

A Brief Introduction of Imam Mahdi(as)

In the name of Allah

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1.A Short Biography Of Imam Al-Mahdi ('A)

Hazrat Imam Al-Mahdi ('a) is the twelfth and last of the chain of the Purified Imams ('a) and the divine successors. He was born at the time of dawn, on Friday the 15th of Shaban 255 A.H. in the city of Samarra¹.

His respected father is Imam Hasan al-Askari ('a). His beloved mother is Janab al-Nargis Khatoon (ra). She was the descendant of the Caesar of Rome from her father's side and from her mother's side she had descended from shamoon the vicegerant of Hazrat Isa ('a).²

This exalted personality has the same name and kunyah (agnomen) as the Holy Prophet (S). His titles are Al-Mahdi, Hujjat, Qa'im, Muntadhar, Sahibuzzaman and Khalaf al-Saleh. His most famous honourific however is Al-Al-Mahdi ('a).³

Ibn Khallikaan writes; "His well-known title is Hujjat. The Shi'as know him by the titles, Muntadhar, Qa'im and Al-Mahdi"⁴

The great scholar Mohaddith al-Noori has collected 182 titles of Imam Al-Mahdi ('a) from the Islamic texts. Each of these titles signify each of his virtuous qualities.⁵

The tyrant Abbasid rulers were aware of the prophecies of the Holy Prophet (S). That the son of Imam Hasan al-Askari ('a) by the name of Al-Mahdi will appear to remove all kinds of corruption and tyranny; hence they planned to eliminate the child when he is born. Due to this the birth of Imam Al-Mahdi ('a) was kept a secret like that of Hazrat Ibrahim ('a). So much so that except for the most trusted of the Shi'as and his own family, no one knew of the existence of Hazrat ('a). In spite of this whenever there was an opportunity, Imam Hasan al-Askari ('a) showed his son to his trustworthy followers; that in future they may follow him. This was in order that the Shi'as may remain firm upon the right path, and not be led astray. A servant Abu Ghanim says:

"Abu Muhammad ('a) has a son whose name is Muhammad." On the third day of his birth he brought him before his companions and said:

"After me he is your Master of the affair, he is my successor, he is the same 'Qa'im', who is awaited by all. When the earth will be fraught with injustice and oppression then he will reappear and fill the earth with justice and righteousness."⁶

The early years of his life were spent in the usual way. When he was in his fifth year, he lost his respected father.⁷

After this tragic event the responsibility of guiding the Shi'as was transferred upon him. At this time, Hazrat ('a) possessed all the qualities and the divine knowledge that was bestowed upon the previous Imams ('a), by the Almighty. In the same way as Hazrat

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Yahya ('a) in his childhood and Hazrat Isa ('a) in his infancy was favoured with the divine office of Prophethood by Allah.⁸

Although all the Imams ('a) were holding the divine office of wilayat, the efforts of the enemies to eliminate the twelfth Imam ('a) were maximum. Hence Imam az-Zaman ('a) was entrusted to Ghaybah and being away from the sight of people, he had to fulfill all the duties of an Imam.

It is said that the concealed life of Hazrat Al-Mahdi ('a) is not something extraordinary. Rather, in the life of so many Prophets ('a) and even Imams ('a) it is seen, that they were at some time, in concealment from the people. The Holy Qur'an records the concealment of various prophets ('a) like Hazrat Ibrahim ('a)⁹, Hazrat Musa ('a)¹⁰ and Hazrat Isa ('a)¹¹.

The Holy Prophet (S) and the Imams ('a) had pointed out to the people the imminent occultation of their last proof (Imam Al-Mahdi-aj), so that no doubt or misunderstanding should remain, regarding this problem.

The occultation (Ghaybah) of the twelfth Imam consists of two phases: one is Ghaybah al-Sughra (The lesser occultation) and the second is Ghaybah al-Kubra (The greater occultation). Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq ('a) said:

'There are two occultations for Qa'im. One is short and the other prolonged. In the short occultation only the special Shi'as will know of his whereabouts. And in the longer occultation only his trustworthy servants will know where he is"¹²

According to the well-known reports, the lesser occultation (Ghaybah al-sugra) commenced from the year of his Imamate in 260 A.H and continued for 69 years. Some of the scholars like Shaykh Mufeed and Syed Mohsin Amin Amili maintain that Ghaybah al-sugra began right from the time of his birth.¹³

Because, even in those early years, Hazrat ('a) was concealed from the common people. According to this method, the period of Ghaybah al-sugra comes to seventy four years.

During the period of Ghaybah al-sugra. Imam Al-Mahdi ('a) himself appointed his deputies from among the righteous Shi'as. Four of them succeeded each other and continued to fulfill the duty of intermediaries. These four personalities conveyed the questions and problems to Imam ('a) and brought back the Imam's ('a) answers for the people. The first of these deputies was Janab Abu Amroo Uthman Ibn Saeed Amri. Before this he was a representative of Imam Hasan Al-Askari ('a)¹⁴

Shaykh Tusi writes: "On the fortieth day the Shi'as were sitting in the company of Imam Hasan al-Askari ('a), when Imam Askari ('a) wished that they recognise his Hujyat after him..... Suddenly a handsome child was brought before them. He resembled Abu Muhammad ('a).

Then Imam al-Askari ('a) said: "He is your Imam after me. And my successor upon you. Obey him, and do not go astray after me (after my death), otherwise your religion shall be destroyed and you will be annihilated. Know that, after today you shall not see him, even if you spend your whole life for it. Hence, accept what Uthman tells you, obey his

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commands and listen to what he says. Because he is the representative of your Imam and holds the responsibility.¹⁵

After the death of Uthman Ibn Saeed, his pious son, Muhammad Ibn Uthman succeeded his father upon the post of the deputyship of Imam az-Zaman ('a).¹⁶

Shaikh Tusi has recorded the letters sent by Imam Hasan Al-Askari ('a) and Imam Al-Mahdi ('a) to Uthman Ibn Saeed and his son Abu Ja'far Muhammad Ibn Uthman for the Shi'as. These letters consists of commands, prohibitions and replies to the questions of the Shi'as.¹⁷

Muhammad Ibn Uthman passed away from this world at the end of Jamadi-ul-Awwal in the year 304 or 305 A.H.¹⁸

During the time of his illness, as he laid on the sick-bed, the Shi'as and their children came and surrounded him. They asked: "If something happens, whom should we consult instead of you?" He answered, "This Abul Qasim Husayn ibn Ruh Ibn Bahr Nawbakhti is successor. And he is the intermediary between you and the Master affair (Imam Al-Mahdi- aj), and his agent. He is trustworthy and reliable. Consult him, and in case of important matters, rely upon him. I have been ordered to announce this, and I have announced it"¹⁹

Husain Ibn Ruh Nawbakhti was. one of the agents of Muhammad ibn Uthman in Baghdad. He had been working closely with him for a long time. These agents used to be in contact with the people and when ordered they handed over the goods to them²⁰. Husayn ibn Ruh died in Shaban 326 A.H.²¹

The last safir was Abul Hasan Ali Ibn Muhammad Seymoori. He became the deputy of Imam Al-Mahdi ('a) according to the will of Husain ibn Ruh. He died after three years on the 15th of Shaban 329 A.H.²²

The graves (tombs) of these four respected deputies (Nawwab al-Arba', as they are commonly known) are situated in Baghdad.²³

The most sensitive and crucial period of Ghaybah al-sugra was when Ali Ibn Mohammad died. Because till his death the people were in contact with Imam az-Zaman ('a) through him. After his death, it was the commencement of Ghaybah al-Kubra.

Six days before his death, Ali ibn Muhammad Seymoori received a communication from Imam az-Zaman ('a):

"...so be prepared, but appoint no one in your place, because from the day of your death, the period of my major occupation (Gaybah al-Kubra) will begin. Henceforth, no one will see me, unless and until Allah makes me appear. My reappearance will take place after a very long time, when the world will be full of injustice and violence".²⁴

Ultimately, the shining sun of the divine proof went behind the curtain of Ghaybah, completely. And the period of communication with Hazrat (through Nawab al-Arba) came to an end. In spite of this (his Ghaybah) Hazrat Al-Mahdi ('a) is the Imam of the time and Imam of the world. He is the Divine Proof. Even though his person may be hidden from our eyes but his commands are clear.

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Amir Al-Mu'minin Ali ('a) announced from his pulpit at Kufa: "Even if the person of the Divine Proof is hidden while he guides the people, his knowledge and manners will be clear for them to follow"²⁵

It is clear that the knowledge and practice of Imam Al-'Asr ('a) is impeccable like the Qur'an, as was the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (S). It is obligatory for the people of faith (Muslims) to act upon the Qur'an and Sunnah, and to refrain from what they prohibit. The Holy Prophet (S) said:

"I leave behind two weighty things among you: The Book of Allah and my Progeny, my Ahl Al-Bayt If you adhere to those two you shall not go astray. And know that these two shall not separate till they meet me at Hauz (Kauthar)"²⁶

During the period of Ghaybah al-Kubra, when it is not possible to establish communication with Imam az-Zaman ('a) at will, the people have been ordered to follow the true teachings of the Qur'an and Ahl Al-Bayt ('a) through the pious and religious scholars and the just jurists. The people must follow them to know what obligations they are supposed to fulfill.

Imam Al-Sadiq ('a): "And among jurists (Fuqaha) are those who protect their selves (from sins) guard their religion, defy their carnal desires and are obedient to their master. It is incumbent upon the people to follow them. Such characteristics are found only in a few of them (Shi'as) and not all"²⁷.

The jurists issue decrees for the people and explain to them truth about faith. They endeavour to fulfill the exalted duty of preparing the grounds for the reappearance of their master, Hazrat Al-Mahdi ('a). So that by the coming of Hazrat ('a) the Islamic faith may strengthen and that he may fill the earth with justice and equity.

- ◆ 1.Kamaaluddin vol. 2, Pg. 428, 433 424,430.
- ◆ 2.Kamaaluddin vol.2 Pg. 420,424.
- ◆ 3.Al Fusoolul Muhimma Pg.292, Nurul Absaar Pg. 168.
- ◆ 4.Wafayatui Ayaan vol.4 Pg 176.
- ◆ 5.Najm-us-saaqib Pg. 41-98.
- ◆ 6.Kamaaluddin Vol. 2 Pg. 431.
- ◆ 7.Al Kafi, Vol. 1 pg. 503.
- ◆ 8. See Qur'an, Sura Maryam, Ayat 12 and 30:
يَا يَحْيَىٰ خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا
قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا
"O Yahya! Take hold of the Book with strength, and We granted him wisdom while yet a child" (19:12).
"He [Isa – Jesus] said: Surely I am a servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and made me a prophet" (19:30).
- ◆ 9. See Qur'an, Sura Maryam, Ayat 48-49:
وَأَعْتَزِلْكُمْ وَمَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَأَدْعُوا رَبِّي عَسَىٰ أَلَّا أَكُونَ بِدُعَاءِ رَبِّي شُعْبًا
"And I will withdraw from you and what you call on besides Allah, and I will call upon my Lord; may be I shall not remain unblessed in calling upon my Lord." (19:48).
فَلَمَّا اعْتَزَلَهُمْ وَمَا يُعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ كُلًّا جَعَلْنَا نَبِيًّا
"So when he withdrew from them and what they worshipped besides Allah, We gave to him Ishaq and Yaqoub, and each one of them We made a prophet." (19:49).
- ◆ 10. See Qur'an, Sura Qasas, Ayat 21-22.
فَخَرَجَ مِنْهَا خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ قَالَ رَبِّ نَجِّنِي مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ
"So he [Musa – Moses] went forth therefrom, fearing, awaiting, (and) he said: My Lord! deliver me from the unjust people." (28:21).

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وَلَمَّا تَوَجَّهَ تَلْقَاءَ مَدْيَنَ قَالَ عَسَىٰ رَبِّي أَن يَهْدِيَنِي سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ

“And when he [Musa – Moses] turned his face towards Madyan, he said: Maybe my Lord will guide me in the right path.” (28:22).

- ◆ 11. See Qur’an, Sura Nisa, Ayat 157:

وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَّبُوهُ وَلَٰكِنَّ شُبُهَةَ لَهُمْ ۖ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ ۚ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ ۚ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا

“And their saying: Surely we have killed the Messiah, Isa son of Marium, the messenger of Allah; and they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them so (like Isa) and most surely those who differ therein are only in a doubt about it; they have no knowledge respecting it, but only follow a conjecture, and they killed him not for sure.” (4:157).

- ◆ 12. Al Kafi Vol. 1 Pg.340; Ghaybah, Nomani Pg. 180.
- ◆ 13. Al Kafi Vol. 1 Pg. 340. Ayan ush Shi’a Vol. 2 Pg. 46.
- ◆ 14. Ghaybah, al-Tusi Pg. 353
- ◆ 15. Ghaybah, al-Tusi Pg. 357.
- ◆ 16. Ghaybah, al-Tusi Pg. 362.
- ◆ 17. Ghaybah, al-Tusi Pg. 356.
- ◆ 18. Ghaybah, al-Tusi Pg.366.
- ◆ 19. Ghaybah, al-Tusi Pg. 371-372.
- ◆ 20. Gaibat al-Tusi Pg. 369/372.
- ◆ 21. Ghaybah, al-Tusi Pg. 387.
- ◆ 22. Ghaybah, al-Tusi Pg. 394.
- ◆ 23. Ghaybah, al-Tusi Pgs. 358, 366. 376, 396.
- ◆ 24. Kamaaluddin Vol.2 Pg.516; Ghaybah, al-Tusi Pg.395.
- ◆ 25. Kamaaluddin vol. I Pg.302.
- ◆ 26. Yanabiul Mawaddah Pg. 35.
- ◆ 27. Tafsir Al Imam Pg. 300.

2.Reasons For The Occultation Of Imam Al-Mahdi (‘A)

1. Free From Allegiance Of Every Tyrant

Amir Al-Mu’minin Ali (‘a) said,

"Certainly', when the Qa'im from among us shall arise, he will not have the allegiance of any one upon his neck. It is for this reason that his birth is secret and his person is in Ghaybah."¹

It must be mentioned that all of our Imams had to pledge allegiance to every tyrant ruler except for a short period during the rule of Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz. This was because, on the face of it, it would seem that they are not against the ruler, In this way they could protect Islam. In the absence of popular support, the Imams were left alone and thus they entered into an understanding with the rulers. Thus even Imam Husain (‘a) for a particular period did not find it necessary to revolt against the regime of Muawiya.

In this regard Hazrat Al-Mahdi (‘a) says:

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"Verily each of my ancestors had the oath of allegiance, upon their necks, of their contemporary tyrant rulers. But I will reappear at such a time that I will not have any tyrant's allegiance upon my neck."²

2. Test Of The People

Imam al-Kazim ('a) said,

"My son! When the fifth descendant of the seventh of the Imams is not visible to you! It is when Allah will test your belief. Ghaybah is inevitable for the Master of this affair.

Till the time when the religion is completely transformed, and only a few people will have belief in him. My son! That Ghaybah, It is a trial through which Allah, the Almighty tests His servants."³

3. Fear Of The Enemy

Imam Musa al-Kazim ('a) said,

"The Qa'im is the one who will purify the earth from the enemies of Allah, the High and the Mighty. And he will fill the earth with justice and equity just as it is filled with injustice and tyranny. He is the fifth of my descendants. He will go into occultation due to the fear of his own (life)."⁴

According to common sense it is necessary for man not to throw away his precious life without a legitimate aim. Thus, the prophets ('a) and the Imams ('a) have taught the people that it is their duty to protect their life under every circumstance and should never put their life in danger. Therefore it is the duty of the last of these exalted personalities to protect himself till the time of his reappearance when he will establish the new world order.

4. Weakness And Lack Of Co-Operation Of The People

Imam Al-Mahdi ('a) said.

"If our Shi'as; may Allah help them in His obedience; would have fulfilled their covenant with united hearts then there would have been no delay in our meeting, and they would have been blessed with our visitation at the earliest, along with the recognition of truth and confirmation of our rights."⁵

- ◆ 1.Kamaaluddin Vol.1. Pg.303
- ◆ 2.Ghaybah, Tusi Pg.292, Kamaaluddin Vol2. Pg.485.
- ◆ 3.Ghaybah, al-Toosi Pg.166 & 337. Al Kafi vol.1 Pg.336. Kamaaluddin vol.2 Pg.359 and 360. Kifayatul Asar Pg.264-265.
- ◆ 4.Kamaaluddin vol.2 Pg.361. Kifayatul Asar Pg.265-266.
- ◆ 5.Al Ihtejaj vol.2 Pg.602.

3.Benefits Of Imam Al-Mahdi ('A) During His Ghaybah

Imam Al-Mahdi ('a) said,

"As for deriving benefit from me in my occupation, (it) is like deriving benefit from the sun when it hides behind the clouds."1

1.Favours Of Imam Al-Mahdi ('A) Upon His Shi'as

Imam Al-Mahdi ('a) says,

"Surely, we do not neglect your condition nor are we forgetful of your remembrance. Had it not been so, then, terrible calamities would have struck you and your enemies would have destroyed you."2

2.Awaiting For The Reappearance Of Imam Al-Mahdi ('A)

The Holy Prophet (S) said,

"The best worship is to await for the reappearance."3

Amir Al-Mu'minin Ali ('a) said,

"Await for the reappearance and do not despair of the divine mercy. Because the best deed in the eyes of Allah, the Great and the Mighty is to wait for the Reappearance. It is the duty of those who are believers."4

Imam as-Sajjad ('a) said.

"The greatest success is to wait for the reappearance"5

Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq ('a) said,

"Those of you who die on this affair (Shi'a faith) while you are in a condition of awaiting, are like those who has served the Qa'im ('a) in his tent."6

Imam Al-Jawad ('a) said,

"Certainly the Qa'im from among us is the Al-Mahdi. Awaiting for whom is obligatory during (his) Ghaybah and obeying him is obligatory after his reappearance. And he is the third of my descendants."7

Imam Al-Sadiq ('a) said,

"One who desires to be among the companions of the Qa'im, must await, adopt piety and behave courteously. If he dies in such a condition before the advent of Qa'im, then

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his reward will be similar to the one who attains his era. Hence, congratulations to you all for your relentless awaiting."8

3.Be Prepared For Being Among The Helpers Of Imam Al-Mahdi

"O You who believe! be patient and excel in patience and remain steadfast and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, that you may be successful". (Surah Ali Imran, 3:200).

Hazrat Imam Baqir ('a) explains the tafseer of this ayat:

"Have patience in fulfilling the religious obligations, Excel in patience in facing your enemies. And be in contact with your Imam who is awaited".9

4.In Service Of Imam Al-Mahdi ('A)

Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq ('a) said,

"If I am able to reach him, I shall serve him for my whole life."10

- ◆ 1.Kamaaluddin vol.2 Pg.485. Ghaybah, al-Toosi Pg.292.
- ◆ 2.Al Ihtejaj vol.2 Pg.598.
- ◆ 3.Kamaaluddin vol.1 Pg.287, Faraidus Simtain vol.2 Pg.335
- ◆ 4.Al Khisaal vol.2 Pg.616
- ◆ 5.Al Ihtejaj vol.2 Pg.154. Kamaaluddin vol.1 Pg.320
- ◆ 6.Ghaybah, al-Nomani Pg.200
- ◆ 7.Kamaaluddin, vol.2 Pg.377
- ◆ 8.Ghaybah, al-Nomani Pg.200.
- ◆ 9.Ghaybah, al-Nomani. pg.27, Yanabiul Mawadda pg.421
- ◆ 10.Ghaybah, al-Nomani Pg.245

4.Advent Of Imam Al-Mahdi ('A)

The Holy Prophet (S) said,

"Even if a single day remains for Qiyamah, Allah will send a man from my Ahlul'Bayt. He will fill the earth with justice just like it is filled with tyranny."1

Dibil Ibn Ali al-Khuzai says:

When I was reciting the Qasida (Panegeric) before my master, Al-Ridha' ('a), I reached to the following lines:

"I hope in the advent of my Imam. Who will rise up with the name of Allah and the divine blessings will accompany him.

He will separate the truth from falsehood (for us) and he will reward and punish."

Imam ('a) said to me:

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"O Khuzae! Ruhul Qudus (the angel) has made you recite these two couplets. Do you know who this Imam is? One who will rise?"

I replied,

"No my master, I only know that one of you, Imams will rise up and clear the earth of all injustice and fill it with equity."

Imam Al-Ridha' ('a) said,

"O Dibil after me my son Muhammad shall be the Imam and after him his son Ali, and after him his son Hasan Al-Askari, and after him his son Al-Qa'im who shall be the awaited one during the period of his Ghaybah. And when he shall be revealed, all the world shall bow down to him. Even if a single day remains for this world, Allah the High and the Mighty shall prolong this day till he will appear and fill the earth with justice as it has been filled with tyranny. And who knows when it will come to pass! I have heard it from my father, (who had heard it) from his father, and they had heard it from the Messenger of Allah (S) when he was asked, "O Prophet of Allah (S) when will the Qa'im of your progeny arise?"

He (S) had replied,

"His likeness is to the Hour (Qiyamah), '....none but He shall manifest it at its time; it will be momentous in the heavens and the earth; it will not come on you but of a sudden'." (Sura Araf 7:187).2

1. Universal Government Of Imam Al-Mahdi ('A)

Holy Prophet (S) said, "My Caliphs are my legatees and the proofs of Allah upon the creatures, after me they are twelve. The first of them is my brother and the last of them is my (grand) son"

He was asked, "O Prophet of Allah, which brother of yours" He replied, "Ali Ibn Abu Talib"

Again he was asked, "And which Son?"

He said, "Al Al-Mahdi is the one who will fill the earth with justice and equity just like it had been filled with injustice and tyranny. I swear by the one who has sent me as the giver of good tidings, even if a single day remains for the world (to end), Allah shall prolong that day till he sends (to it) my son Al-Mahdi. Then Ruhullah (spirit) Isa Ibn Maryam will descend and perform prayers behind him. The earth shall be illuminated by his radiance and his authority shall stretch from the east to the west."³

2. Merits Of The Rule Of Imam Al-Mahdi ('A)

Amir Al-Mu'minin Ali ('a) said,

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"He will direct desires towards (the path of) guidance while people will have turned guidance towards desires, and he will turn their views to the direction of the Qur'an while the people will have turned the Qur'an to their views."⁴

According to the submission of Ibn Abil Hadid, this saying refers to Hazrat Al-Mahdi ('a)⁵

Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq ('a) said,

"When the Qa'im shall arise, he will rule with justice, the tyrants of his time shall fear him, the righteous will be safe, the earth shall reveal its treasures, all the truth-seekers will seek his company and no follower of any religion would remain except that they see Islam and declare their faith in it."⁶

Imam Al-Ridha' ('a) said,

"The fourth of my descendants is the son of the chaste maid. Allah shall purify the earth from every atrocity through him and rid it of every injustice. He is the one whose birth shall be doubted. He will have an occupation before his reappearance. When he reappears, the earth will light up with his brilliance. And he will establish the scales of justice among the people. Then, (among men), one will not oppress the other."⁷

- ◆ 1.Sunan Abu Dawood vol.4 Pg.107.
- ◆ 2.Kamaaluddin vol.2 Pg.372-373, Faraidus Simtain vol.2. Pg.337- 338. Al Fusool al Mohimma Pg. 250-251.
- ◆ 3.Faraidus Simtam vol.2 Pg.312.
- ◆ 4.Nahj al-Balagha, sermon no, 138.
- ◆ 5.Sharh Nahj al-Balagha vol.9. Pg.40.
- ◆ 6.Kashful Ghumma vol.3. Pg.255.
- ◆ 7.Faraidus Simtain vol.2. Pg.336.

5.Guardianship of the Scholar (Wilayat al-Faqih)

The Awaited Imam (a.s.) has appointed the great Shia jurists as his Wali and deputies just as the Purified Imams (a.s.) had appointed them from their side and commanded their Shias that during the time of the Abbasides when it is not possible to contact the Imams (a.s.), they must refer to the religious jurists and seek their opinion in legal matters.

In a well-known tradition from Umar Ibn Hanzala it is mentioned that two Shia persons had a dispute and were going to present their case to the government magistrate. When Imam Sadiq (a.s.) was asked if such a step was permitted, he replied, "One who presents his case to a tyrant and he gives a verdict it is invalid, even though it may be his lawful right. Because he has got it through the verdict of a tyrant while the Almighty Allah (SwT) has commanded shunning the tyrants."

I asked, "Then what should these people do?" He replied, "See who relates our traditions and narrations to you and who considers our permitted and prohibited and who possesses knowledge and information about our commands. Be prepared to follow him. I have appointed him as authority on you. And when he commands our commands

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and prohibits our prohibitions and he is not obeyed, it is as if the commands of Allah (SwT) were considered unimportant. And we have been denied. And one who denies us has denied Allah (SwT). Such that he shall be in the limits of having associated with Allah (SwT).”¹

In this discourse, the Holy Imam (a.s.) has given a general Wilayat to the jurists and made him the authority as the ruler and point of reference for all Muslims in their social aspects. Like this tradition there is another famous narration of Ibn Khadijah that the Imam (a.s.) told him:

“Beware! Do not take your mutual disputes to the tyrant rulers. Rather search among yourselves and see if you can find one who is knowledgeable about our judgments and solutions to religious problems. Make him a judge among yourselves. Because I have appointed him as a judge. So take your cases to him.”²

On the basis of this we can say that Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) has appointed the just jurisprudent as the general authority and the point of reference for the Muslims. Similar to these two traditions is an epistle of His Eminence, the Master of the Age (a.s.) addressed to Shaykh al Mufid (a.r). It is as follows.

“As for the events, which will occur, turn to the narrators of our traditions, because they (the narrators) are my proof to you, while I am the proof of Allah (SwT) to them...”

In this tradition and others like it, His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) has appointed the jurists as his deputies and commanded the Shias to refer to them and follow their verdicts in all religious aspects of their life.

However, one who is responsible for the religious leadership of Muslims during the occultation of His Eminence (a.s.) must possess the following qualities:

1. Adulthood
2. Sanity
3. Justice
4. Man
5. Knowledge of Jurisprudence
6. Independence (according to some narrations)³

1.Responsibilities of the Religious Jurisprudent

The following are the responsibilities of the religious jurisprudent appointed as the general deputy of His Eminence (a.s.).

The Islamic world and all the sects have considered (accepted) that he is one who takes care and is concerned for everything regarding the world of Islam and if there is an attack from the enemy or an infidel invades Muslim lands it is necessary that he should rise to defend them and the Shia point of reference is in Najaf Ashraf.

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Thus when Libya was attacked by the Italians and Muslims of Palestine were under the yoke of the Zionists (Jews) the scholars of Najaf Ashraf always supported the people of Libya and rose up to defend the Muslims.

He must possess expertise on all the faculties of the colleges of religious sciences and he must be responsible for their expense and the budgets.

He must convey funds to the poor and deprived people of community and fulfill their needs. These were some of the responsibilities of the religious jurists appointed as point of reference by the Holy Imam (a.s.) for the Muslims.

- ◆ 1.Wasaelush Shia, Kitabul Qaza
- ◆ 2.Wasaelush Shia, Kitabul Qaza
- ◆ 3.Urwathul Wuthqa, Vol. 1. Pg. 4
- ◆

7) Duties and Responsibilities of Believers during Occultation period

It is clear now as to how important it is to await for the reappearance of Imam al-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) and how great is the status and position of those who await. Also, it is a reality that as the level increases, responsibilities and duties increase too. Although there are a number of responsibilities of a believer during the major occultation, we shall mention a few important ones hereunder, keeping brevity into consideration.

1) Recognition of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)

By recognition, historical knowledge and information is not what is implied. Rather, it means to be aware of those levels, perfection and authority that has been granted to Imam al-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) by Allah the Almighty.

If we believe in these, then we will be sure that he is definitely keeping a watch on all our actions, every single one of them. He rules on each and every particle of this world. The entire universe is subject to his command. Only then will we refrain from sins and seek refuge and help from him for all our difficulties.

2) Improvement in deeds

We cannot see Imam al-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) with our sinful eyes but he, definitely, is observing us . If somebody really believes that he is constantly being watched by Imam al-Zaman (a.t.f.s.), he will keep away from quite a few sins. Good deeds are the only way to gain proximity and nearness to Imam al-Zaman (a.t.f.s.). And who does not desire to be nearer to his Imam (a.s.)? He (a.t.f.s.) himself has admonished us,

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"Then each one of you should act in such a way that your deeds bring you closer to our love, and refrain from all those actions that will bring you nearer to our wrath and anger."6

3) Reformation of the Society

To rectify and improve our society, i.e. our children, brothers, sisters, relatives, friends, acquaintances, etc. is also our responsibility. For, it is essential that the ground be prepared for the reappearance. Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) says,

"An orphan is he who loses his father. But greater than him is he who has become distanced from his Imam and does not have access to him. He is not aware of his responsibilities and obligations.

Among our Shias, one who is knowledgeable of our traditions and knowledge, should teach this Shia who is ignorant and unaware, and guide him. It is as if he has sheltered and nourished an orphan. Yes, the one who guides him and teaches him our religious laws, will be with us in the highest grades of paradise."7

4) Supplication (Du'a)

Supplication is a weapon of the believer through which he repels calamities and encounters difficulties. He attains his desires with its help. The reappearance of Imam al-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) and his being safe from all evils and calamities is the heartfelt desire of every believer. One of the rights that he (a.s.) enjoys upon us is that we should pray for him, first and foremost, in our supplications and invocations.

Naturally, we always pray for that thing first which enjoys utmost significance in our eyes. Nobody is greater than Imam al-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) nor is anything more important than his reappearance. It is necessary that after every namaz, our first supplication be in favour of Imam al-Zaman (a.t.f.s.). We must begin and end our day with the prayers for the reappearance of our beloved Imam (a.s.).

Although there are a number of invocations for Imam -e -Zaman (a.t.f.s.) like Du'a al-Nudbah, which should be recited on Fridays, etc. we shall suffice here with only two important supplications for him.

a) In every Salat, especially in obligatory prayers, we should recite the following invocation in the Qunoot. This is also called Du'a al-Faraj.

اللهم كن لوليك الحجة بن الحسن صلواتك عليه وعلى ابائه في هذه الساعة وفي كل ساعة وليا وحافظا وقائدا وناصرا
ودليلا وعينا حتى تسكنه ارضك طوعا وتمتعه فيها طويلا

b) After Salat al-Subh (morning prayers), we must recite the brief Du'a al-Ahd. It is a salutation, a covenant and a supplication, all put together.8

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اللهم بلغ مولاي صاحب الزمان صلوات الله عليه عن جميع المؤمنين والمؤمنات في مشارق الارض ومغاربها وبرها وبحرها وسهلها وجبلها حيهم وميتهم وعن والدي و ولدي وعني من الصلوات والتحيات زنه عرش الله ومداد كلماته ومنتهى رضاه وعدد ما احصاه كتابه واحاط به علمه اللهم اني اجدد له في هذا اليوم وفي كل يوم عهدا وعقدا وبيعه في رقبتي اللهم كما شرفتني بهذا التشريف وفضلتني بهذه الفضيله وخصصتني بهذه النعمة فصلي على مولاي وسيدي صاحب الزمان واجعلني من انصاره واشياعه والذابين عنه واجعلني من المستشهدين بين يديه طائعا غير مكره في الصف الذي نعت اهله في كتابتك فقلت صفا كانهم بنيان مرصوص على طاعتك وطاعة رسولك واله عليهم السلام اللهم هذه البيعه له في عنقي الى يوم القيامة

O Allah, convey to the master, the Master of the Time, from all the believer men and women in the easts of the earth and its west. In its lands and its seas, in its plains and its mountains, their living and their dead, and from my parents and my children and from me, from the blessings and greetings, which are the weight of Allah's throne and ink on his words, and whatever His knowledge enumerates and his book encompasses.

O Allah renew for him my covenant, pledge and allegiance on my neck on this day and whatever days (of my life) I live.

O Allah, like You honored me with this honor, and gave me this excellence and bestowed this bounty to me especially, bless my master and chief, the leader of the time and make me from his helpers and followers and protectors and make me of those who seek martyrdom in his presence, with full eagerness, without any hesitation put me in that row of the army of those whom You have described in Your Book and said: "in ranks as if they were a firm and compact wall" on Your obedience and the obedience of Your Messenger and his progeny, peace be on them.

O Allah, indeed, this allegiance is upon my neck till Judgment Day.

5) Sadaqah

When a person knows and likes somebody from the depth of his heart, he wishes him well and desires his safety from all evils and calamities. He prays for his wellbeing and health. He gives sadaqah for his safety and protection. Praying or giving sadaqah does not mean that the concerned person is afflicted with calamities. Rather, it is an expression of our love for him. The more we love him, the more will be our invocations and sadaqah in his favour.

Today, who is more deserving to be loved and be attached with than the holy person of Imam al-Zaman (a.t.f.s.)? Can a believer's heart love anybody else more than him? To pray for Imam al-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) and to give sadaqah for his safety is an expression of our love for him. In the ta'qeebaat of the obligatory prayers, it has been emphasized to recite Ayat al-Kursi for the safety and security of Imam al-Zaman (a.t.f.s.).

6) Seeking of Desires

Allah the Almighty has appointed the infallible Imams (a.s.) as the media and doors for approaching Him. Presently, Imam al-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) is that door through whom Allah is approached. The Holy Quran says,

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا

"And all the good names are for Allah, then call Him through them."(Surah A'raaf, 7:180)

In the interpretation of this verse, traditions say that good names in the verse implies the infallible Imams (a.s.) and that we should call Allah through them. (Al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 618, H.2)

Imam al-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) is the Door of Allah and His Name. If we plead to Allah through this all-important medium, our supplications will be accepted. Besides, it is the sincere desire of every father or every elder that the youngsters of the family approach him for their needs and that he fulfills them. Particularly, when he is in a position of power and authority. The elders feel great joy in fulfilling the needs of the youngsters.

Imam al-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) is our father, elder and the master of all bounties. Today, it is an important duty for us that we present our difficulties to him for their solution. Unfortunately, we speak of our problems to everybody but to that Imam who is able to provide its remedies within no time.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.) says,

"Whenever you get entangled in some difficulty, then seek refuge in the presence of Hazrat Hujjat (a.t.f.s.) and invoke him. He will save you and grant you salvation. He answers the needy. He is the refuge of anybody who seeks refuge in him."9

6.Some Queries

There are some doubts regarding the occultation of His Eminence, the Awaited Imam (a.s.) that we shall study in the following pages.

1. What is the Benefit Derived from the Occultation of the Imam of the Age (a.s.)?

A lot of discussion is carried out on the benefits of the occultation of the Awaited Imam (a.s.). Those who do not have deep understanding of the matter have expressed their view saying that the existence or absence of the Imam (a.s.), whether he is in occultation or not is one and the same. The Shia scholastic theologians have later rebutted their view and mentioned numerous benefits, and they are as follows:

Firstly: Even though His Eminence (a.s.) is concealed from public view, his existence is the cause of security for the inhabitants of the earth, as mentioned clearly in numerous traditions regarding this matter. Some of them are as follows.

The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“My Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) are security for the inhabitants of the earth. If my Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) are not there, the inhabitants of the earth shall be destroyed.”¹

The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“This religion shall always be upright till there are twelve chiefs from Quraish. When they pass away, the earth will swallow all its inhabitants.”²

His Eminence, Amirul Momineen (a.s.) said:

“Yes! The earth is never devoid of the Qaim (a.s.) from Allah (SwT)...”

Other traditions also prove that the Purified Imams (a.s.) are the security for the inhabitants of the earth and their existence repels calamities and troubles from all the people of the earth. And the traditions also prove that the occultation of His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) is for the well-being of people.

Secondly: The occultation of the Awaited Imam (a.s.) is so because the people do not deserve him and also because of prevailing evils among the people. Were they righteous and deserving and had not deviated from the path of truth, His Eminence (a.s.) would have appeared. The great scholar, Tusi (a.r) has pointed towards these two causes mentioned above. He says:

“The existence of His Eminence (a.s.) is a grace; his authority is another grace.”³

Thirdly: While he is in occultation, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) is kind on his Shias and he prays for them and there is no obstacle in his prayer and if the prayer of the Imam (a.s.) had not been for them, the oppressors would never have allowed the righteous people to control their desires and they would have destroyed all of them. The same point is mentioned in a letter of His Eminence (a.s.) to Shaykh Mufeed (a.r.). In the letter he says:

“Surely we are neither negligent of your affairs, nor are we forgetful of your remembrance. Had it been so, afflictions would have descended upon you and enemies would have suppressed you.”

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Fourthly: His Eminence, the Baqiatullah (a.s.) has himself mentioned a benefit of his occultation and said:

“Taking benefit from me during my occultation is like getting benefit from the sun while it is hidden from the view.”

Sulaiman Amash bin Mehran asked His Eminence, Imam Sadiq (a.s.): How do the people benefit from His Eminence, the Proof (Hujjat) (a.s.) when he is concealed from the view? His Eminence, Imam Sadiq (a.s.) replied:

“Just as they benefit from the sun when a cloud comes over it.”

Allamah Majlisi (a.r) explains this tradition and says:

Effulgence, generosity, knowledge and guidance reaches the people through His Eminence (a.s.) because it is proved from traditions that His Eminence (a.s.) is the cause of the creation of the creatures. Thus if he had not been there no one else would have come into existence.

Rather, sciences and recognition is due to his blessings and cure and mediation of His Eminence (a.s.) becomes apparent on the people and calamities are repelled through him. It is so because if they had not been there, people would have been involved in various chastisements due to their evil deeds. As the Almighty Allah (SwT) has said: “Allah (SwT) would not punish them till you are among them.”

And we have often experienced that when we are in difficulties and our avenues are closed and we are distanced from the Almighty and we have closed the doors of mercy due to our deeds. Yes! At that time we have made those noble personages as our mediums. And we pray through the holy effulgence of those personages in proportion to our proximity with them. Our complicated problems are solved and whosoever’s heart Allah (SwT) has illuminated with faith realizes this fact and is not able to deny it.

Just as people gain benefit from the sun hidden behind clouds and wait for the cloud to move away so that they could gain more benefits, in the same way the real awaiter and the sincere Shias wait for His Eminence (a.s.) during the occultation every moment that when His Eminence (a.s.) reappears there may be greater benefit from him.

One who denies His Eminence (a.s.) during the period of occultation is like one who has denied the sun when it is behind the clouds.

Sometimes, when the sun is behind the clouds, it is for the good of the people. In the same way the occultation of His Eminence (a.s.) is better for the people rather than his reappearance due to the condition of the people (who are not capable or deserving).

It is ordinarily not possible to see the sun directly when it is not behind a cloud. It can lead to blindness if one sees the sun with naked eyes. In the same way the sun of the existence of His Eminence (a.s.) may cause the incapable people to be blinded of truth.

Sometimes the sun comes out from behind the clouds and some people see it. In the same way during the period of occultation some people see His Eminence (a.s.) and are honored to be in his service.

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His Eminence (a.s.), like the sun, gives benefit to all, although one who is blind is not able to take benefit from him. As the Almighty Allah (SwT) says:

وَمَنْ كَانَ فِي هَذِهِ أَعْمَىٰ فَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ أَعْمَىٰ وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا

“And whoever is blind in this, he shall (also) be blind in the hereafter, and more erring from the way.” (Surah 17, Verse 72)

It is explained in this way:

Just as the rays of the sun enter the house according to the space of the slits and windows and by it gives light and energy, in the same way are the hearts of the people. As much as they remove the curtains of sensuality and physical attachments and open up the slits and windows of the heart for the recognition of Allah (SwT), the same proportion of the light of guidance of those great personages would benefit them.

In the same way they must remove from them the obstacles and curtains like one who stands below the shining sun and the rays of the sun surround him. By this eight doors of Paradise of spirituality are opened up for him and the rays of guidance and guardianship (Wilayat) cover him...4

Fifthly: We do not know the Hidden wisdom of the occultation of His Eminence (a.s.) as many traditions have explained.

Abdullah bin Fazl Hashimi says that he heard from His Eminence, Imam Sadiq (a.s.) that he said:

“The Master of this affair has an occultation which is certain, and every untrue person falls into doubt regarding it.”

Abdullah asked: “May I be sacrificed for you. Why is it so?”

His Eminence (a.s.) replied:

“It is a matter regarding which we are not permitted to inform you.”

Abdullah asked: “Then what is the wisdom behind occultation?”

The Imam (a.s.) said in reply:

“The wisdom behind the occultation of His Eminence (a.s.) is the same that had been in the occultation of the previous Divine Proofs. The cause of the wisdom shall be known after the reappearance just like the wisdom behind the actions of His Eminence, Prophet Khizr (a.s.), regarding the damaging of the boat, the killing of the boy and the repairing of the wall. It was not clear to His Eminence, Prophet Musa (a.s.) till they were about to part ways.

O son of Fazl! This is an affair of Allah (SwT) and the secret and mystery of the occultation is from the secrets and mysteries of Allah (SwT). As we have faith that Allah (SwT) is the wisest one, we must have certainty that all His actions are based on wisdom. Even though we may not be aware of the hidden wisdom in detail.”5

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These were some causes and factors regarding the benefits of the occultation of His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.).

2.Longevity of the Imam of the Age (a.s.)

Numerous questions are raised regarding the age of the Imam of the Age (a.s.) and it is asked how His Eminence (a.s.) has continued to live for 1150 years and how natural factors like old age and weakness have not affected him?

In reply to this question it is said:

Firstly: It is logically possible for one to have a long age and it is not from the impossibilities. In the same way it is not possible for a thing to be single and two at the same time. On the other hand it is rationally possible for a person to land on the moon or another planet and therefore after obtaining the causes and means of it, his landing becomes practical.

In the same way, the prolonging of the life of a man is rationally possible and from the scientific and rational view there is no doubt in it. When divine providence has favored him, his body is shielded from natural factors and unaffected by the ageing process and old age does not approach him.

Such an example is also present in the Holy Quran, where Prophet Nuh (a.s.) is said to have lived among his people for 950 years. On the basis of this, how do we accept the long age of Nuh (a.s.) but not accept the long age of His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.)? Even though both of them were appointed for the reformation of humanity.

Secondly: If, supposedly we accept that an age of hundreds and thousands of years is an impossible thing because it is against the natural factors, but we say that it is possible for the Almighty Allah (SwT) and it is very much in His power if He wants.

Just as fire has a natural effect of burning; He made it cool and comfortable for His friend, Ibrahim (Surah Anbiya 21:69). And He split the sea for His Prophet, Musa (a.s.) and saved Musa (a.s.) and his people and drowned the Pharaoh and his people. Thus when the Almighty Allah (SwT) intends such things, He does it.

Therefore, He can also protect and shield His Wali from natural disasters and ageing factors. The Almighty Allah (SwT) renders the natural qualities of various things ineffective. Just as infidels and polytheists of Mecca were unable to see His Messenger (S) and he went out right under their eyes.

3.Why Such a Long Age?

Here another question arises that why the Almighty Allah (SwT) has bestowed such a long life to His Eminence (a.s.)? And why his age was not like his respected great grandfather, the Messenger of Allah (S) and his ancestors, the Infallible Imams (a.s.)?

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The reply to this is that His Eminence, the Baqiatullah (a.s.) is an exception among them, because the reformation of all the world and saving of all the people from the waves of darkness and ignorance is restricted to His Eminence (a.s.).

Therefore, the Awaited Imam (a.s.), is the last reformer of human society of the world, thus it should be that the afflictions should be maximum on the people when the illuminated sun of His Eminence (a.s.) grace shines upon them and that he fills the whole earth with justice and equity.

His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) is that champion that will alter the flow of the history of the world. He would on the basis of a lofty civilization destroy all those civilizations that have filled the earth with injustice and oppression and dominated the whole world. Thus it is necessary for His Eminence (a.s.) to have a long life so that he could cover the whole world and he may reform them in every way.

4. Why does the Imam of the Age (a.s.) not Reappear?

One of the questions that arise regarding His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) is that why His Eminence (a.s.) is not reappearing to establish the rule of God on the Earth and save the people from difficulties and problems?

Its reply is that the reappearance of His Eminence (a.s.) is not in the control of man and the will of humanity. It is in the hands of the Almighty Allah (SwT). The Almighty Allah (SwT) raised the great Prophet of Islam (S) after five centuries of ignorance. And he was raised only when the conditions that were suitable for his advent had been fulfilled.

Apparently such an advent did not take place before the conditions were conducive for it. The reappearance of His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) is also like that. Till the world and all the conditions of the world are not eligible for reformation and the atmosphere is not conducive for his reappearance, his reappearance will not occur.

When its time would be mature and the worldly systems would not be able to lead humanity, such is the time when His Eminence (a.s.) would arise and install the system of divine religion in human society, which is presently incapable of guiding the people.

5. How would the Imam of the Time (a.s.) Reform the World?

Another question regarding His Eminence (a.s.) is how can one individual take upon himself the task of reforming the whole world and fill the earth with justice and equity as it would have been filled with injustice and oppression in such a way that the rights of everyone are protected and that the oppressors, oppression, deprivation and poverty is destroyed? And all the human beings, to whichever religion they may belong, would have their rights protected.

The reply is as follows: The greatest systems and events that changed the world were caused at the hands of a single individual and not by a group of people. For example, the Prophet of Islam (S) was a single individual, who had such influence that he

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destroyed the systems of the period of ignorance and replaced it by a heavenly and illuminated system.

The same was the case of Prophets Musa (a.s.) and Isa (a.s.), that each of them, completely and even without the help of their relatives, rose up and fulfilled the functions of their divine messengership. All of them performed those feats single handedly and not in the form of a group.

It is against what the Marxists believe, who say that it is not possible for an individual to compete and bring about complete reformation. Rather a group would be effective in this. However, this view of the Marxists is not based on facts and it is far from reality.

In all conditions, His Eminence, the Awaited Imam (a.s.) would arise like his holy great grandfather to establish peace, justice, truth and prosperity and save humanity from all difficulties and evils and spread love and brotherhood and unity of mankind. The time of his reappearance is not in control of anyone except that it is at the discretion of the wise will of the Almighty Lord.

- ◆ 1.Zakhairul Uqbah, Pg 17, Kanzul Ummal, 6/116
- ◆ 2.Muntakhabul Athar, Pg. 27, quoted from Kashful Astar
- ◆ 3.Sharh Tajreed, Tusi, Pg. 389 (Iran Edition)
- ◆ 4.Muntakhabul Athar, Pg. 271-272
- ◆ 5.Jalalul Uyun, 3/157