

IBN KHALDUN VIS-A-VIS TRADITIONS ABOUT IMAM MAHDI (A.S.)

Personality and prominence often establish or nullify an idea in the minds of the people. Their opinion, often, is of prime importance in understanding a concept. Their opinion creates an impact as compared to that of a common individual. Ibne Khaldun is an eminent scholar of reputation in the Islamic world. His views rule the hearts of a section of Muslims, thus making him popular with titles like 'Allama'. Ibne Khaldun's views have not left the present day scholars unaffected. And so we delve to study his consideration towards the traditions concerning Imam Mahdi (as). Some scholars have subscribed to his viewpoint and consequently the common masses have been affected with it. Here, before bringing the traditions collected by Ibne Khaldun regarding Imam Mahdi (as) and his standpoint with regards to them, we present the Muqaddamah where he has mentioned those traditions.

Muqaddamah of Ibne Khaldun

Ibne Khaldun has authored a six-volumed book of history entitled "**Kitabul Abar wa Deevanal Muftada wal Khabar fi Ayyamal Arabe wal Ajam wal Barbar**". This book of Ibne Khaldun did not become as popular as the Muqaddamah written on it. The popularity of Ibne Khaldun is more associated with this book. This Muqaddamah is also very popular in Europe, as well. The original Arabic book has been translated into many languages; the English and Urdu translations are easily obtainable in India. Moreover, in some universities this Muqaddamah is a part of the final examination of the Arabic course (Faazil).

It can be said that this Muqaddamah is the seventh part of Ibne Khaldun's book of history. The book was written in a short period of eight to nine months, detailing the principles of history and varied other aspects. It is the collection of all logical and narrative (from traditions) sciences. With all this is also an independent analysis by Ibne Khaldun. Some people consider the history book of Ibne Khaldun to be the body and the Muqaddamah, the spirit. As, it is this Muqaddamah which has brought him the actual fame.

We have taken this very Muqaddamah to be our subject and review the analysis of Ibne Khaldun. For this treatise we have referred to the Urdu translation of the Muqaddamah by **Maulana Raaghib Rehmani Dehlavi** and published by Aeteqaad Publishing House, Delhi. It is in 2 volumes. The 52nd part of the second volume is concerning Imam Mahdi (as) and comprises of 18 topics.

Traditions about Imam Mahdi (a.s.)

Ibne Khaldun has quoted twenty one traditions from the companions, and brings them on pages 158 to 173 in the second volume. The narrators include Hazrat Ali (a.s.), Jabir (a.r.), Ibne Masud, Umme Salma, Abu Saeed-e-Khudri, Abdullah ibne Masud, Mohammed ibne Haatayah, Ibne Abbas, Thaubaan, Abdullah ibne Harith ibne Harr, Abu

Hurairah, Qurah ibne Ayaas, Ibne Umar, Talha ibne Abdullah, Mujahid, Umme Habibah, amongst others. The narrations are from disparate chains of narrators. Ibne Khaldun himself acknowledges that Tirmizi, Abu Dawood, Baraaz, Ibne Majah, Hakim, Tabrani and Abu Yaala Masuli have brought these traditions in their books. And then he writes, "The rejectors of Mahdi doubt the chain of narrators of these traditions, as we shall see. It is an acclaimed rule that "doubt precedes justification". On that account if a narrator is doubted - for instance if he is negligent, or he has a poor memory, or if some weakness is found in him, or his opinion is not good then this will affect the correctness of the tradition. The tradition will now no longer fit the criteria of authenticity. (Muqaddamah, 2/158)

Reminder

From the above it becomes clear that the respected Allamah rejects all traditions wherein the narrator is doubted (Muqaddamah, 2/158) directed by the principle 'doubt precedes justification'.

The doubted traditions

Ibne Khaldun brings twenty one traditions regarding Imam Mahdi (as) after the above explanation, and casts doubt on the narrators and chains of each one of them with these words, 'Because the scholars of traditions have doubted these traditions (concerning Imam Mahdi (as)). Suhaili Abu Bakr Khaithamah has collected all the traditions about Mahdi (as). We present them here.' (Of the twenty one traditions we consider only two of them).

Tradition One :

Jabir (ar) says: "The Messenger of Allah, blessings and peace be upon him (and his progeny) said, The denier of Mahdi is an infidel; and the rejector of Dajjal, a liar; and about the denier of the sun rising from the West, I think he said something similar." The narrators of this tradition are Malik ibne Anas from Mohammed ibne Munkadar from Jabir. This series is mentioned by **Abu Bakr Asqaaf** in his **Tavaaedul Akhbaar**'.

Doubt: There is a lot of disorder in the chain of narrators reaching Malik ibne Anas. And even Abu Bakr Asqaaf himself is accused by the Ahle Hadith of fabricating traditions.

Tradition Two :

Ibne Masud narrates from Holy Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him (and his progeny), that even if one day remains for the end of this world, the Almighty will prolong that day such that He will send a person from me or my family, whose name will be my name and his father's name will be my father's name (Tirmizi, Abu Dawood - these are the words of the narrator of Abu Dawood). The chain of narrators is **Aasim ibne Abi Najoor** from the famous reciter **Zareen Habeesh** from **Abdullah ibne Masood**.

Note: Tirmizi and Abu Dawood bring this tradition with their own chain of narrators. Abu Dawood has maintained silence over this tradition. In his famous treatise Abu Dawood writes for whichever tradition I maintain silence, is self-explanatory. (Capable of acceptance as a proof).

Doubt : Imam Ahmad says that he (Aasim) is a pious man, reciter of the Holy Quran, a good and honest person. However, A'amash has a better memory. (Here he is suggesting Aasim has a poor memory). In Ajali's words, opinions about Aasim differ, that is he was considered weak (narrator).

Mohammed ibne Saeed says Aasim was honest, yet he often made

mistakes. Abdur Rehman ibne Abi Khatim says, "I told my father, Aasim is called to be reliable. My father commented, 'He (Asim) is not of that calibre (of being reliable).'" Ibne Haaliyah has discredited him and has stated, Aasim is of weak memory. Abu Hatim remarks, "According to me he is on the level of truthfulness (i.e. he is truthful), and is a good traditionalist (i.e. his traditions are acceptable), but is not a memoriser of traditions. Nesai has another opinion about him. Abu Jafar Aquili avers: Only he had poor memory. Darqutni opines, "His (Asim's) memory was weak". Yahya Al Qataan declares, "I have observed the person (the narrators) called Aasim who has poor memory. I have heard Sheba say, that Asim b. Abi Bakhud narrated a tradition for us, although people did not have a good opinion about him." (**Muqaddamah, 2/159-160**)

Note: After these doubts, Ibne Khaldun makes an attempt to answer an objection, "If someone contends that Bukhari and Muslim too have quoted from Asim, and hence Asim is reliable. The reply is, Bukhari and Muslim have not only brought his traditions, but they have brought them along with other narrators. Thus the actual narrator is someone else and this (quoting by Bukhari and Muslim) is only for further substantiation." (**Muqaddamah 2/160**)

Fearing, doubts will be casted on other narrators of Bukhari and Muslim, Ibne Khaldun writes (in their defence). The scholars without exception adjudge the traditions of Bukhari and Muslim to be correct. This unanimity of the scholars is ie most potent proof and the best evidence for the defence and support of the traditions. (**Muqaddamah, 2/158**)

We make the following conclusions on the writings of Ibne Khaldun and the doubts he raises.

- 1) Those traditions from doubted narrators are not authentic.
- 2) Doubts have been casted on the traditions of Mahdaviyat and consequently they are unacceptable.
- 3) If the narrator on whom doubt is casted is a narrator of Bukhari and Muslim, the validity of the tradition will not be affected, since the scholars are unanimous about the correctness of Bukhari and Muslim.

It should be noted that after bringing twenty one traditions about Imam Mahdi (a.s.) and after discarding them, Ibne Khaldun writes: "These are all the traditions which the scholars bring about Mahdi and his re-appearance at the end of time. You have noticed that all these are doubted, and it is improbable that any has been spared." (**Muqaddamah 2/173**)

By calling these traditions rare Ibne Khaldun has not only misled the Muslims, it has actually deviated some. Now let us make it clear that neither the traditions about Mahdi are rare nor by doubting the narrators the authenticity of the traditions can be shrivelled. Because the truth is:

- (1) The chains of reliable traditions are not in need of scrutiny. Thus by terming the traditions of Mahdaviyat unauthentic by doubting the narrators is against the principles of 'science of traditions'.
- (2) Ibne Khaldun contradicts himself as on the one hand he brings the traditions from twenty one different narrators and on the other hand declares them rare.
- (3) Ibne Khaldun has cited the traditions of Mahdaviyat from a section of

prominent scholars like Tirmizi, Abu Dawood, al Baraaz, Ibne Majah, Tabarani and so on. Does this not establish that the doctrine of Mahdaviyat is a fundamental belief and Muslims are unanimous about it. Is it not for this reason that the recent scholars have quoted them?

(4) The rule, 'doubt precedes justification' is framed by the scholars of traditions, and is not based on Quran and traditions. Besides many of the traditionalists have rejected it. So why has the respected scholar Ibne Khaldun employed only this rule to declare the traditions of Mahdaviyat weak?

(5) It is incorrect to label the tradition as weak on account of a narrator with weak memory or negligence, as the traditions of Mahdaviyat are authentic on the basis of narrative language, concept and all other aspects.

(6) Ibne Khaldun has himself confessed, "It is pronounced and famous amongst the Muslims that during the end of time, a person will appear from the Ahle Bait who will consolidate the religion and spread justice..." This determines the unity of the Muslims on the doctrine of Mahdaviyat, and this itself is the best proof for the support of this belief.

The article can continue with the flow of such arguments. However, we have demonstrated the validity of this doctrine from varied aspects in the previous issues. Therefore, the claim of Ibne Khaldun of calling the traditions of Mahdaviyat weak is baseless.

Furthermore, it should be noted that Ibne Khaldun was not a traditionalist but was a historian. Thus seeking his opinion to determine the authenticity of traditions is unfitting. And a traditionalist is always preferred instead.

The famous scholar of the Ahle Sunnah, **Ahmad ibne Sadeeq Shafeei**, rejecting this opinion of Ibne Khaldun, wrote a book, '**Abraaz al Wahm al Maknoon min Kalaam-e-Ibne Khaldoon**'. This educative book comprising of 150 pages was written in Arabic and printed in Damascus in 1437 A.H. The author very proficiently proves the traditions concerning Mahdi authentic and exposes Ibne Khaldun.

O Almighty ! Protect all Muslims from deviation.