem".

(Faraaedus-Simtain by Shaikhul Islam Al-MuhadithAl-Kabir Ibrahim bin Mohammad bin Al-Moayyad Al-Hammui (exp.

In the same reference the Holy Prophet (S.A.) is reported to have said :

"There will be twelve Caliphs and successors after

me. Verily the proofs of Allah on the creatures are twelve. Of them first will be my brother and last of them will be my son." They asked, 'Which of your brothers and which son?' He replied : "My brother Ali bin Abi Talib. My son Mahdi, the one who will fill justice and equity in this world as it would be fraught with injustice and oppression."

The Conclusion:

The Holy Prophet (S.A.) will have twelve successors. The proofs of Allah will be twelve. The twelfth successor will be the last and he will be the Mahdi. The divine religion will remain upto his reappearance as the Holy Prophet (S.A.) said :

"This religion (Islam) will never decline until there will be twelve successors of mine.

"[Sunane Abi Daud, Part four, Kitabul Mahdi, Pg. 40,also Pg. 150, printed at Egypt] The characteristic of Mahdi being the twelfth successor. Such traditions can be found in abundance in Shia books of traditions. Lutfullah Safi Gulpaigani has compiled hundreds of traditions on such topics in his book 'Muntakhabul-Asar'. The topics under which traditions are collected are as follows :

The twelfth Imam will be the ninth descendant of Imam Husain, the fourth descendant of Imam Reza (A.S.), the third descendant of Imam Moham-mad Taqi (A.S.), the grandson of Imam Ali Naqi (A.S.), the son of Imam Hasan Askari (A.S.), etc.

A Ponderable Point

When it is proved that the caliphs or Imams will be twelve, then the verdict on the veracity of the system of Caliphate can be rendered. Hence, that series of Caliphate which is beyond Quraish like the caliphs of Turkey or which is within Quraish but its number is more or less than twelve, then definitely it is not a Divinely established system of Caliphate. For, it is dead impossible that Allah may have informed the Holy Prophet (S.A.) wrongly about the number of caliphs. Even this is not evidently possible that the Holy Prophet (S.A.) had predicted such a thing without Divine revelation. Here is the point-"When neither God can commit a mistake nor can the Holy Prophet (S.A.) falter, then what could be the reason behind the differences in the number of caliphs as suggested by the Holy Prophet (S.A.) ? Precisely speaking how could there be only four truly-guided caliphs while the Holy Prophet (S.A.) had predicted twelve?

Ofcourse even this point has to be admitted that the system of caliphate which originated after the Holy Prophet (S.A.) as a result of Ijma (consensus), Istekhlaf (appointment), Shura (selection committee) and Qahr-o-Ghalba (coercion) and which by no means was confined by the figure of twelve was not a system approved or approbated by Allah or the Holy Prophet (S.A.)