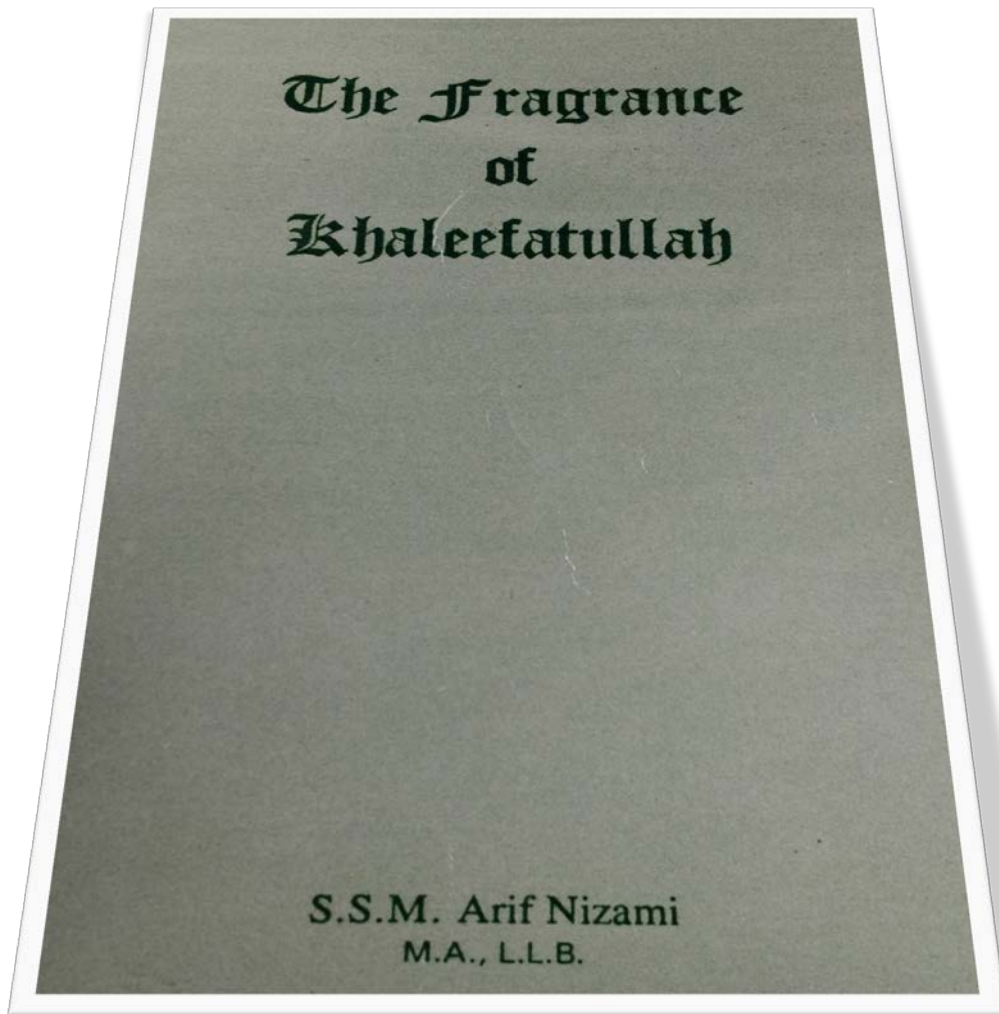


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THE FRAGRANCE OF KHALEEFATULLAH

A Biography of Hazrat
Syed Mohammed Jaunpuri
Mahdi-e-Maud (AS)

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INDEX

A BRIEF SURVEY OF SOCIO POLITICAL PANORAMA IMMEDIATELY BEFORE AND DURING THE LIFE OF THE PROMISED MAHDI (A)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

JAUNPUR

DECCAN DURING THE IMAM'S (A) LIFE

MALWA

ORISSA

GUJARAT

THE ARAB SCENERIO

FALL OF SPAIN

OSMANLI DYNASTY

THE PROMISED MEHDI (THE DOCTRINE OF HIS ADVENT) BIRTH, CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

COMMENCEMENT OF LEARNING (TASMIAH KHANI)

JIHAD AND ABSORPTION

THE ABSORPTION:

DIVINE JOURNEY

AT DANAPUR

AT CHUNDAIRY

AT CHAPANAIR

HAZRAT SHAH NIZAM (R) JOINS THE IMAM (A)

MANDO

AT DAULATABAD

AT BIDAR

THE PILGRIMAGE

FORMAL DECLARATION

Malik Burhanuddin (R)

Hazrat Malik Gowher (R)

The Prince

Qazi Budhan

The Mashaiq Brothers

Moulana Yusuf (R)

Ahmed Shah Khaden (RH)

Haji sees his Creator

Shah Niamat (R) joins Hazrat Mahdi (A)

Brief Stay at Sauda

Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) joins the Imam (A)

Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) seeks permission for 'Kasb-e-Halal'

Hazrat Malik Maruf (R) and Malik Sharfuddin (R) Bariwal

Syed Kahnji Khidkiwall (R)

Moulana Mohammed Yousuf Suhait and Moulana Mohammed Taj Suhait (R)

Moulana Abdur Rasheed Hanafi (R)

Moulana Malikji Mehri (R)

THE FINAL PROCLAMATION

Shaikh Sadruddin becomes a disciple

QAZI KHADEN (or KHAZI KHAZEN) becomes a Devotee

THE HAZARDOUS JOURNEY

THE LAST DAYS

Return of Caliphs (R) with other companions

TEACHINGS OF HAZRAT MAHDI (A)

Preeminence of Mehdi (A)

The faith of the Imam (A)

Tark-e-Dunya (renunciation of everything worldly)

Uzlat-Az-Khalkh

Suhbat-e-Sadiquin

Tawakkul

Zikrullah (Remembering God)

Type of Zikr

Talab-e-Deedar-e-Khuda

Hijrat

Ushr

Dogana Lailat-ul-Qadr

THE DAIRA

Prayer routine of Dairas

Sawieth

Social equality

Dairas were not States

Progress of Daira System

**HAZRAT MAHDI (A) AS THE ABSOLUTE FOLLOWER OF PROPHET MOHAMMED (S).
OPINION OF NON-MAHDAVI SCHOLARS AND HISOTRIANS ABOUT HAZRAT MEHDI (A).**

Mullah Abdul Khader Badauni

Abdul Khasim Farishta

Mir Shair Ali Khan

Mohammed Hussain Azad

Shah Abdul Haq Muhaddis Dehlavi

Shah Abdul Aziz

Mian Hatim Sumbhuli

Moulana Abul Kalam Azad

Khairuddin Mohammed Illahbadi

Khaja Hassan Nizami

Moulana Syed Abul Hassan Ali Nadvi

Syed Abu Zaffar Nadvi

Akbar Shah Khan Najeebabadi

THE AFTERMATH (Persecution of Mahdavis)

CHAPTER I

A BRIEF SURVEY OF SOCIO POLITICAL PANORAMA IMMEDIATELY BEFORE AND DURING THE LIFE OF THE PROMISED MAHDI (A)

It is a peculiar phenomenon of human history that generally great men are born in a period of crisis. Whenever there has been great political commotion, economic decay, social unrest, moral turpitude or spiritual bankruptcy and as a consequence, humanity suffered from the pangs of oppression and exploitation, God out of His mercy sent, for its rescue, great men either in the form of great kings, reformers, Prophets or Saints. Before attempting to narrate the holy life of Hazrat Syed Mohammed Jaunpuri, the promised MAHDI (A), it would be apt to give a brief outline of the political, social, religious and spiritual conditions, prevailing in India immediately before and during his eventful and glorious life, The Promised Mahdi (A) was born in the year 847 Al Hijra (1443 A.D.) and passed away in the year 910 Al Hijra (1506 A.D).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The Tughlaq dynasty occupies a unique place in India history due to various reasons, particularly for its attempt in the consolidation of Muslim power in this country. The benevolent and prudent rule of Feroz Shah Tughlaq ended in 791 Hirjri = 1389 A.D. He ruled for a long period of forty years in which he tried to strengthen the cause of Islam to certain extent. During his rule and that of his stern predecessor Mohammed Tughlaq, many Muslim saints, scholars and divines came down to India from all parts of the Muslim world and settled down in this country, spreading their activities and mission through out the vast span of this country which was predominantly under the yoke of high caste Hindus, who already lost their earlier glory in matters of religion, art, culture and learning. These saints and scholars took up the cause of oppressed humanity, and by introducing the ideals of monotheism, purity, equality and justice laid down by Islam, commenced their struggle to ameliorate the condition of the down trodden masses. In their mission, they did not depend upon the temporal support of the Muslim rulers of those times, who were more interested in gaining political power and influence than in serving the cause of their religion. Very often, they hindered greatly the work of pious men. Whenever they offered some co-operation or help to the Muslim saints it was in the hope of obtaining their blessings for their success in political or war-like ambitions and errands. Some eminent saints often blessed some ambitious and noble kings without asking for anything in return. But a group of worldly-wise religious men became a permanent appendage to various kingdoms of India. Hence, along with the noble saints and reformers, a new class of fake sufis and worldly-wise divines emerged in this period which played a vital role in making or marring the destinies of the warring chieftains.

After the death of Feroz Tughlaq the power of Tughlaq dynasty suddenly melted away like a cube of ice in the heat of political strife. King after King succeeded to the throne of Delhi which was coveted by every ambitious chieftain. To attain it, no amount of blood and toil was considered as dear and no scruples were considered as sanctified. Taking advantage of the political instability of this country, the great conqueror Taimur attacked India and reached the fertile banks of Indus on 12th Moharram 801 Hijra = 12th September, 1399 A.D. and after much bloodshed, plundering and pillage left for his capital. But however the disastrous rule of Mahmood Tughlaq continued for twenty years from its tumultuous commencement till he died in 814 Hijra (1412 A.D.). During his rule, which was marred by many wars and battles, one of his vazirs, Khaja Jehan, revolted; and assuming the title of Malik-ush-Sharq, founded an independent Kingdom at Jauanpur. His dynasty was called Sharqia dynasty. He forced even the King of Bengal to pay tribute to him. Further details of the Sharqia dynasty would be given in the pages to follow.

Delhi has to unfold a different scenario of strife and revolution. Subsequent to the death of Mohammed Tughlaq and after the lapse of a brief period of uncertainty, Dowlat Khan Lodhi was elected as King. Khizer Khan who was by that time the Governor of Multan and who was a Syed by birth, and was one of the important nobles of the Court of Mohammed Tughlaq, attacked Dowlat Khan Lodhi, at Delhi, captured and imprisoned him. The unfortunate Dowlat Khan Lodhi died as a prisoner after a short reign of one year and three months. Khizer Khan alias Syed Mubarak became the Sultan of Delhi. He was a brave warrior and a benevolent King. The dynasty founded by him is often called by historians the dynasty of Syeds which was short lived. During the glorious course of Islamic history Syeds rarely gained temporal authority and whenever it fell in their hands, it was short lived inspite of great abilities of their race. They were destined not to rule over the territories, but they mostly ruled in the scholastic and spiritual realms. Syed Mubarak ruled over the Sultanate of Delhi for about thirteen Years. He was succeeded by his son Syed Mohammed who was set up as a puppet king by the killer of Syed Mubarak, the vazir Sarwar-ul-Mulk. But Kale Khan the Deputy Vazir killed Sarwar-ul-Mulk

Hindustan at this period of political chaos was divided into separate principalities. The Deccan, Gujarat, Malwa, Jaunpur and Bengal had each its independent kings. Punjab, Deepalpur and Surhind as far south as Panipat, formed the territory of Bahlol Khan Lodhi, Mehrowly and the country within seven koss of Delhi was in the hands of Ahmed Khan Mewati, Sambul even to the suburbs of Delhi was occupied by Durya Khan Lodhi, Kole Jolesur in the Doab, by Essa Khan Turk and Rabery and its dependencies, by Khutub Khan Afghan, Kampilla and Pallaly, by Raja Pratap Singh and Bayana by Dawood Khan Lodhi, so that the Sultan of Delhi had to be content with a small tract of territory around his capital. This was the state of affairs at the closure of the thirty year rule of Syed dynasty over Delhi facing all tides of disaffection and anarchy. Besides, these principalities, Khandesh, Sind and Malwa had each its separate Muslim king in northern India.

Bahlol Lodhi, who was a brave warrior and an ambitious soldier, was the nephew of Islam Khan Lodhi the Governor of Surhind. The Lodhi family already became eminent during the rule of Syed dynasty. Bahlol commenced his martial career by capturing Lahore. Thereafter he besieged Delhi during the reign of Syed Mahmood. The King has no option but to compromise and he adopted Bahlol as his son and made him his Chief Minister. Sultan Syed Mahmood died due to illness in extremely helpless circumstances, after ruling for twelve years in the year 849 Hijra- 1445 A.D. (when Hazrat Syed Mohammed (A) was about two years of age). His son Syed Aladdin succeeded on the shaking throne of Delhi. He tried in vain to consolidate his power in the year 852 Hijra, but failed. His vazir Hameed Khan who surreptitiously escaped to Delhi from a campaign launched by the last Syed Sultan, defected him and invited Bahlol Lodhi to assume the government of Delhi in the year 854 Hijra = 1450 A.D. The king helplessly abdicated in favor of Bahlol and returned to Budaon and lived there as an ordinary citizen for another twenty eight years.

After an adventurous carrier as a soldier, a governor and Chief Minister, Bahlol Lodhi became Sultan of Delhi in February 1451 A.D. (855 Hijra). According to an interesting episode reported by certain historians, Malik Bahlol while engaged in a campaign during the early days of his warlike career, while on his way to some battle field along with his companions came across a dervish called Sheida, who was shouting, "who will give 2000 gold coins for the kingdom of Delhi", Bahlol on hearing the grotesque call of the dervish approached him along with his friends and told the Fakir that he had only 1600 in the world and presented the same. The Dervish accepting the same said "Shabash betta, the kingdom is yours". When the companions laughed at his credulity, Bahlol remarked that, if the prediction of the dervish proved to be true, then he did not strike a bad bargain, if not, the blessings

of a holy man would not go waste. This incident shows not only a good trait in Bahlol's character but also his burning ambition and belief in the efficacy of the blessings of the pious.

Bahlol Lodhi could not expect and did not find the sultanate of Delhi to be a bed of roses. On the contrary his whole reign extending to a long period of forty three years was full of strife and struggle for supremacy. He did not remain the unchallenged sovereign of the capital of India, throughout his reign. His main rival was the bravest, pious and pompous king of Jaunpur Sultan Hussain Sharqi, who attacked Delhi within a year after Bahlol assumed the sultanate. But he was defeated and had to retire to his capital. A long struggle for power and predominance ensued between Bahalol Lodhi of Delhi and Sultan Hussain Sharqi of Jaunpur, in which the brave but unfortunate king of Jaunpur was ultimately defeated.

Hussain Shah Sharqi, by about 883 Hijra (1478 A.D.) made three attempts to capture Delhi and depose Sultan Bahlol Lodhi, but every time either due to superior diplomacy or military ascendancy of Bahlol, truce was agreed. According to the famous historian Farishta, Hussain Sharqi, on one occasion, advanced over Delhi with one lakh horses and one thousand elephants. No ordinary monarch could mobilize such a formidable force and no insignificant warrior could dare to cross swords with Bahlol Lodhi. In some biographies of Imam Mahdi (A), Sultan Hussain Sharqi is described as a vassal of one Raja Dalpat of Goud and we gather an impression that he was an ordinary king of Jaunpur. As the life of Bahlol was full of adventures and series of success and glory along with some set backs, the life of his rival Sultan Hussain Sharqi was not less eventful. He faced many ups and downs. With great perseverance, he mobilized forces and always had burning desire to capture Delhi, but either due to misfortune or due to some inherent weakness in his diplomatic and military talents he was defeated on many occasions and faced many vicissitudes during his long martial career. The reference to Sultan Hussain Sharkqi in Mahdavia literature might depict some period of life when he was frustrated in his ambition and had to accept for some time the vassalage of some Raja Dalpat against whom he won a battle with the help of the Imam (A). As Imam Mahdi left Jaunpur, forever at the age of forty years, and never returned back to Jaunpur or any place which was the theatre of war between Sultan Hussain Sharqi and Bahlol Lodhi and never participated in any war thereafter and continued his journey and holy mission in southern and, eastern India. His companions did not deem it necessary to record the events which took place in northern India. In fact they were least interested in temporal matters. This might be the reason for the references about Sultan Hussain Sharqi as they stand in the annals of our history.

After this digression let us resume the narrative of the stupendous strife between Sharqi and Bahlol. When the formidable forces of Sultan Hussain Sharqi dashed with the forces of Bahlol at Sisar Village, the Sultan of Delhi by clever maneuver and obstinate battle defeated Sultan Hussain Sharqi who lost all his treasure and baggage along with many of his soldiers, horses and elephants. Hussain had to escape towards Rabery but was closely followed by Bahlol and another battle ensued and again Sultan Hussain was defeated and was forced to take refuge at Gawalior. The Raja of Gawalior supplied him with valuable military and monetary assistance. Bahlol did not dare to attack before the superior forces of Bahlol. Again re-equipped by the Raja and after remobilizing his forces, Sultan Hussain came down to Kalpy. Bahlol followed him and defeated him after a grim battle and the vanquished Sultan had no option but to retire towards his capital Jaunpur. After some time, Sultan Hussain Sharqi again opposed Bahlol on the banks of Kali Naddi, but he was again defeated. Bahlol not only captured his treasure and equipage but also captured the Queen of Sultan Hussain, Beebi Khonza who was the daughter of the late monarch Syed Aladdin. But she was treated with great respect by Bahlol Lodhi and was honorably released. Thereafter Bahlol retreated to Delhi. This shows that the victor and the vanquished both sustained heavy losses and required some more time to settle the account. After

recruiting his troops Bahlol Lodhi again advanced towards Jaunpur and expelled Sultan Hussain Sharqi, entrusted the throne of Jaunpur, to one of his sons Barbek and then advanced towards Kalpy. After capturing this town he entrusted the government of the same to his grandson Azam.

When Bahlol became old, war weary and disabled, he divided his extensive kingdom; Jaunpur was conferred on Barbek Khan, Kura and Manikpur on Alam Khan, Bhyraich on his nephew Shaikhzada Mohammed Firmully, known by the name of “Kala Pahar” (Black rock) due to his valor and ferocity. Lucknow and Kalpy were allotted to one Azam Humayun son of Bayazeed Khan, the eldest son of Bahlol. This prince was assassinated subsequently by his own servant. Budayun was allotted to Khan Jehan and Delhi with several districts of Doab was given to his son Price Nizam Khan who was declared as the heir of Bahlol and known afterwards as “Sikander Lodhi”. Hence the kingdom of Bahlol, acquired with so much of struggle and blood shed, was virtually disintegrated and fragmented before his eyes in his declining years. He died in the year 894 Hijra = 1488 A.D. (When Imaam Mahdi (A) was about forty seven years old).

After grave family feuds Sikander Lodhi succeeded to the throne after fighting with almost all of his brothers and cousins. Defeating everyone he surprisingly restored most of them on their respective position on condition of accepting his over lordship. Jaunpur was again restored to Barbek. As Sultan Hussain Sharqi was still alive and ruling some parts of Bihar, the Sultan wanted to check him through his brother. Sikander Lodhi died in the year 923 Hijra (the reign of Bahlol Lodhi and Sikander Lodhi covers almost the entire period of the holy life of the Imam (A)).

JAUNPUR:

The historic and sacred city of Jaunpur, the birth place of Hazrat Mahdi (A) was founded by the pious, sagacious and illustrious emperor of Tughlaq dynasty Ferozshah Tughlaq in or around the year 1361-62 A.D. (772 Hijri). According to various historical accounts Feroz Shah while on a hunting trip near the City of Zaffarabad found a picturesque spot on the bank of river Gomti where there were already ruins of earlier Hindu and Buddhist monasteries and hutments of Bhar tribes which once ruled the surrounding areas. The King decided to construct a fort at that spot considering its strategic importance and to develop a city. He immediately took steps to construct an impressive fort and other buildings necessary to form the nucleus of a beautiful town. In a short span of time several mosques, houses, schools, markets were constructed with the help of the ablest architects and engineers of Delhi and Daulatabad. When the construction of the fort and city was completed the King named it after his illustrious uncle Juna Khan (Mohammed bin Tuglaq) as Jaunpur and gradually this city became known as Jaunpur. Feroz Shah encouraged many learned men, scholars and saints to shift their residence to Jaunpur, by granting Jagirs and other donations to them and named various localities of the new city after the names of the nobles and scholars who chose Jaunpur as their abode.

After the fall of Tughlaq dynasty and the brief rule of Syed dynasty over the throne of Delhi, Malik Sarwar, an able administrator and brave commander of the Sultanate of Delhi, taking advantage of the fall of the central government assumed the titles of Malik ush Sharq and Atabak-e-Azamr, declared independence and founded Sharqi dynasty selecting Jaunpur as his capital. In his reign Jaunpur further developed as a capital of an independent and powerful kingdom and consequently many scholars and sufis were attracted towards this city as it was by then regarded as Dar-us-Suroor (the abode of bliss) when compared with the other big cities of Northern India which at that time were hit by political chaos. With the rise of Sharqi dynasty the glory of their capital Jaunpur also increased. When Ibrahim Shah Sharqi became the ruler of Jaunpur, he took special care to develop Jaunpur not only as a beautiful capital city but also as a great seat of learning and a cultural centre of unique

importance. As a consequence of Taimur's attack, many nobles of Northern India and saints and scholars of all northern cities migrated to Jaunpur and settled down there. Due to their services in the field of art and learning, religion and culture, under the generous patronage of Sharqi Sultans, the city of Jaunpur reached the peak of its glory by the time of Hazrat Mahdi's birth in the year 847 H and it came to be regarded as the Shiraz of India.

DECCAN DURING THE IMAM'S (A) LIFE:

In the ninth century Hijra, a great empire flourished in the south Indian peninsula, which is known as Bahmani Empire. Ahmed Shah I of Bahmani dynasty, who was the most able and pious king known in history as Ahmed Shah Wali Bahmani died in the year 839 Hijra = 1436 A.D. After his death, the Bahmani Empire started losing its way in the Deccan Plateau. Zaffar Khan, assuming title of Allauddin Ahmed II succeeded the pious king. But he was not so pious and eminent as his predecessor. He ruled from 17-4-1436 to 6-5-1458 A.D (862 Hijra). During his reign he led a number of campaigns against the Kingdom of Vijayanagar. He fought with the Malwa King as well. He appointed Mahmud Gawan, a sagacious and pious trader and warrior, as his Minister. Mahmud Gawan, initiated political compromises with the neighboring states; and as a consequence, for about a quarter of a century, conditions of peace prevailed. Mahmud Gawan was a gifted statesman and the Bahmanis, particularly during the reign of their weak kings greatly benefited by his services. When Alluddin Ahmed II succumbed to the injuries sustained during the last Telangana campaign in the year 1458 A.D., Alluddin Humayun Shah succeeded him. He elevated Mahmud Gawan as his Prime Minister. He fought several battles against Linga the Chief of Velmas of Telangana, who was supported by Kapileshwar, an ambitious king of Orissa. Sultan's forces were ultimately defeated and he lost many territories including Warangal. Farishta, the famous historian points Humayun as the cruelest king who ever ruled the Deccan plateau. According to him this unscrupulous king would seize the brides for his enjoyment before sending them to their bridegrooms. He suffered many rebellions and family feuds during his reign; and his cruelties gradually enhanced. But Harun Khan Sherqani, the famous historian of modern times differs from Farishta and says that Humayun Shah was not a wanton cut throat and a mean tyrant. He mostly relies on the testimony provided by Mahmud Gawans letters. On Humayun's death, his minor son Nizamuddin Ahmed Shah became the king at the age of eight years and ruled through the council of regency for only two years. He was succeeded by King Mohammed III. During his reign Mahmud Gawan was victim to a conspiracy and the ablest minister of the Bahmani Empire was executed brutally. After this diabolical act the king repented very much for his loss. The execution of Mahmud Gawan was a prelude to the down fall of the great Bahmani Empire. Mohammed Shah died in the year 887 Hijra, one year after the death of Mahmud Gawan at the young age of 29 years. Then Shahabuddin Mahmud assumed the regal throne and ruled from 26-3-1482 to 7-12-1518 (887 Hijra - 923 Hijra) (this period covers the entire mission of the Imam (A) in the southern and north eastern India). His reign was in fact the period of disintegration of the Bahmani Empire. The king remained as a puppet enjoying nominal control over the kingdom, while the empire was divided among the nobles in large principalities which ultimately became independent kingdoms. The rashness of state policy would manifest from the fact that shortly after the coronation of this worthless king, for no proper cause four thousand Turkish soldiers and their innocent families were killed in cold blood. (This act of brutality was committed shortly before or after the visit of the Imam (A) to the Deccan).

MALWA:

Bahmanis were also involved in a keen contest for territories with the Sultans of Malwa during the middle of the ninth century Hijra. Mahmud Khilji was ruling Malwa in the year 867 Hijra 1436 A.D. He was very ambitious to extend his territories and domain towards the south. Whenever conflicts

arose and trumpets of war were sounded, between Bahmanis and the Sultans of Malwa, an alliance was formed between the Kings of Gujarat and the potentates of Bahmani Empire. At this time Mahmud Shah was ruling Gujarat. In the year 872 Hijra - 1468 A.D a severe battle was fought between the Bahmani forces led by Nizamul Mulk and the Malwei forces led by Sirajul Mulk. The latter suffered crushing defeat and the strategic fortress of Kurla was occupied by the victorious Bahmani army. Sirajul Mulk was arrested after losing about five thousand men as dead in the battle but he was treated kindly by Nizamul Mulk, who allowed the entire Malwei army to leave the fortress unharmed. But in his hour of victory, while observing the formalities of surrender, Nizamul Mulk was treacherously murdered by two Rajputs of Malwei army. Hence his chivalry was rewarded with deceit and death.

ORISSA:

In these days Orissa was a powerful Hindu Kingdom ruled by a very ambitious Rajah Kapileshwar who fought many battles with the surrounding Muslim rulers and other Hindu Kings. In all probability he might have tested his metal even against Sultan Hussain Sharqi of Jaunpur. He was ultimately defeated by the coalition of Bahmanis and Vijayanagar in the year 1470 A.D. Vijayanagar also was a great empire of the south. It fought many battles either against or in coalition with surrounding Muslim Sultan.

GUJARAT:

Muzaffar Khan who was a general in the army of Mohammed Tughlaq was appointed as Governor of Gujarat by Feroz Shah Tughlaq. He ably administered the territory for a long time. After Taimur's invasion (1398 A.D), taking advantage of the weakness of Tughlaq dynasty, he declared himself Sultan of Gujarat. After him, his worthy grandson, Ahmed Shah I ruled Gujarat for a long period of thirty one years (1411 to 1442 A.D). He founded the beautiful city of Ahmedabad and ruled his kingdom with sagacity and grace. He had to fight many wars against the Rajputs and subdued them. He was succeeded by Sultan Mohammed Shah II 1442 to 1451 A.D who was succeeded by Sultan Qutubuddin Ahmed Shah II whose reign also was destined to be short (1451 to 1458 A.D). After his death Sultan Mahmood Shah Begda occupied the throne of Gujarat and ruled for more than half a century (1458 to 1511 A.D). This is the same Sultan Mahmood Begda whose name we find in Mahdavia annals. He was a great ruler and an able general. He often fought wars with religious zeal, M.S.Commissariat in his book "History of Gujarat" gives a biased account of the religious zeal of Mahmood Begda and his atrocities against the Rajputs and their religion. But he admits the military skill and success of Mahmood Begda in the following words "The military annals of the reign of Mahmood Begda, constitute a record of uninterrupted successes extending over a period of half century".

The above narrative is only a brief account of ruthless battles, and political and factional conflicts and chaotic conditions prevailing in India immediately before the birth and during the life time of Hazrat Mahdi (A). One can imagine what would have been the plight of common people when their rulers adopted blood bath as the fashion of the time. How cruelly they might have taxed their subjects in order to finance their war efforts, what would have been the condition of agriculture and industry when, day in and day out, rival armies were trampling the fields with their marches and extracting grains to feed their men and fodder for their horses. How the workshops of the craftsmen could survive the on-slaught of scarcity in raw material and uncertainty of market. What would have been the state of administration, when there was no effective government in many territories? What amount of poverty, hunger, disease and frustration would have vexed the population of this country? One may wonder how the newly established Muslim power in India could survive the attack, blood-

shed and pillage of Taimur and innumerable subsequent battles between the Muslim sultans throughout India. What impression the local population would have gathered about the Muslims and Islam if such war mongering and morally derivate sultans were left to themselves.

In this trying period, the Muslim saints, sufis and scholars who migrated from Arabia, Persia and Afghanistan took up the task not only of preserving and preaching the tenets of Islam in this country but also up-holding the cause of exploited humanity without any regard to caste, creed or color. They came and lived in this country as saviors of human values, patrons of the poor consolers of the aggrieved, helpers of the helpless and above all, the messengers of God and his last Prophet. For them the helpless slaves and all powerful Sultans were equal in status and they tried their best, even risking their lives and honor to restrain the kings and nobles from atrocities. Prominent among these saints were Hazrat Moinuddin Chishti (RH), Hazrat Nizamuddin Aowliya (RH), Hazrat Bakhtiar Kaki (RH), Hazrat Shaikh Fareed Shakargunj (RH) and Hazrat Naseeruddin Chirag Dehelvi (RH), Hazrat Khaja Banda Nawaz Gesudaraz (RH) and a large number of sufis of Khuladabad who with a host of their colleagues and disciples spread all over India, organized various socio-religious institutions and schools and through service and sincerity not only preached Islam but preserved the moral fabric of this country in that dark era. But when the eminent saints passed away one after the other a crisis arose, in the second quarter of the ninth century even in the religious and moral field. Although the institutions and schools founded by the great saints and scholars with the help and charity of the pious kings and nobles existed in important cities like Delhi, Jaunpur, Dowlatabad, Gulbarga, Bidar and Ahmedabad they were deprived of sincere guidance and able leadership, of course with few honorable exceptions. Fake sufis took the place of real saints, fanatical mullahs became the successors of learned divines, and seducers took the place of reformers. What would have been the moral state of the masses when most of the rulers, nobles, khazis and mullahs were behaving wild beasts? Some of the few pious men and saints who survived were forced to lead their lives in isolation. Darkness loomed large over Islamic horizon. This was the time for the advent of the Promised Mahdi.

THE ARAB SCENERIO:

About a hundred years before the birth of Imam Mahdi (A) the Abbasies Caliphate was practically destroyed with the destruction of Baghdad and the sack of their vast territories by the Mongol hordes who carried carnage every where and committed unprecedented atrocities. According to Ibn-e-Khaldun, the population before the sack of Baghdad was over two million, out of which sixteen lakh people perished in the slaughter of six weeks. In the words of Amreer Ali, "Bagdad, the abode of learning, the seat of culture, the eye and centre of saracenic world, was ruined for ever". Mustaasim the caliph was slaughtered along with his family. A few members of the house of Abbas escaped death and migrated to Egypt where they were treated only as nominal caliphs, having no political authority but enjoyed merely the title of caliphs as religious heads. At the time of the birth of Hazrat Mehdi (A) they were under the protection of Mumluk rulers who were ultimately destroyed by Osmani rulers. In the sixteenth century Sultan Salim, the great Osmani conqueror, obtained renunciation of the office of caliphate in his favor from the last Abbasies caliph. Since then the Osmani sovereigns assumed and enjoyed the title of caliph which was recognized by the bulk of Muslims.

FALL OF SPAIN:

The glorious Muslim empire of Spain was also declining by the time Imam Mahdi (A) was born. During his life time, due to the internecine conflicts of Muslim rulers, the treachery of Ferdinand and Isabella, whose marriage united the forces of Castile, Aragon and Leon the Muslim empire of Spain suffered severe shocks. Ultimately, after many battles, conspiracies and calamities including

famine, Granada fell to the atrocious Christians in the year 897 AH. 1491 A.D. The appeals of the Andalusian Muslims for help to the Sultans of Egypt and Rum proved futile. The last struggle of Musa the brave Muslim Knight of Spain to save the great Muslim empire proved equally futile; and the Muslims of Arab origin were expelled enmass from Spain and “The cross supplanted the crescent at the towers of Granada”

OSMANLI DYNASTY:

The famous Osmanli (or Osmani) dynasty was founded in the year 699 AH by Osman Khan. He fought many battles with the Mougols on one hand and Christians on the other and expanded and consolidated his domain and adopted the Crescent as the symbol of his state. After ruling for about twenty seven years he died and left behind as his personal assets a sword, a turban and armor. He was succeeded by very able successors like Arkhan Khan, Murad Khan the First and Bayazid Khan Yeldram, who succeeded one after the other as sultans. They were all endowed with war-like qualities and statesmanship and fought many battles with the Roman Christians and won most of them. During the glorious reign of Sultan Yeldram, the combined forces of Europe i.e. France, England, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Poland and Germany attacked the Osmanli empire at the instigation of the ruler of Constantinople who was the head of the remnants of the Roman Empire. The Pope also played a dominant role in infusing religious zeal and fanaticism among the combined forces of Europe with a vein to destroy the most powerful Muslim kingdom of the time. The ruler of Hungary Sajmond and the Duke of Burgundy were the prominent warlords who led the attack. The Christian armies started the attack and captured many cities of Osmanli empire and massacred the Muslims every where and committed most shameful atrocities and slaughtered even Women and children and also the aged persons. Sultan Yeldram showed great courage and mobilized his forces in a short time and attacked the combined forces of Europe. After a grim battle at Nichopolis, the Osmani forces won a decisive victory. In this battle about one and half lakh Christians were killed and many were arrested. The King of Hungary succeeded in escaping but almost all the war leaders were either killed or arrested. This historic battle was fought in the month of December 1396 A.D (799 AH), about half century before the birth of Imam Mahdi (A). It was the ambition of Sultan Yeldram to conquer Constantinople and punish the Roman emperor for this treachery. Unfortunately another ferocious tyrant Taimur, who being a Muslim himself, mostly devastated the small Muslim kingdoms and extended his carnage not only in Caucasus regions but also in the Indo-gangetic plains, became the rival of Sultan Yeldram. As a consequence of Christian conspiracy two Muslim conquerors of great ability clashed at Angora in the year 804 AH. In this unfortunate battle Muslims massacred the Muslims with impunity. Sultan Yeldram the brave conqueror was defeated and arrested. Taimur treated him with utmost cruelty and he died in prison. Taimur also could not survive long after this victory and his vast kingdom was also shattered.

After the death of Sultan Yeldram there was continuous sanguinary struggle for power in which the sons of Sultan Yeldram fought bitterly for a long period of eleven years shedding much Muslim blood for the sake of Osmani throne. But the Osmanli empire miraculously survived the said calamities and ultimately Sultan Mohammed Khan I became the emperor by killing some of his brothers and blinding the others. But he gave new life to the Osmanli dynasty. He was succeeded by his son Murad Khan II who ruled for about thirty years and further expanded and consolidated the Osmanli empire. After his death his young and brave son Mohammed II who is called also Mohammed the conqueror succeeded the throne. He had the ability, courage, and good fortune to siege and grim battle against the united Christian forces he captured Constantinople in the year 1453 (857 AH), when Imam Mahdi (A) was about ten years of age. This was the only great Muslim victory against the Christians which the Muslims achieved during the life time of Hazrat Mahdi (A). No doubt Mohammed the conqueror won

some more battles and conquered some more Christian territories but he was also involved in war with Persian and other Muslim Kings. The consequences were obvious. After his death in 887 AH, again the star of Osmanli empire was eclipsed. There were many internecine conflicts between Muslim rulers and great chaos prevailed in the Muslim world, through-out the life of Hazrat Mahdi (A).

The above historical sketch is sufficient to show that the period before the advent of Hazrat Mahdi (A) was one of the gloomiest, sanguinary and dark period of Muslim history although occasional gleams of glory e.g. the victory of Yeldram over the united forces of Europe and the rule and victories of Sultan Mohammed the Conqueror, are apparent. These were mostly military and political achievements. But Islam as a religion, as a philosophy of life and as a dynamic movement intended to emancipate humanity from the shackles of the forces of evil lost its momentum and became not only dormant but also degenerated. This was the time selected by God for the advent of His caliph the Imam Mahdi (A) to revive the faith of His last Prophet (PBUH) and to adore it with spiritual perfection.

CHAPTER II

THE PROMISED MEHDI (THE DOCTRINE OF HIS ADVENT)

The advent of Mahdi is one of the most fascinating, inspiring and thrilling concepts, the foundation of which is the series of various traditions (Hadis) of the Prophet (PBUH); traced from various sources which are not only numerous, but are mostly reliable. Hence this concept assumed the importance of a doctrine. Many of these traditions are really authentic; cogent and illuminating but some are unauthentic. All are based on ostensible or real prophesies of the Prophet (PBUH). As the authentic traditions about the advent of Mahdi (A) give great hope for the future to the Muslims about their spiritual salvation and also about the revival of Islamic values at the most crucial and delicate period of history, the Muslims even during the life time of the Prophet and thereafter become very much interested in knowing the attributes of the great personality who was given the title of Al-Mahdi by the Prophet (PBUH) himself. Moreover the Prophet (PBUH) foretold the high spiritual status of the Mahdi and predicted that he would be from the progeny of Hazrat Fatima (R) the most pious and beloved daughter of the Prophet (PBUH). All the Muslims truly attached to the faith, had great reverence for Hazrat Ali (R) and Fatima (R) in view of the fact that the Prophet had great affection for them due to their piety, devotion and sacrifices for the cause of Islam right from their childhood and also due to his natural filial affection. It was but natural that their descendents, particularly whose services and sacrifices for the faith is almost legendary, should enjoy the veneration of the Muslims. The Prophecy of the Prophet (PBUH) that Imam Mahdi (A) shall be from among the descendants of Hazrat Fatima (R) might have been the cause for eager preservation of authentic traditions by the faithful; and also the malicious manipulation of unauthentic traditions by the enemies of the house of Hazrat Fatima (R) and Hazrat Ali (R) who often pretended to be their staunch devotees.

The admixture of authentic and unauthentic traditions gave rise to great confusion and controversy about the advent of Mahdi and his attributes. In spite of many discrepancies in the traditions (Hadis) about the Mahdi, a great majority of Muslim sects both of Sunni and Shia origin believe in the advent of Mahdi as the greatest Imam of unquestionable innocence and spiritual eminence. Even great scholars, jurists and saints belonging to all sects of Muslims believed in the advent of Mahdi, as they had to believe the traditions, the source of which were the great companions of the prophet (PBUH) like Hazrat Ali (R), Hazrat Omer (R), Hazrat Ibn-e-Abbas (R) and others and their descendents like, Hazrat Hussain (R), Hazrat Abdullah Bin Omer (R) and others. Almost all the eminent Imams of early period and all saints of all orders believed in the advent of Mahdi and they had clear perception of his spiritual eminence and his mission as predicted by the Prophet (A). Some eminent saints during the course of high mystic experience misjudged themselves and claimed for some time that they were the promised Mahdi. But such pious saints shortly realized, by the grace of Allah, that their claim was not correct and hence they renounced it and repented for it. Among such claimants of the status of the Promised Mahdi we find the venerable names of Hazrat Khawja Hassan Basri (RH), Hazrat Junaid Baghdadi (RH), Shaikh Idris Rami (RH), Hazrat Abdul Khader Jeelani (RH), Hazrat Mohiuddin Arabi (RH), Hazrat Syed Mohammed Gesu Daraz (RH) and some other eminent saints. The facts about their claim for a short period are to be found in all the authentic biographies of the said saints. The very fact that the said eminent saints who were also scholars of high repute claimed for some time, to be the promised Mahdi, shows that they believed in the advent of the Promised Mahdi and his high spiritual status. Moreover all authentic collections of Hadis, (traditions of the Prophet (PBUH) contain several traditions about the advent of Mahdi. Hence the concept of the advent of Mahdi assumed great significance in due course of time and became part of Muslim faith as the

concept of the resurrection of the Prophet Jesus (Hazrat Essa (A)). But the attributes of Mahdi, the period of his advent, the scope of his mission and the identity of the real promised Mahdi became the subject of many controversies during the course of Islamic history. Some scholars without going deep into the significance of the concept about the advent of Mahdi have preferred an illusive course of denying altogether the authenticity of the concept itself. Ibn-e-Khuldun and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, in spite of their acknowledged fecundity are unfortunately among such scholars. In modern times, due to various reasons, the Muslims in general do not bother much about the concept of the advent of Mahdi or resurrection of Hazrat Essa (A). Although the learned of almost all sects, with few exceptions, treat this matter to be a part of their faith and belief.

The word “Mahdi”, obviously, is an Arabic word, which literally means the guided one or one who gets guidance from God in order to guide humanity. This word assumed the significance of a title when the Prophet (PBUH) of God used it to signify the caliph of God whose advent was predicted and promised in several of his traditions reported in many authentic collections of very learned Imams and scholars. Hence the real Mahdi is called the Promised Mahdi (Mahdi-e-Maud), some of the traditions which are significant and which are quoted in many Mahdavia and non-Mahdavia works about the advent and proof of Mahdi (A) are quoted below for the reference of the reader in order to facilitate the proper appreciation of the life and teachings of Imam Mahdi (A).

- (1) One of the important traditions originally narrated by Ibn Abbas (R), a learned companion of the Prophet (PBUH) reported by Ibn Abi Shaiba, Tabrani, Abu Nua'im and Hakim in their respective collections is as follows:

“The world shall not come to an end unless God creates a person from the progeny of my family (or my house i.e. Ahla bait) who shall bear my name and his father shall bear the name of my father. He would fill the world so much with justice as it would be filled with atrocities.”

- (2) Another Hadith from the same source is as follows:-

The Prophet (S) said: - “God would send a young man, who shall be from the progeny of my house, and who shall be safe from blasphemies and shall rectify the defects of Umma (the body of believers) and as God has assigned the function of introduction of faith from us. He shall culminate it through us (Khattam-e-deen).”

- (3) The same source reports:-

“The Prophet once said that even if a day remained for the end of this world He would prolong the day unless and until, from the progeny of my house, a person is born whose name would be my name and his father would have the name of my father and he would fill the world with justice as (by that time) it would be full of atrocities, he would equally distribute the wealth and would enrich the hearts of believers. He would survive for seven years or nine years (after proclamation of his status as Mahdi (A)). After him, life would be mostly devoid of virtue.

(This tradition is reported by Hafiz Abu Nayeem).

- (4) A tradition reported in the famous collection of Abu Dawood, which is one of the “Sihah”, i.e. the six most reliable collections of Ahadis (Traditions) states: “Mahdi shall be from the progeny of my daughter Fatima (RZ).”

(5) Another important Hadith quoted from Ibn Abbas (R) is as follows:-

"The Prophet (S) said My Umma shall not extinguish because I am at its beginning, Esa (Jesus) (A) son of Maryam (Mary) is at the end and Mahdi (A) is in between (in order to guide)".

This tradition is reported in his book by Hafiz Abu Nayeem and also Imam Ahmed Hambal in his "Masnad" (the collection of Hadis).

(6) Abu Sayeed Khudri (R) another companion of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) narrates as follows:-

"The Prophet (S) said that in the era of Mahdi my Umma shall be rewarded with divine blessing. The earth and skies shall be generous to them." This tradition is reported by Abu Nuayeem and Tabrani.

(7) The illustrious companion of the Prophet (A) Abdullah Bin Omer (R) narrates:-

"The Prophet said that Mahdi shall be the descendant of Imam Hussain (R). He shall be born in the East and even if mountains obstruct him, he would carve out his way."

(8) Ali Bin Al-Zaili quoting his father says:-

When I visited Prophet Mohammed (S) when he was about to breath his last, Hazrat Fatima (R) was sitting near his head and he was giving his last instructions to her; At last he said "By God who has sent me on truth; Mahdi is from us - when the world would be full with commotion, and riots; and clashes would prevail and faith and worldly lusts would intermingle and the outlets would be closed, rampage would became rampant; neither the elders would have compassion for the younger nor the younger would show respect for the elders; then, Allah shall create from amongst our descendants, one Mahdi, who shall subdue the evil forces, would shed the restraints of hearts; and would be firm in faith in the closing era, as firmly as I was at the beginning. He would promote justice to full extent in this world; as it would, by then, be full of cruelty."

This tradition is reported in Hafiz Abu Nu'ayeem's collection.

(9) Saoab-Bin Hamza (R) said:-

"When I met Hussain(R) s/o Ali (R) and asked:

"Are you Imam Mahdi (A)," he replied "No". Then I asked 'is your son or grand-son is Mahdi' he replied 'No' then I enquired who is he? He replied, "He is such an Imam who would fill the world with justice as it would be full of atrocities and he would appear much after all important Imams of the faith, in such a glorious way as Prophet Mohammed (S) appeared as the last Prophet (A) long after earlier Prophets."

(10) The Prophet said

"After me, in my Umma, there shall appear a Mehdi at the interval of every hundred years. Among them nine shall be Mahdi in literal sense and the Tenth shall be the Promised Mahdi (A). Whoever confirms him confirms me and whoever denies him denies me." This Hadis

has been reported by Imam Abu Khasim, in his introduction to Sharah-Al-Seer and Hazrat Syed Abdul Khader Jeelani Mahbooh Subhani (RH) in his “Malfoozat” and also in his “Masharikh-ul-Anwar.”

(11) Sauban (R) is quoted as saying:-

The Prophet said: “For your (referring to the generality of Muslims) treasure (throne) of Khilafat, there would be a fight between three aspirants for Khilafat but none would get it. Then from the East people bearing black standards would appear and they would massacre you as none would have done before. But no one would defeat them. Then the Caliph of God Mahdi would appear. If you hear about him, go to him and offer fealty even if you would have to crawl on icebergs for that purpose as he would be the Caliph of God.” This tradition is reported by many compilers of Hadis including Abu Nu’ayem, Ibn-e-Maja, Imam Ahmed in his "Musnad" and Imam Baihaqi in his “Dalayal-un-Naboowat”.

(12) Nayeem-bin-Hammad narrates quoting Khatada (R) the Prophet (A) said “Mahdi shall arrive from Madina to Makkah. People will recognize him and shall offer fealty to him between Rukn and Maqam and it would be accepted by him at that place with aversion.” *(Allama Shamsi (R) in his thesis 'Tanveer-ul-Hidaya' gives elaborate reasons for believing that in this Hadis the word Madina does not refer to the capital of the Prophet but it refers to the city from which the Imam (A) proceeded to Makkah).*

(13) Abu Harish bin Mughaira Basri narrates that when he enquired from Imam Hussain (R), “from what signs we can recognize Mahdi?” he replied "from his solemnity and dignity". Then I asked what are the other signs and Imam Hussain replied “his ability to distinguish between the permissible and the forbidden” he added: 'People will depend on him and he will not depend on anyone'.

(14) Tawoos (R), one of the companions of the Prophet (S) used to say “It is my desire that I should survive till the era of Mahdi (A). In his era, every benefactor would thrive in his benevolence the repentance of offenders would be accepted; and he would distribute wealth; and he would be stern against the learned and kind towards the poor.”

(15) The Prophet said: "Mahdi is from me; he shall follow me in my foot-steps and shall not falter."

In the holy Quran there is no express reference to the promised Mahdi but there are clear hints in some verses about his advent and only such of those scholars and commentators on the scriptures who were endowed with spiritual powers and mystic insight could follow such hints. In this regard we are not referring to the Mahdavi commentators but to those who adorned the Islamic seats of learning much prior to the advent of Mahdi. For details about their names and works one may refer to the more comprehensive works on the subject. In this regard the commentary namely Tafseer Taveelat-Al-Quran by Moulana Abdur Razak Kashi is important. The other commentaries relevant in this aspect are Tafseer Velmi and Tafseer kashf-ul-Haquayakh (Haqaiq).

It is evident from the references made so far about the traditions of the Prophet (PBUH) and the Quranic hints about the advent of Mahdi, that the same are basically prophecies. As a matter of rule the divine prophecies made in the scriptures are couched in symbolic language. The prophetic language of prophecies indicates some more clarity but the element of symbolism and suspense is still apparent in

them. If correctly reported by the preservers of traditions, such prophecies convey the meaning and object in some comprehensive manner. But when traditions are distorted and coined by unauthentic reporters the meaning and purpose of the prophecies are lost and future generations are bound to suffer from great confusion. Hence the authentic Imams who compiled and preserved the authentic traditions of the Prophet (PBUH) took great pains in their noble work of compilation; and Muslim scholars have treated the work of collection, verification and compilation of traditions not only as an art but a systematic branch of learning (Ilme Hadis). In spite of all this care and caution, several inconsistencies, and discrepancies have crept into the traditions concerning the concept of Mahdi. But, however, no sincere reader of these collections of traditions about the advent of Mahdi could miss the following among other points:

- (1) That a caliph of God endowed with great spiritual attainments would appear at appropriate time who would claim to be the Mahdi promised by the Prophet (PBUH).
- (2) He would be from the progeny of Hazrat Fatima (R) the daughter of the Prophet (PBUH).
- (3) He would remove the heretical innovations and schism which would pervade the Islamic society at the time of his advent.
- (4) He would follow the footsteps of the Prophet (PBUH) in all matters of Shariat so strictly that no person, however, eminent and pious he might be, could match him in this aspect. Hence he would be absolutely innocent.
- (5) He would explain both the explicit and implicit meanings of Quranic verses.
- (6) He would culminate the spiritual aspect of Islam and invite the believers to have the vision of Allah.
- (7) To accept him as Imam Mahdi would be binding on all Muslims.
- (8) The name of his father and that of his mother would be the same as that of the noble parents of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH).
- (9) He would fight against atrocities and would fill the world with peace and justice.
- (10) He would disdain worldly possessions and would distribute the wealth equally among all.
- (11) He would appear in the East and his advent would be in a period somewhere between the advent of the Prophet (PBUH) and the reappearance of Hazrat Essa (A).
- (12) He would save the Umma from extinction of faith; and would restore, by his example, the pristine glory of Islam.

The above are some of the important attributes of Mahdi deducible from the authentic traditions of the Prophet reported in the most authentic Sunni collections of Hadis. The life of Hazrat Syed Mohammed Jaunpuri (A) narrated briefly in the following pages, would reveal how far it was in accordance with the authentic prophecies of the Prophet and the Quranic hints about the advent of Mahdi and his mission.

We do not venture, through this book to provide a proof for the claim of Hazrat Syed Mohammed (A) to be promised Mahdi (A) in the light of Hadis or Quran and to enter into the realms of scholastic discussions in the traditional manner. Many books of great and pious scholars containing such discourses are available in both Persian and Urdu language for the reference of those who are interested in the subject.

The identity of Prophets, saints and caliphs of God cannot be established beyond all doubts in the light of earlier prophecies contained in earlier scriptures or traditions of earlier prophets. This is true even for the greatest and the most eminent Prophet (PBUH). His glory does not depend on scholastic arguments; and his claim to be the last Prophet is proved not by such arguments but by the greatness of his work, his mission, his character and his impact. The sun does not require any scholastic or other type of arguments for the proof of its existence and glory; for its perception only beholding eyes are required. The purblind can never have its clear perception. Any amount of arguments about its existence would not make them perceive the real glory of the sun. Same is the case with Prophet Mohammed (S) and the promised Mahdi (A) for the non-believers. Persons who read and appreciate their glorious lives without bias and with a tinge of inherent belief only would be able to recognize the truth of their respective claims. This book is meant for un-biased and sincere Muslim readers who would realize that the whole life and the mission of the Imam (A) as narrated in this humble work and other authentic biographies provides the proof of the genuineness of his claim and purity and sincerity of the belief of his followers more than any traditional scholastic discourse.

CHAPTER III

BIRTH, CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

On 14th Jamadi-ul-Awwal 847 Hijra (1443 A.D), on Monday, at night the renowned city of Jaunpur (U.P) witnessed that all the idols in the temples and other seats of Pagan worship fell down and the people heard an unknown voice reciting part of Quranic verse i.e., “... *Truth has descended falsehood has vanished as it ought to have vanished*” they noticed that the lights from all lamps lit in the houses suddenly extinguished and a benign fluorescent light illumined every nook and corner of every street and household of Jaunpur. People were amazed and bewildered on the occurrence of these miraculous events, but some of them who were pious and spiritually advanced came to the conclusion that some eminent personality, some man of destiny or some saint destined to bring salvation for the deserving was born. Shaikh Danial (RH), the leading Saint of those times who was pious and venerable and who was running a great school for Islamic studies at Jaunpur became inquisitive about the above mentioned events and started enquiring about the birth of children on that momentous night. He was informed that God in his mercy to Hazrat Syed Abdullah and his learned and pious wife Bibi Amina had blessed them with a son whose body even at the time of birth was elegant. Hazrat Shaikh Danial (RH) on hearing this news rushed to the house of Hazrat Syed Abdullah and enquired about the blessed boy. He, after some meditation predicted that the new born would be the promised Mehdi. He congratulated Hazrat Syed Abdullah and asked what name he would assign to his son. Syed Abdullah replied that on that night, he saw in his dream, Prophet Mohammed (S) commanding him to name his son after him as Mohammed. Hence in obedience, he would call him Syed Mohammed. Then the Shaikh enquired about the appearance and face cut of his son. The description given by Syed Abdullah (RH) convinced the Shaikh those traditions. According to a tradition reported in the sacred collections of Hadis, the Prophet (A) once predicted “Mahdi shall be from me, he shall appear after me, his name shall be my name, his father's name shall be that of my father and his mother’s name shall be that of my mother.” The coincidence of name Hazrat Syed Abdullah and Bibi Amina and their son Mohammed with the name of the prophet and his parents have reminded the Shaikh of the predictions of the Prophet(S). According to various authentic biographies of Imam Mahdi (A) childhood was extraordinary and full of miracles, all of which cannot be mentioned here for the sake of brevity. It is not uncommon and history is full of examples of extra-ordinary and even miraculous circumstances which prevailed at the time of the birth of great Prophets and saints. Even men otherwise great displayed signs of their future greatness and glory right from their childhood. As a child and young boy Hazrat Mahdi (A) displayed extra-ordinary genius and even spiritual power. Consequently Shaikh Danial (RH) due to his pious insight realized and declared that the extra-ordinary boy was none else but the promised Mahdi (A). Other learned pious men of Jaunpur who believed that the time for the advent of the Promised Mahdi had come thought the Hazrat Syed Mohammad (A) might be the very person entitled to hold that position by the grace of God.

Hazrat Mahdi (A) commenced his learning and joined the school at a very young age. When his elder brother, Syed Ahmed, who was the student in the school of Hazrat Shaikh Danial, brought him to the school, the Shaikh received him with so much affection, consideration and respect that Syed Ahmed was amazed. After some time when both the brothers were sitting the Shaikh, one venerable and elderly person came to the school and the Shaikh received him with great respect and had a talk with him. When he departed, the Shaikh asked Syed Ahmed whether he knew who the visitor was. Syed Ahmed replied that he don't know him. Then the Shaikh asked Hazrat Syed Mohammed (A) the same question, He immediately replied that was the Prophet Khizar (A), who according to the tradition is the special messenger of God having longest life span and is spared for guiding people when they are in distress and conveying special spiritual messages to the eminent saints. On hearing the answer of the

young Imam (A) the Shaikh turned towards Syed Ahmed and said: “This is the reason why I am treating your younger brother with so much respect”. Thereafter Syed Ahmed also started respecting his younger brother as he should have respected elderly and pious persons. These were the days when the young Imam was about to join the famous school of Hazrat Shaikh Danial (RH) for formal and regular education, at the age of about four and a half years.

COMMENCEMENT OF LEARNING (TASMIAH KHANI):

Before joining the school and commencing his formal education, the Imam's father Hazrat Syed Abdullah, celebrated his Tasmiah Khani with great pomp and enthusiasm and invited many Ulema, Saints, and Nobles of Jaunpur. This ceremony which signifies the commencement of regular education is performed when a child attains the age of four years, four months and four days. In view of the great importance given by Islam to learning and acquisition of knowledge, Muslims treat this occasion in the life of a child as very solemn and happy. Hazrat Syed Abdullah was well to do; and he belonged to respectable family of Syed and was a descendent of Hazrat Ali (R) the fourth Caliph of the Prophet (A) and Hazrat Imam Hussain (R) the great martyr. Among Syed Abdullah's ancestors were the most eminent Imams like Imam Moosa Kazim (RH), Imam Jaffar Sadiq (RH), and Imam Zainulabeddin (RH). He was attached to the Chistiya order of Sufis. The Imam's pious mother also was a descendant of Hazrat Imam Hussain (R). The grand-father of Hazrat Syed Mohammed Jaunpuri (A) whose name was Syed Osman (RH) came down from Samarkhand to Jaunpur in the hay days of Sharqi dynasty and was received with great honor. The Imam's ancestors, both maternal and paternal, held high positions under the Sharqia dynasty of Jaunpur. Imam's maternal uncle Syed Ali, also known as Malik Khyam-ul-Mulk, was an important officer of Sultan Hussain Sharqi as his title suggests. In view of the above family background, and in view of the fact that the Imam already attained fame at Jaunpur due to the circumstances of his birth and his early child-hood, his Tasmia Khani (Bismillah Ceremony) was well attended. When the ceremony commenced and the young Imam (A) was seated on musnad for reciting the Quranic verses as is customary, he suddenly got up and paid respect to a stranger. The guest were wondering, who was the object of the Imam's salutations. After some meditation, Hazrat Shaikh Danial (RH) realized that the stranger who was present was none else but Khizer (A) and he also got up to salute him and invited him to come nearer and perform the Tasmiah Khani. Hazrat Khizer (A) replied that he was ordained by God only to attend the ceremony in honor of the occasion and to say “amen” when the Imam (A) recites the customary prayer. Hence Shaikh Danial (RH) performed the Tasmia Khani and when the Imam (A) repeated the prayer, Hazrat Khizer (A) said “Amen”.

The Imam (A) at the very commencement of regular education displayed extraordinary qualities of mind and spirit; and every man observing him in those days was bewildered at his genius which was almost miraculous. The Imam learnt by heart the entire Quran at the tender age of seven years. His teacher Hazrat Danial was amazed and proud at the extraordinary rate at which Hazrat Mahdi (A) was grasping and mastering all branches of Islamic learning. He became very famous through out the learned circles of Jaunpur which included many ulemas and saints due to his extraordinary genius. At the very young age of 12 years the title of "Asad-ul-Ulema" (the tiger of the learned) was conferred on the Imam by his contemporaries. According to Mahdavia traditions, during the course of formal education and training of the Imam at the school of Hazrat Shaikh Danial (RH) Hazrat Khaja Khizer (A) used to visit the school in order to impart special spiritual instructions to him. At that point of time, once Hazrat Khizer (A) asked Shaikh Danial (RH) to bring the young Imam to a mosque known as Khokri Masjid, which was located at the banks of Gomti River in the suburbs of Jaunpur. When the Imam (A) and his teacher along with the brother of the Imam, Syed Ahmed visited the Mosque on the appointed hour, Hazrat Khizer (A) took the Imam in a corner of the Mosque and solemnly presented him with a sacred relic, representing the spiritual heritage of the prophet Mohammed (S) which was

entrusted to Hazrat Khizer (A) by the Prophet (S) himself with a direction to deliver it to his eminent successor, the Caliph of God. The Urdu and Persian biographies refer to it as an "amanat", what it consisted of cannot be conceived by ordinary people. According to some traditions, it consisted of the trust of Almighty in the human being as his Caliph and it had to be delivered symbolically to the most supreme of the Human beings, Prophet Mohammed (S) and Hazrat Mehdi (A). It is reflected in all Saint-hood, conferred on all saints. But in its absolute form it was reserved for the Promised Mahdi (A). In its formal aspect, according to some traditions it represented the mode of Zikr-e-Khafi, roughly described in brief as silent and inward rhythmic repetition of the faith affirming one God Almighty and negation all other false objects of worship including one's ego, with every incoming and out-going breath. This mode of Zikr, as conveyed to Hazrat Mahdi (A) through Prophet Mohammed (S) in its refined and perfect form, was one of his basic spiritual teachings. On the solemn occasion of the transfer of this heritage, Hazrat Khizer (A) confirmed that Hazrat Syed Mohammed was the promised Mahdi (A) and he formally offered fealty and learnt Zikr-e-Khafi from the Imam. Immediately afterwards Hazrat Shaikh Danial (RH) and Syed Ahmed (RH) followed the example of Hazrat Khizer (A). Such spiritual experiences, although difficult of perception for common people, are a part of the holy order of vilayat (saint-hood) and the lives of saints are full of similar examples. Many learned Ulema and pious saints including his own teacher Hazrat Shaikh Danial (RH) gradually became his devotees; and even during youthful days of the Imam, they started believing that he was promised Mahdi. They initially started calling him Syed-ul-Auliya (leader of saints), as a mark of veneration. Many Ulema used to consult him for solving their scholastic and spiritual problems and riddles. Gradually the Imam became famous for his facundity and saintly eminence. Apart from the Mahdavi biographers, Moulvi Mohammed Khaja Ibadullah after gathering evidence from other Sunni Historians has confirmed the above mentioned facts about the unique respect enjoyed by the Imam (A) among the Ulema and saints of Jaunpur right from his youthful days. According to traditions preserved by Mahdavi biographers and as narrated by Hazrat Syed Hussain Mahmudi in his book *Al-Mahdi-Al-Maud* the parents of the Imam died when he was still very young but the exact dates of their demise are not available. His teacher Hazrat Shaikh Danial also passed away in the year 865 Hijra when the Imam was only eighteen years old. At the age of nineteen, the Imam married Bibi Allahdadi (R) who was the daughter of his paternal uncle Hazrat Syed Jalal (R). He was blessed with two daughters Bibi Khunza (R) and Bibi Fatima (R) and two sons Miran Syed Mahmood (R) and Miran Syed Ajmal (R)

By this time, at the command of God, Hazrat Mahdi started his campaign against all impurities of faith and religious practices, which had polluted the Islamic society due to the local pagan influences or due to moral degeneration which was a consequence of the political turmoil and social and economic decay referred to in Chapter I. He reminded the Muslims about their duty as enjoined by the Holy Quran and Prophet Mohammed (S) about establishing truth and piety and eliminating heresies and sins. (Amar Bil Maroof wa Nahi an-il Munkar). He started delivering sermons every day in the late afternoons and on special occasions of Juma prayers and also after festival prayers. He selected the verses of Quran as the theme of his lectures. His elegant style of simple eloquence, his captivating personality and sincerity of purpose attracted thousands of people who used to be almost spell bound while hearing him. The space provided by the mosques and schools of Jaunpur could not accommodate his enthusiastic audience and many had to sit on the house tops and branches of the surrounding trees. His miraculous voice used to be audible to one and all sitting far and near and the message he tried to convey touched every heart according to its capacity. The Imam by that time was not ordained by God to openly claim to be the Promised Mahdi and there was little scope for any opposition to his message. The Imam in those days concentrated more on the first part of his mission i.e., revival of Shariat. He reminded the Muslims that the cause of their degeneration was their lust for worldly gains. He emphasized that the tenets of Quran and the life of the Prophet(S) are the only sources of inspiration through which one could aspire for salvation. His own example of perfectly adhering to these sources

of inspiration made him extremely popular at Jaunpur and the surrounding areas. Lakhs of Muslims became his disciples and his popularity reached such heights which could not be touched by the wings of envy or jealousy. His lectures transformed not only the lives of thousands of Muslims rich and poor alike but also inspired many non-Muslims who as a consequence were converted to Islam. Among his disciples there was a formidable group of bairagis who were not only pious and selfless but were also proficient in martial arts of those times. These devotees were so strongly attached to Hazrat Syed Mohammed (A) that they could lay down their lives at his command. The Imam did not confine his activities merely to sermons, exhortations and moral reforms but he also participated along with his disciples in various battles fought against the enemies of Islam (of course according to some traditions, but all traditions bear testimony to his participation in the battle against Raja Dalpat Rai). Many non-Mahdavi historians from Abdul Fazal of antiquity to Abul Kalam of recent times and many others confirm about the above mentioned facts relating to the dynamic impact of the Imam's personality, his purity and devotion to the spirit of Islam and his extreme popularity.

JIHAD AND ABSORPTION

The King of Jaunpur, Sultan Hussain Sharqi who was not only a great warrior and able ruler but also a man of saintly temperament, became the staunch devotee of the Imam. Thereafter the King never undertook a military expedition and never made any important decisions without consulting him or without obtaining his blessings. Sultan Hussain Sharqi was then under the over lordship and vassalage of one Raja Dalapat Rai who was the powerful king of the State of Goud. On one occasion, when the Imam was addressing his devotees including the Sultan, he was preaching that it was most unbecoming of a Muslim ruler to be a vassal of an infidel King. Sultan Hussain Sharqi, inspired by the said Sermon of the Imam, refused to pay the annual tribute to the Raja. In order to punish the Sultan the Raja attacked the State of Jaunpur, with a formidable army consisting of heavy cavalry, arches and infantry apart from war elephants. The Sultan's army was very small and ill-equipped when compared with the gigantic force brought forward by the Raja for the battle. The Imam was not content by merely blessing the Sultan or praying for his victory. He personally joined the Sultan's army along with his 313 bairagis (according to some biographers the number of bairagis was 1500), the brave young men who were imbued with soldiers of high professional skill. The Raja's arms, apart from its numerical superiority, consisted of brave and trained soldiers. When the battle commenced, in spite of the courage and zeal of his army, the Sultan could not hold the field for long and his men started retreating in disarray. The Raja's elephant, holding a huge chain in its trunk and rotating the same to the utter dismay of the Sultan's vanguard, was advancing forward trampling under its feet everyone who dared to hold the ground before it. The Sultan was prepared for retreat but the Imam (A) and his bairagis held the ground fighting with utmost ferocity and firmness, unmindful of the dangers and confident of victory. The Imam (A) riding his steed came face to face with the deadly elephant whose back was adored by the majestic Raja. When the elephant advanced, the Imam (A) reciting Quranic verses, praying for victory, shot an arrow which pierced the root of the elephant's trunk and it fell screaming wildly and the Raja was dismounted. He secured a horse and advanced towards the Imam (A) and attacked him with his sword which failed to strike. In a moment, the Imam (A) retaliated with his sword and dealt a decisive blow at the Raja's shoulder and the sword descended down to his bosom and his heart protruded out of it. According to tradition, when the Imam (A) saw the heart of the slain Raja, he noticed that the image of the deity which the Raja used to worship was engrained on it. When the Imam (A) saw this extraordinary scene, he was greatly moved with the thoughts that when the unreal is worshipped intensely the impact on human heart and soul is so great; what would happen when the real is worshipped with heart and soul. This was the turning point in the Imam's (A) life. He left the battle field in victory amidst applause and veneration of one and all including the Sultan but unmindful or rather unconscious of everything and everybody except Him at whose command he fought, he won and

he was lost to Him. The Sultan proclaimed that the Imam (A) was the hero of the battle and carried him in palanquin accompanied by the martial procession of victorious soldiers. Soon afterwards Sultan Hussain Sharqi offered considerable estate, money and bodyguards, by personally. At the end of the battle Imam (A) received a divine message reminding him that he was not created for riding horses, winning battles and conquering states; instead, he was created for Him and the divine cause. No sooner the message was conveyed to the Imam (A), he got down from his horse and sat on the ground and the above mentioned sublime mood prevailed over him.

THE ABSORPTION:

For a long period of Twelve years Hazrat Mahdi (A) remained in a state of deep absorption in Almighty (Jazba-e-Haq), almost unconscious about any thing worldly, always fasting and meditating. Only at the time of namaz he used to gain consciousness and after offering the compulsory prayers used to relapse in the same condition of deep absorption. Such spiritual condition was experienced by many saints, but during such state of mind and spirit, many of them lost touch with the strict rules of Shariat. But it was the privilege of the Imam (A) that, by God's grace he never failed to observe any duty enjoined by the Shariat even during the said extraordinary phase of his life. During this period according to traditions, the Imam (A) consumed scanty quantities of food and water and remained always fasting. When his pious wife Bibi Allahdadi (R), who faithfully served and looked after the Imam (A) during these long years of divine absorption, once eagerly enquired, what would happen to him if he continued to go on without food, the Imam (A) affectionately replied that God was sustaining him with the same subtle food which sustained the spirit. It is not uncommon with saints and spiritually elevated persons, that during the course of their extreme spiritual exertions and deep absorption in God, they do not require worldly means of sustenance e.g. food and water for very long periods. He was very much pleased with the devotion and piety of his wife and blessed her and prayed for her salvation and highest spiritual rewards. During this extraordinary phase of life the Imam (A) attained highest spiritual glories. He often referred to it as a phase of unlimited divine revelations of almighty.

CHAPTER IV

DIVINE JOURNEY

When the above mentioned state of deep absorption gradually receded and the Imam (A) regained worldly consciousness and started taking part in routine activities, he was ordained by God to migrate from Jaunpur and commence his holy mission and also to perform Hajj. In compliance, he left his house, his native place and many of his relatives and friends never to return again. When he was about to leave, the kind hearted Sultan Hussain Sharqi was very much perturbed. He initially tried to persuade the Imam (A) not to leave his country; but he came to know that the Imam (A) himself was helpless, as he was ordained by God to fulfill his mission and destiny which required continuous migration from place to place, visits to distant lands and kingdoms always preaching the religion, the traditions and the example of Prophet Mohammed (S) (Peace be on him). When the Sultan realized that it was impossible for the Imam (A) to remain in his kingdom, he expressed his desire to renounce his kingdom and to join the Imam (A) in his pious mission. The Imam (A) appreciating his zeal directed the Sultan to remain at Jaunpur and rule over his state as it was necessary in the interests of the Muslims of that area. He blessed the king who was so faithful and devoted and exhorted him to do his best to advance the cause of Islam in India. The Imam (A) migrated from Jaunpur when he was about 40 years of age in 887 Hijra. His faithful and pious wife, his young son Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) his servant and follower Hazrat Shah Dilwar (R), Hazrat Miyan Bheek (R) Miyan Syed Salamullah (R) and other staunch followers in all about seventeen in number accompanied him in the arduous journey with the only they would to gain the approval and approbation of Almighty.

AT DANAPUR: The Imam (A) and his followers reached Danapur and stayed there for sometime. There, the pious wife of the Imam (A) had divine revelations that her husband was the Promised Mahdi. She disclosed this fact to the Imam (A) who confirmed that what was revealed to her was true. He further told her that God out of His grace, on many earlier occasions, had revealed this reality to him but the time for formal declaration had not yet arrived. When his young son Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R), at the same place, came to know about this, he was so much overwhelmed by spiritual ardor that he lost consciousness for sometime. He was so pious and devoted to his father and followed him in his entire mission so faithfully, that he came to be called later as Sani-e-Mehdi. He was destined to succeed the Imam (A) as his first Caliph. Mahdavis always held him in highest esteem and reverence. The other followers of the Imam including Hazrat Shah Dilwar (R) had similar revelations. Hazrat Shah Dilwar (R) was the nephew of Raja Dalapat Rai. He was captured after the war described above and was given under the care and custody of Sultan Hussain Sharqi's sister Saleema Khatoon who being issueless brought him up as her own son. He was only a boy at that time and had a religious bent of mind. The lady presented the young prince to the Imam (A) and under his pious influence he was converted to Islam and became a very devoted follower of Hazrat Mahdi (A) and attained highest spiritual glory. The Imam (A) always treated him as his son. As he was very much overwhelmed by sublime spiritual experience and was unable to move, Hazrat Shah Dilwar (R) was left at Danapur under the care of some friends. He joined the Imam (A) in his journey much afterwards.

Due to the spiritual training imparted by the Imam (A) and the love of God infused by him in his followers, they reached remarkable spiritual heights. Even during the early phase of his journey, when the Imam (A) was staying near Danapur one of his follower Miya Bheek (R) visited a village where he saw a crowd which was weeping and crying aloud. He was very much absorbed in meditation and while passing by, after casting a glance at the crowd, enquired from them about the cause of their mourning. They ruefully told him that their head-man was dead. At this juncture, Miya Bheek (R)

stared at the dead body and declared, "He is not dead." Lifting the hand of the dead body he commanded in the manner of Hazrat Esa (Jesus) (A) "Get up in the name of God". The dead man suddenly came to life! This miracle created so much amazement among the villagers, that they started chasing Miya Bheek (R) proclaiming that he was their Devata. Realizing his mistake, Miya Bheek (R) started running to avoid his vulgar pursuers and took refuge in the camp of the Imam (A). When the villagers approached the camp and tumultuously sought Miya Bheek (R), Hazrat Mahdi (A) asked them as to why they had come. They replied that their "god" had come to them. The Imam explained to them that the people who lived with him were all subjects of God and none of them was God by himself. They were persuaded to disperse with some difficulty. Hazrat Mahdi (A), after this incident, admonished Miya Bheek (R) and exhorted him not to show off such miracles again. He was so much grieved and touched by the incident that he fasted continuously for three days and prayed Almighty for saving his followers from the temptation of Karamat (Spiritual Jugglery). He strictly reminded his followers about the bound of Shariat (Rules of conduct as laid down by the Holy Quran and the Traditions of Prophet Mohammed (S)). Some biographers are of the opinion that this incident took place at or near Kalpi, a city located half way between Danapur and Chundairy. But the earlier biographies particularly "Moulid" by Hazrat Shah Abdur Rahman (R), "Shawahid-ul-Vilayat" of Hazrat Syed Burhanuddin (RH) and "Matla-ul-Vilayat" by Hazrat Syed Yousuf (RH) are silent about Kalpi and Hazrat Mahdi's (A) visit to that city.

AT CHUNDAIRY: After staying for a few days at Danapur, Hazrat Mahdi (A) proceeded to the city of Chundairy. At this city the Imam (A) became very popular. Every day five to six thousand people used to gather in order to hear his sermons about the Quran and the Hadees (traditions of the Prophet (S)) and to seek his blessings. The local Mullahs became jealous and sent their men to force the Imam (A) to leave the city of Chundairy. At this, he told them that he is on the move at the command of God and would not remain there for long. But the Mullahs were impatient and sent hooligans to warn the Imam (A) that if he failed to leave the city, he would suffer the consequences. Then the Imam (A) remarked that they would shortly know who would suffer the consequences and left the city and camped for the night about a mile away from that town. On that night the young sons of the so-called divines and the nobles bitterly quarreled during a drinking bout and came to blows. As a consequence one of the nobles was killed. Infuriated by this murder, the noblemen of the city burnt the house of the Mullahs and committed great atrocities against them and their women. The conflagration was visible from the humble camp of the Imam (A). Some people expressed the opinion that as they had insulted a venerable saint, they were destroyed as a consequence. But the Imam (A) categorically told them that the men of God would not cause harm to anybody. What happened to the Mullah and their families was the consequence of their own sinful acts. This incident shows the moral degradation of the generality of the Mullahs and Mashaikhs and Sajadas of those days, who were spoiled due to the company of the rich and perverted people and totally forgot their duties towards their noble religion. After great saints like Hazrat Bakhtiyar Kaki (RH), Hazrat Shaikh Fareed Shakargunj (RH), Hazrat Nizamuddin (RH), Hazrat Moinuddin Chishti (RH), Hazrat Syed Mohammed Gesudaraz (RH) passed away, serving the cause of Islam and humanity in India, a period of general decline and moral turpitude among the So-called Muslim divines commenced. The Muslims of India in particular were faced with grave danger of being extinguished through their own follies, lack of faith and neglect of their duties as enjoined by the Quran and the Hadith. Very few pious and sincere men like Hazrat Shaikh Danial (RH) remained to keep the fire of religion burning. But there was no dynamic saint who would take up the mission after the venerable saints mentioned above. At such a time God sent his Caliph, Imam Mahdi Maud (A), whose dynamic and forceful personality, whose piety, sincerity and absolute adherence to the Quran and the traditions of Prophet Mohammed (S), in fact, caused the revival of true Islamic values in India and abroad. The Imam (A) not only launched a vigorous campaign for the revival of Shariat but also brought about a spiritual revolution. The incidents at Chundairy were a prelude to the resistance which

he had to face throughout his divine life and mission from the orthodox and perverted Muslim divines, and rich noblemen and rulers who had developed vested interests in the name of Islam and whose lusts were the root cause of moral and spiritual degradation of the Muslims in those days.

AT CHAPANAIR: Ordained by God, from Chundairy, the Imam proceeded to the City of Chapanair which was then the capital of Gujarat ruled by Sultan Mahmood Begda, an intrepid and sagacious king who left indelible mark of Muslim rule in the vast territory occupied by him for about half a century. According to some biographies, the Imam (A) first visited Mando and then proceeded to Chapanair. It is more likely that he first stayed for quite a long time at Chapanair and then proceeded to Mando, as it is so narrated in the earliest biography written by Hazrat Shah Abdur Rahman (R). At Chapanair, the Imam (A) stayed at the Jama Masjid (Central Mosque of the City). Every day he used to deliver lectures explaining the Quranic verses in such eloquent, impressive and appealing manner that many among the audience used to get into raptures. His emphasis was generally on the love of God, insignificance of everything worldly and the significance of pious life led according to the rules laid down by Quran and followed by the Prophet (S) as Shariat. He denounced lust of all kinds and the impurities and heresies which were smuggled in true religion by fake Sufis and opportunist Mullahs. His towering personality, purity of life, spiritual eminence and strict adherence to Shariat moved thousands of people and revolutionized their life. Many renounced the world and joined his mission as preachers and faithful devotees. On hearing about the popularity of the Imam (A) Sultan Mahmood sent two of his Ministers Farhad-ul-Mulk and Saleem Khan along with some learned men to ascertain what the message of the Imam (A) is. After meeting the Imam (A) and hearing his sermon, the Ministers were so impressed that they immediately became his devotees. But the Ulema who accompanied them tried to play mischief, as was usual with them. The Ministers informed the Sultan that the Imam (A) is in fact a saint of extraordinary eminence, and what he says and exhorts is in total conformity with the Quran and Sunnah and he is endowed with great spiritual powers. After ascertaining these facts the Sultan also became his devotee. The Ulema somehow prevented the King from personally meeting the Imam (A).

HAZRAT SHAH NIZAM (R) JOINS THE IMAM (A):

When the Imam (A) reached Chapanair, Shah Nizam (R) was already staying there at Salim Khan's Mosque, known also as Ek Minari Masjid. He was once the king of the State of Jais. He was an able administrator, a brave warrior, popular king and above all a staunch and pious Muslim. Fed up by the worldly glories, he abdicated his throne in favor of his younger brother, renounced everything worldly and left for the pilgrimage to Makkah. He was in search of a true spiritual leader, who could give him in his quest for perfection. He met many saints and divines during his extensive travels and expressed desire to learn from them the secrets of spiritual attainments. But the divines he came across were so much impressed by his learning, character and spiritual stature that they frankly admitted to him that they were not the proper persons to meet his requirements or to act as his guides in the mystic realms. They advised the Shah (R) to wait for the greatest of all saints, the Promised Mahdi (A) whose advent they were expecting in their own life time. In the pursuit of his ambition when Hazrat Shah Nizam (R) reached Chapanair and was staying there, he came to know about the arrival of Hazrat Mahdi (A) and his disciples through one of his friends Saleem Khan the minister of King Mahmood. The Shah rushed to the Jama Masjid in order to meet the Imam (A). Hazrat Mahdi (A) who was already informed by God about the sincere desire of the Shah (R) welcomed him enthusiastically and was very much pleased to meet him. With the blessings and special guidance of Imam (A), Shah Nizam (R) immediately attained the spiritual perfection and was blessed with Deedar (Vision of God). He was so much overwhelmed by the love of God that he remained almost unconscious for three days. On this occasion the Imam (A) remarked that Hazrat Shah Nizam (R) had all qualities of head and heart

required of a true Muslim. He was just like an unlit lamp, in a way perfect in itself but devoid of flame and that he kindled the lamp with the spiritual flame of Prophet Mohammed (S). Shah Nizam (R) remained a staunch devotee throughout the life of the Imam (A) and was destined to become one of his distinguished and venerable Caliphs.

At Chapanair , the Imam's (A) beloved wife Bibi Allahdadi died after a short illness leaving behind two sons, Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) and Syed Ajmal (R) who was then three months old and who also passed away at Mando as destined by God in an accident. Hazrat Mahdi (A) stayed at this city for about one and half year and inspired thousands of people including Raje Soan and Raje Muradi sisters of Sultan Mahmood Begda with his exhortations and blessings.

MANDO: From Chapanair, the Imam (A) proceeded to Mando which was the capital of the State of Malwa. Sultan Naseeruddin was then ruling the State by keeping his pious and saintly father Sultan Ghiasuddin in captivity under house arrest. At Mando too thousands of people after observing his spiritual eminence and after hearing his sermons became the staunch devotees of the Imam (A). His fame reached the captive Sultan Ghiasuddin, who wrote a letter to the Imam (A) expressing his regret that he was unable to have the privilege of a personal visit to the Imam (A) and requested him to send two of his learned disciples with his blessings. So that he would have the privilege of knowing more about Hazrat Mahdi (A). Accepting his request, Hazrat Mahdi (A) sent two of his disciples, Mian Salamullah (R) and Mian Abubakar (R) to meet the Sultan. The pious King received the said disciples with great honor and after hearing from them about the spiritual glory of the Imam (A), accepted him to be the greatest saint and the Promised Mahdi (A). The Sultan sent presents and considerable gold coins to the Imam (A). The presents sent included a very valuable tasbih (beads tied through a string and used for counting prayers). The captive Sultan received the representatives of the Imam (A) with utmost respect and through them he sought the blessings of the Imam (A) and asked him to pray for his last desires namely:-

(1) Life under oppression; (2) Martyrdom; (3) Death as a faithful Muslim. These wishes show how devoted to vilayat was old pious King. The Imam (A) blessed the King and prayed for the fulfillment of his desires. He distributed all the gold and silver coins sent by King Ghiasuddin among the poor persons who gathered near the camp of the Imam (A) to watch the royal entourage which brought the gifts. The Imam (A) did not touch anything and lifting the valuable tasbih with his hand stick threw it towards musicians who accompanied the royal servants. At this, one of his disciples remarked that the tasbih was invaluable. The Imam (A) replied, “when according to the Holy Quran the entire wealth of the world is nothing but scant (Qul Mataa-ul-Duniya Qaleel) how could you say that the Tasbih is invaluable” He got distributed some paltry amount among his disciples and devotees. Some of them went to the local market and could not return back at the appointed time of collective prayers. The Imam (A) remarked that a few coins deprived them of his company and the namaz and exclaimed that what would have happened, if the entire treasure sent by the king would have been distributed among them. The Imam (A) always detested the wealth, like Prophet Mohammed (S) and his noble caliphs; and he inculcated among his disciples and devotees, total disregard of wealth and everything worldly. At Mando one of the ministers of Kingdom of Malwa Hazrat Miya Allahdad (R) resigned his post, renounced the world and joined Imam’s (A) mission. He was a renowned scholar and poet of exceptional talents. His collection of verses in Persian consisting of rhythmic line adored with words constituted by dot less alphabets is a marvel of poetic proficiency. The Imam’s (A) , stayed at Mando was marred by a tragic accident due to which he was bereaved as his youngest son from Bibi Allahdadi (R), Miyan Ajmal (R) died at the age of one and half year or six months according to some traditions. The infant was extremely beautiful and bright and the Imam (A) and Miyan Syed Mahmood loved him very much. Miran Syed Mahmood's grief's knew no bounds as his brother slipped from his arms and fell down in the fire lit for cooking on the occasion of the Prophet’s death anniversary. The loss of the

most venerable mother sometime back coupled with the loss of his only younger brother when he himself was quite young, drowned his tender heart in deepest gloom. The Imam (A) consoled his repentant and grief stricken son, by reminding him of the duty of a Muslim to submit to the will of God and face destiny with courage and composure.

AT DAULATABAD: Traveling through Burhanpur and Khan-des the Imam (A) reached the historic city of Daultabad. He left Jaunpur, at the command God for the achievements of the objects of his advent. But unfortunately, in those days, there was general moral degradation among Muslims, mainly due to the lure of power and wealth and lack of sincere religious leadership. He visited first, most of the important cities, stayed there for sometime, preached and lectured and presented him and his disciples as the models of Islamic virtues and showed the Muslims how the commands of Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (S) could be followed and observed in the day to day life. Over and above this, the Imam (A) was keen to impart the means of higher spiritual perfection to the deserving. At Daulatabad, where the sacred tombs of innumerable saints including Hazrat Syed Raju (RH) Hazrat Burhanuddin (RH) and Syed Momin Arif (RH) are located, the Imam (A) stayed for some days, visited the tombs of the said saints and prayed and meditated there. The Imam (A) showed great respect and regard for all the perfect saints who preceded him and who did so much for the preaching, propagation and consolidation of Islam in India. At the well the water turned sweet for ever miraculously. When Mahdavis visit the tomb of this venerable saint for paying respect they never miss to offer prayers at the spot where the Imam (A) offered prayers and in a reminiscent mood, peep into the well which once attracted the attention of Hazrat Mahdi (A).

From Daultabad the Imam (A) proceeded to Ahmednagar where his fame reached before him. The King of Ahmednagar State, Ahmed Nizam Shah met the Imam (A) and became his devotee. He was issueless and sought for Imam's (A) blessings. The Imam (A) prayed for him and the Sultan was blessed with a son who was later named as Burhan Nizam-ul-Mulk (Burhan Nizam Shah). The devotion of the Sultan and his son to the Imam (A) was the cause of great encouragement to the Mahdavis for many years in their kingdom. In later years, one of Burhan Nizam-ul-Mulk's daughters was married to Syed Meeranji (RH), the great grandson of Imam Mahdi (A). In fact in subsequent centuries the attention of Mahdavia movement in every nook and corner was due to the impact of the holy personality of the Imam (A) and the devotion of some of the rulers and the divines of the religion.

AT BIDAR: From Ahmednagar the Imam (A) arrived at Bidar, which was adored by an impressive fort and was already a State capital, a great seat of learning and had attained great historic significance. The Burid Shahi Dynasty was ruling Bidar at that time around 900 Hijra and Malik Khasim Burid was the Sultan. According to a tradition, before the arrival of the Imam (A) at Bidar, the Sultan saw in his dream that a giant tiger entered from the city and passed off from the other. The Sultan became inquisitive about the meaning and implication of this strange dream and asked the learned Ulema to interpret the significance of this dream. Most of the divines and Ulema, who were consulted, expressed their inability to give a proper interpretation. When Shaikh Momin Tawakalli (RH), a saintly person hailing from Idam village was consulted, he explained that the Royal dream signified the arrival of a great saint in the capital city for a short stay. All this which had happened before Imam (A) reached the City of Bidar, which gave a credulous dimension to his visit. The Imam (A) was received with great ardor, reverence and devotion by the King, the Ulema and nobles of this kingdom. As was his habit, the Imam (A) frequently delivered sermons on Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (S) and exhorted the Muslims to follow the true and pure religion. His lectures, exhortations and blessings filled one and all with the love of God (Ishq-e-Ilahi) and the divines realized that a saint of unique stature adored their city with his presence. Many of them who were spiritually advanced had premonitions that the Imam (A) was the promised Mahdi, although by that time he did not make any formal declaration to that

effect. Notable among the Ulema and nobles who became the disciples of the Imam (A) at Bidar were Shaikh Momin Tawakkali (RH), Qazi Allauddin, Hazrat Ziauddin Ashikuliah (RH) and Qazi Muntajabuddin Junairi (RH). These noblemen and divines renounced their state honors and joined the mission of the Imam (A). Shaikh Momin Twakkali was particularly infatuated by the spiritual impact of Hazrat Syed Mohammed (A) as he himself was a saintly person. He intended to accompany the Imam (A) in his pilgrimage but the Imam (A), considering his age, persuaded him to stay at his place only and keep up the spiritual attachment. The later three mentioned above renounced the world and joined the pilgrimage of the Imam (A), in spite of severe resistance from their relatives and devotees and remained as disciples for the whole of their lives. He stayed for about one and half years at Bidar. From Bidar, the Imam (A) initially desired to go to the port of Dabul with a view to commence his voyage to Aden for his pilgrimage. But he changed his plan and proceeded to Gulbargah with a view to visit the tombs of Hazrat Syed Mohammed Gesudaraz (RH) and Hazrat Shaikh Sirajuddin (RH). At Gulbargah, the Imam (A) was received with utmost courtesy and veneration by the Sajjadas of the Dargah of Hazrat Khaja Gesudaraz (RH). After visiting the tomb of Hazrat Gesudaraz (RH), the Imam (A) paid homage to his noble soul and remarked that he was a great saint and Murshid of his time imbued by the spirit and love of the Prophet (S), and those who failed to see God through him in his life time would be answerable on doom's day. Afterwards the Imam (A) visited the tomb of the eminent saint Hazrat Shaikh Sirajuddin (RH), and stayed there. At the tomb of Hazrat Shaikh Sirajuddin (RH), the Imam (A) observed "Atekaf" (meditation in solitude) for 7 days. He showed great respect to Hazrat Shaikh Sirajuddin (RH) who was a saint of high eminence preceding Hazrat Gesudaraz (RH) and spoke highly about him before his disciples. From Gulbargah while proceeding to the Port of Dabul, the Imam (A) on his way visited and stayed for some time at Bijapur and Cheetapur also. At Bijapur, according to some tradition, the Imam (A) stayed at the tomb of Shah Hamza Vali (RH) and at Cheetapur, he stayed at the nearby hamlet of Nagai, where he prayed in seclusion for few days. Cheetapur is named after one saint Hazrat Cheetah Shah (RH), who used to ride a panther journeys to express his spiritual prowess. At his village, he saw the Imam (A) sitting on a stone, he felt as if the stone was moving and the Imam (A) was riding the same. Overwhelmed by this miracle and impressed by the personality of the Imam (A) Cheetah Shah (RH) suddenly dismounted from his tiger and offered his salutations to the Imam (A) and became his devotee.

From Cheetapur, according to some traditions, the Imam (A) proceeded to Dabul via Konkan. On his way he and his disciples came across a formidable group of dacoits who were fully armed. When the disciples of the Imam (A) expressed apprehension that the dacoits were about to attack his group with the intention of pillage. Hazrat Mahdi (A) exhorted them to maintain composure and go on repeating the glorious name of God. He after dismounting unsheathed his sword and holding it in one hand and his shield in the other marched ahead on foot leading the caravan. The gangsters were suddenly overawed and disappeared in the nearby jungle. The next day, they caught hold of one of the disciples of the Imam (A) who was left behind the caravan and was proceeding to join the same. When he disclosed his identity and informed the miscreants that he intended to join the Imam (A), they told him that he should not have neglected to keep pace with the formidable army of the great commander which was fully armed and had several cavalry units and war elephants, particularly while he was passing through thick forest; and they left him unharmed. After joining the Imam (A), when he narrated what the gangsters told him, the Imam (A) admonished him and commanded him to keep himself busy in remembering God. In fact such incidents are the manifestations of the heavenly protection to the pious souls.

THE PILGRIMAGE: At the Port of Dabul, the Imam (A) was very much moved by the enthusiasm of pilgrims who were eager to board the ship. The Imam (A) was accompanied in his pilgrimage to Mecca by about 360 of his chosen disciples and devotees according to the testimony of Shawahid-ul-Vilayat.

These disciples were extremely pious; many of them were learned scholars and nobles and some of them were princes who renounced their estates and worldly possessions, honors and properties and joined the mission of the Imam (A). They were highly disciplined, selfless and devoted, always ready to face any hazard, any challenging situation and any calamity which might come in their way in the Imam's (A) sacred campaign of purification of Islamic Society and glorification of spiritual values. Imam (A) while boarding the ship ordered his disciples to leave behind all provisions and have trust in God for meeting their needs during the voyage. The followers obeyed his command although they were fully conscious of the hazards of voyage in those days and the imperative need of ample water and provisions. This incident showed how much trust they had in God, how selfless and daring they were and how much faith they had in their leader. During the voyage, the lack of provisions caused great hardships to the disciples and they became anxious and restless due to continuous starvation. One day, during this hazardous voyage a boat appeared plied by some strangers and it approached the ship in which the Imam (A) and his followers were traveling. The men in the boat enquired from the staff of the ship about the Imam (A) and his followers and presented in the name of Allah, sufficient quantities of water and provisions to the followers of the Imam (A) and left the ship unnoticed and proceeded to unknown destination. This unexpected supply of provisions in the most difficult and hopeless circumstances, reaffirmed the faith of the devotees of the Imam (A) in the rewards of extreme trust in God (Tawakkul-al-Allah). On the way, another occasion, the ship carrying the Imam (A) and his disciples faced a peculiar storm and everyone felt as if the ship was about to be drowned. The anxious followers, who lost all hopes of life, approached him and requested him to do something to save the ship. The Imam (A) enquired what could he do and how could he alter the will of God. The anxiety and amazement of the inmates of the ship knew no bounds when they saw from the deck a gigantic fish approaching the ship along with hundreds of others causing storm by their movements. When they informed the Imam (A) about this strange phenomenon, he came out, and waived-his hand. The fish moved away instantly and the ship continued to sail smoothly. The Imam (A) informed his followers that the huge fish they saw was the same which once swallowed Prophet Younus (A) and God spared it to see his last saint of the order of Prophet Mohammed (S). Such unusual and miraculous events are not uncommon in the lives of saints and prophets. They occur, and the believers believe in their occurrence. God causes such miracles to strengthen the faith of the followers in their religious leaders and also to confirm their spiritual greatness. The Imam (A) landed at Jeddah, after staying for some time at Aden and then proceeded to Mecca for pilgrimage.

While performing Hajj, during the course of circumbulating the Holy Kaaba along with his disciples, the Imam (A) enquired from Shah Nizam (R) who was close-by, "You had been here on your previous pilgrimage. You are again visiting this Holy Place, what do you see?" Shah Nizam (R) replied "There I saw the House of the Lord, now I am seeing the Lord himself." This was the effect of the spiritual heights he attained due to the Imam's (A) training and blessings.

CHAPTER V

FORMAL DECLARATION

After performing Hajj in the year 901 Hijra, when the Imam (A) was about fifty four years of age, he proclaimed, between Rukn and Maqam, (the sacred places in Kaba) before a huge gathering of pilgrims, that he was the promised Mehdi and declared that one who obeyed him was the momin. Hazrat Shah Nizam (R), ex-king of Jais and Qazi Allauddin (R) the learned Scholar and Qazi of Bidar and one Arab (according to one tradition he was Khaja Khizar (A) loudly declared that they accepted the Imam as the promised Mehdi (A); and they were treated as the formal witnesses of the proclamation. There upon all the followers also formally accepted him as Mahdi-e-Maud (the Promised Mehdi (A)) and offered their fealty by way of “bait”. Some among the audience, who were strangers, remarked that the Syed had made an extraordinary claim and no body after the Prophet (A) could dare to make such a claim in front of the Kaba. But no person could challenge the Imam's (A) claim or tried to discuss with him about it, although the Imam (A) lived at Makkah for many a days and thousands of people, among whom there were several scholars and nobles from all countries, assembled at the Holy City at the time of Hajj.

After performing the Hajj the Imam (A) visited several tombs of Prophets and saints located in the vicinity of Makkah and offered prayers and paid homage. At the holy city the Imam (A) and his followers suffered great hard-ship and starvation due to lack of provisions. One full week they had to pass without food. Hazrat Syed Salamullah (R), one of the disciples, informed the Imam (A) that many of the devotees are restless due to starvation and enquired what should be done in such circumstances. The Imam (A) replied that people who had trust in Allah do not lose hope and they do not lose their fortitude. Allah would make some arrangement. He prohibited the disciples from seeking any help from any body as it would be below their dignity. After some time, Mian Salamullah (R) happened to meet the Shareef of Mecca and informed him about the difficulties and starvation of the group of pious men staying in his jurisdiction. The Sheriff donated some amount in the name of Allah and through this arrangements were made for the food of the entire group. But The Imam (A) refused to consume anything from food so procured; stating that he was not in distress and the aid did not come voluntarily and directly in the name of God. According to him it was sought indirectly by way of help. The Imam (A) further stated that in fact he did not need material food and he consumed the same in obedience to the Shariat, whenever he desires. The Imam's (A) followers stayed at Makkah for 7 to 9 months facing extreme hardship and starvation. They accepted help voluntarily extended in the name of God from those who revered them. Then the Imam (A) intended to pay homage to the Holy tomb of the Prophet (A) at Madina. He in fact made all arrangements for the journey and paid the fare for the camels but having received a hint from the divine soul of the prophet (A), cancelled his visit. According to tradition, he was directed by prophet (A) to immediately proceed to Gujarat and continue his mission there. On the return voyage, again the followers suffered great hardships due to starvation but they showed exemplary patience and trust in God. When the shores of native land remained at a distance of 3 days journey, his ship was again trapped in a storm. The strong winds seemed to shatter the sails and everybody feared that the ship was about to sink. When some of the anxious devotees approached the Imam (A), they found him completely unperturbed and composed lying down in one corner. They asked the Imam (A) to do something, having great faith in his spiritual powers. The Imam (A) bluntly replied “Did I ever claim that I can alter the Will of God? You have to submit to His Will, the ship which carries the servants of God does not drown”. After sometime, the Imam (A) came out looked around and prayed. Immediately the force of the storm receded. In a way the storm proved helpful and the remaining voyage which required 3 to 4 days, ended in a few hours and the ship was safely ashore.

AT AHMEDABAD: After landing at the port of Devbander, the Imam (A) and his group proceeded to Ahmedabad in Gujarat and stayed at the Mosque of Taj Khan Salar for about eighteen months. According to some recent biographers, the Imam (A) proceeded to Ahmedabad via: Khambait but there is no mention about Khamhait either in Maulud, Matla-ul-vilayat or Shawahid-ul-vilayat.

In those days also Ahmedabad was a big city with about 360 localities and considerable population, trade centers and religious institutions. After seeing the intensity of business activities and hubbub of the market area of that city, the Imam (A) ironically remarked that it looked like Donkey's paradise. It was not only the old capital of Gujarat but also the abode of many Ulema, Sajjadas and Divines. Most of them were self-seekers devoid of sincerity towards their duty to the faithful and were extremely perverted in their habits. They developed a sort of vested interest in religion and were exploiting their simple devotees by indulging them in many superstitions and heresies. When the Imam (A) commenced his daily lectures in the said Mosque, explaining Quranic verses and the traditions of the Prophet (A), in the most attractive and forceful manner, he became immediately popular at Ahmedabad. Every evening the whole compound of the gigantic mosque used to be full with audience and some people had to accommodate themselves on the walls and branches of the trees surrounding the mosque. They heard the Imam (A) with rapturous attention and devotion and felt as if some one is shaking their hearts and soul and transforming them into enlightened beings full of love for the Almighty and his last Prophet (A). Their lives acquired new meaning and purpose. Thousands of people became his devotees and admirers and hundreds renounced their worldly possessions, positions and honors and joined the group of disciples who dedicated their lives for the Imam's (A) mission of the revival of Islamic value and attainment of spiritual glory. These included many learned Scholars and Mashaikhs. Prominent among them were the leading personalities mentioned below:

Malik Burhanuddin (R): He was a noble man of Ahmedabad and Scholar of high repute. After coming to know about the arrival of Hazrat Mahdi (A) in his city, the Malik went to meet him. At the time when he visited the Mosque where the Imam (A) staying, he observed that the Imam (A) was delivering a lecture on a Quranic verse which emphasized the need of sacrifice of the rest and most valuable asset of a person in the name of Allah attaining His approbation and eternal blessing. The Imam (A) said on the occasion that the seekers of Divine Vision have to sacrifice every thing for Him. Moved by the eloquence and the novel style of interpretation of Quranic verses, Hazrat Malik Burhanuddin (R) offered his valuable sword and horse to the Imam (A) in the name of God stating that he loved his horse and sword more than anything else. The Imam (A) enquired what was the cause of that peculiar love. The Malik (R) replied that he cherished those things as they protected his life. The Imam (A) retorted that the Malik still loved his life more than his horse and sword and said. "God asks from you your own self, I have not come to accept swords and horses". Inspired by this sublime call, the Malik renounced the world and joined the circle of disciples of the Imam (A) and attained great spiritual heights. He forgot his early pomp and power, his great position in the Courts of kings and the possibility of temporal achievement which lay before him in the youthful days of his life. The meeting with the Imam (A) entirely transformed his life and his whole outlook of life changed. Without change of outlook it was hardly possible for him to renounce the World and join the mission of the Imam (A) which required dedicated and hazardous life. He lived with the Imam (A) during all his travels throughout Gujarat and Khorasan and as a faithful devotee, he had the privilege of attaining the position of the close associates of Hazrat Mahdi (A) and he was held in high regard and esteem by all the disciples of the Imam (A). Subsequently he had the honor of marrying the daughter of the Imam (A), Bibi Fatima (R)

Hazrat Malik Gowher (R): He was once the treasurer of the king of Bengal and subsequently joined the Court of Sultan Ghiasuddin Khilji. While going on Hajj Pilgrimage, he happened to meet the Imam (A), became his devotee, renounced the world and remained for the rest of his life as a strong follower and was honored as a prominent disciple of the Imam (A).

The Prince: Another prominent person was a prince who was the nephew of Sultan Mahmood Begda, ruler of Gujarat (unfortunately his name is not mentioned in biographies). He was lost in evil ways of life. One day, in the early morning, while he was returning frustrated after quarrelling with his concubine, he saw the Imam (A) standing near the banks of the River Sambermathy along with some of his companions. He enquired from them angrily as to whom they were and what were they doing there. The Imam (A) smiled and replied. "I am a man who shows the true path to the broken hearted-lovers. One who seeks my help, gets accustomed to the paths of the Divine love". This reply and its implication moved the young prince so much that he fell down unconscious. After regaining his senses, the prince very much repented for his past and became a devotee of the Imam (A).

Qazi Budhan: He was one of the Qazi of Ahmedabad. His teacher Islam Khan, who was a scholar, directed him to meet the Imam (A) and seek his blessings. He decided to meet Hazrat Mahdi (A) after he finished his daily lecture at the Mosque where he was staying while joining the audience, he thought of asking some question about the possibility of beholding God during the course of this worldly life. On the very same occasion the Imam (A) made this issue the topic of his lecture and so effective was his explanation of the doctrine and so convincing were his arguments in the light of Quranic verses that the Qazi was overwhelmed and became his devotee.

The Mashaiq Brothers: Among the Mashaiqs who were the descendents of the great saint Hazrat Shaikh Fareed Ganje Shakar (RH) were Shah Abdul Majeed, Shaikh Amin Mohammed and Shah Abu Mohammed (RH) These Sajjadas were very pious, learned and influential. Many of the nobles and even the King were among their admirers. After meeting the Imam (A) they were so much inspired by him that they renounced all their Honor, Khankhas and Estates to join the Imams (A) for the rest of their lives.

Moulana Yusuf (R): He was a rich and noble Scholar enjoying great respect at Ahmedabad. When he met the Imam (A) and remained in his company for a few days he was so much inspired that he renounced the world and dedicated his remaining life for the mission of the Imam (A). He was held in high esteem by all the devotees of the Imam (A).

Ahmed Shah Khaden (RH): He was a spiritual leader of high repute and had a great following. His father Shah Khaden was also a venerable Mashaiq having thousands of devotees throughout the state of Gujarat. A locality at Ahmedabad was named after him. During the course of the Imam's (A) stay at Ahmedabad, Ahmed Shah Khaden was a punctual visitor to the daily religious gatherings held by the Imam (A). Moved by the truth of his mission, his piety and sincerity of purpose and his glory as the promised Mahdi (A), Ahmed Shah Khaden (RH) also renounced the world and became his devotee. But he did not join the Imam (A) in his regular mission and travels and stayed at Ahmedabad and was content to pray and preach at his native place only.

Haji sees his Creator: Human beings have an inherent hidden desire to worship or be worshipped; and these tendencies guide or misguide them and make them do many pious and ignominious acts depending upon how they used these urges during their life span. Some mortals developed the pious tendency of being absorbed in Almighty right from their childhood. In the suburbs of Ahmedabad there lived an orphan boy who had such predicament. He was then under care and custody of his Uncle who

was harsh against him due to his inability to work for gain. They were gardeners (Malis) by profession and Brahmins by caste. The Boy was endowed with solemn meditative temperament right from his childhood and not at all interested in any work or profession. He was always absent minded, absorbed in something inexplicable in his childhood; but when his mind gained some maturity, he found that his whole heart and soul was involved in a deep urge to see the Almighty. He already realized the inefficacy of pagan beliefs to satisfy a noble soul. His rustic uncle was totally unmindful and unsympathetic towards the magnitude of spiritual crisis which his nephew was undergoing. Disappointed by the inertia and apparent madness of the young boy, he expelled him from his house. The young man started roaming about in the vicinity of the town in search of consolation and peace. Once he happened to see a Brahmin funeral in which the young widow was voluntarily consigning herself to the flames lit for burning the corpse of her husband. The horrible custom of sati was prevalent in those days among high caste Hindus. The boy joined the gathering and saw with his own eyes the remarkable attachment of the widow with her late husband. When she was sacrificing her life, an old man attired in customary hindu clothes with caste mark of a Brahmin on his forehead, started praying loudly “O Lord give me at least a part of the devotion and love for You, which this lady is having for her late husband which is forcing her to sacrifice her life through the ordeal of fire”, Such prayer from the lips of a pious looking Brahmin (according to a tradition, this stranger was Hazrat Khaja Khizar (A)), kindled the fire of Divine Love in the tender heart of the young gardener and he left the place and started wandering in search of God. During those crucial days, he came to know from Muslims that Kaba is the House of God. He innocently concluded that if Kaba was the House of God, the owner of it would definitely occupy the same and he could meet his Lord at Kaba only. He decided to proceed to Makkah and was about to commence his journey on Hajj Pilgrimage, when he saw a pious Dervish on his way who enquired from the young man about his destination. On hearing about the ambition of the young Mali, the Dervish (Hazrat Khaja Khizar (A)) told him that he could not realize his ambition unless he observed some formalities and changed his faith, the old man offered to help him and the boy eagerly accepted the offer. The Dervish took him to a nearby Canal and asked him to bath and taught him the formalities of ablution and then asked him to pronounce the Kalima “There is no God but Allah and Mohammed (A) is His Prophet”. The young man protested that he was being asked to adopt the Mohammedan faith. The Dervish replied that unless he adopted the faith and repeated the Kalima it would be impossible for him to realize his salutary ambition. With this exhortation the Dervish was preparing to leave the young gardener. Fearing that the Dervish was about to abandon him the boy caught hold of his collar with anxiety and protested that having deprived him of his ancestral faith and making him to adopt a new one, how could the Dervish leave him without showing God? On the peculiar agitation of the young man the Dervish smiled and consoled him that he was not abandoning him and directed the young man to meet Hazrat Mahdi (A) who was fortunately staying at that time in the nearby city and who alone could help him to realize his ambition of beholding the Almighty. Believing in the sincerity of the advice of the old Dervish the young enthusiast proceeded to the Camp of Hazrat Mahdi (A) with garlands to offer as a mark of respect. When he approached the mosque where the Imam (A) was staying, the Imam (A) received a Divine call directing him to personally receive the sincere lover of God. He came forward and addressing the young man said: “Come on Mian Haji Mali”. This title was conferred on the young man in view of his desire to go on Hajj Pilgrimage. When the eager lover came face o face with the Imam (A) with garlands in his quivering hands, he was so much over-whelmed by the Divine Vision that he fell down unconscious. Hazrat Mahdi (A) carried him to the mosque where the young man lay for about four days, totally unconscious and died before his senses were restored. Such was the culmination of his ambition and the Imam (A), blessing him, remarked that the young lover had little spiritual endurance to match with his ambition and through intense love he was lost for ever in the object of his love. When the young lover was buried, for forty days the flowers laid on his grave did not wither, When Hazrat Mahdi (A) came to know about this, he ordered that the grave of the pious lover be erased as it would become an

object of un-islamic credulity. But before the Imam's (A) order was enforced the sacred grave was washed off due to heavy rains.

Apart from the above mentioned prominent persons, thousands of people at Ahmedabad became his staunch followers. The tremendous popularity and ever-growing influence of Hazrat Mahdi (A) made the perverted Mullahs of Ahmedabad more and more jealous during the continuance of his stay at that city. As the pagan Quresh were not so much worried by the religious preaching's of the Prophet (A) as they were perplexed about the danger from Islam to their vested interests, the Muftis and Mullahs of Ahmedabad were not so much worried about what the Imam (A) was saying about the importance of the Quran and the tradition of the Prophet (A), as they were perplexed about their vanishing influence as a result of the progress of Mahdavi movement. This aspect of the Imam's (A) lectures, they could not dare to challenge or contradict Their greatest grievance was that the Imam (A), while condemning the general tendency to give too much importance to worldly possessions and lusts at the cost of religious duties and self less love for God, was exposing their frailties and was indirectly exposing them to general criticism. Moreover, they had the grievance that many of their devotees and followers were becoming staunch devotees and followers of the Imam (A), They feared that in such a situation they would not only lose the honor and veneration which they enjoyed from the innocent and devout Muslims but their income also would be dwindled as they would be deprived of the amounts which they previously extracted from their followers. They neither had the learning nor scholarship nor the moral courage and piety to face the Imam (A) in religious discussion or at a spiritual level. The Imam (A) was in fact living among the masses and the Mullahs and Mashaiqs of those times were living in their ivory towers. The purity of his life and selflessness and sincerity of his mission and above all his disciple's strict adherence to the tradition (Sunnah) of the Prophet (A) was so apparent that they looked like the living models of Islamic virtues to the people of Ahmedabad. The Mullahs were at a loss to find fault with Hazrat Mahdi (A) or his followers. Hence they resorted to the old propaganda tactics and vilification campaign. They alleged that the Imam (A) was a magician, he was forcing through his charm, thousands of people to renounce the world and to leave their houses and families.

They further contended that the Imam (A) through his preaching is shaking the very fabric of Islamic kingdoms; and made a complaint to the king on this ground. In their petition they asserted that the majority of Ulema and Officers of the State were becoming fakirs due to his influence and as a consequence it would be impossible to hold his sway in that area if the Imam (A) remained there for some more time. As the Sultan himself had a soft-corner for Hazrat Mahdi (A), they initially failed in their attempts to obtain orders of expulsion against him. The Mullahs went to the extent of attempting to obtain death sentence against him on the ground of heresy but their evil designs failed as the Qazi of Ahmedabad had refused to cooperate with them. Hence in collusion with Etemad Khan who was an officer of high rank, they procured an order of expulsion and forced Hazrat Mahdi (A) and his disciples to leave Ahmedabad. Some biographers, particularly the learned author of "Shawahid-ul-Vilayat", is of the opinion that the Imam (A) made the formal proclamation that he was the Promised Mahdi at Taj Khan Salar's Mosque, during his stay at Ahmedabad. But in the Moulud of Mian Shah Abdur Rahman (R) and in Matla-ul-Vilayat by Mian Syed Yousuf (R) and other later works, we do not find any mention of this second formal proclamation at Ahmedabad. Whether the Imam (A) made such a formal claim at Ahmedabad for the second time or not is of little importance as during his stay at the great city, not only his disciples and devotees but his adversaries also knew about his position, status and claim as the Promised Mahdi.

Another important event which took place at Ahmedabad was the rejoining of Hazrat Shah Dilawar (R) the eminent Caliph of the Imam (A) with his master after a long interval of more than seven years, during which he lay almost unconscious and disabled at Miyan Duraj's mosque at Danapur

in a deep state of absorption in God. When his absorption receded after a long time, he miraculously came to know that the Imam (A) was camping at Ahmedabad. According to some Naqliat, he in fact smelt the fragrance of the Imam (A) and pursued it. Facing all hazards of journey he rushed to join the Imam (A) at Ahmedabad and was rewarded with his company during the important phase of his mission.

Shah Niamat (R) joins Hazrat Mahdi (A):

After leaving Ahmedabad, the Imam (A) decided to proceed towards Peeraan Pattan or Patan (this town was also called Neharwalah) as it was then called, along with his companions. On his way he stayed for a few days at a village called Sola Santej. While he was there, one afternoon, a contingent of the Sultan's army approached the village pursuing the band of rebel bandits led by one Niamat (Hazrat Shah Niamat (R)) who was the son of Malik Shaikh Bade, a high ranking officer of the Sultan. He had tumultuous temperament; and undue favors of his parents had spoiled him and he took to bad company. But he had very good physique and acquired mastery over customary martial arts, particularly fencing and horse-riding. When his parents died and his pension from the Sultan was reduced his rebellious and rude temperament made him a bandit and he became a terror in parts of Gujarat. In an encounter, he killed the son of a noble of the Sultan's Darbar. On his complaint, a cavalry contingent was sent to arrest him and his followers. At Santej, the pursuit reached the crucial stage. He and his companions were eager to escape arrest. In such a dramatic situation he heard an Azan (call for prayer) at that village. Many a times he might have heard the call for prayers but little or no effect was felt in his heart. But the Azan at Santej was a different affair. He was destined to reach a turning point of his life in that remote village. On hearing the Azan, he was very much moved and ordered his followers to dismount for prayers. They were wonder-struck at this command and fearing the consequences of the arrival of the Royal Contingent they refused to obey, abandoned their leader and continued their flight. But the leader stopped, tied down his panting horse with a tree and after performing ablution stood erect with folded hands for the afternoon prayer, forgetting everything about the past and unmindful of the approaching danger. At that moment it seemed as if he was tired of a hazardous journey in the wilderness of sinful life. He needed a respite, a refuge and some consolation for his turbulent mind and soul. The Contingent arrived on the spot. On seeing him they thought that the man might have been a pious lonely traveler offering prayers, tracing the foot marks of the bandit's horses they continued their chase. After finishing his prayers, the leader wept heartily repenting his past sins and prayed for the forgiveness of almighty, on coming to know that the Azan he heard came from the camp of a group of pious men who had stayed there. He was over-whelmed by an intense desire to see the camp and meet the inmates. He approached the camp and saw a group of persons, at that time busy in hearing the Imam's (A) lecture. He sat down and heard the Imam (A) explaining Quranic verses which accidentally, on that occasion, threw light on the significance of repentance and God's mercy and forgiveness. He was so much moved that he burst into tears. When he approached the Imam (A) in such state, although he never saw him before, the Imam addressed him by calling his name and said "Miyan Niamat as your name suggests, you have come like God's blessing". "Offer your sincere repentance to God and He may forgive you out of grace". Then Hazrat Niamat (R) fell down at his feet and the Imam (A) blessed him and exhorted him that such of the sins which did not directly affect other human beings would be forgiven by God; but the sins which caused loss and injury to others would not be forgiven unless their pardon is procured by the sinner from the persons aggrieved. The Imam (A) advised Hazrat Niamat (R) to meet all such persons whom he caused loss and injury, and after offering sincere apologies to seek their pardon. After meeting Hazrat Mahdi (A) his entire life was transformed. He became a devotee, and in obedience to the command of the Imam (A) to seek pardon from the aggrieved persons went straight to his native place. First he discharged all his liabilities and then, sword in hand, proceeded to the house of the Negro Abdullah whose son he had killed. On seeing him

marching silently towards his house, Abdullah was at first taken aback. But when the bereaved father saw signs of great transformation writ large at the face of the fugitive, he came forward fully composed. Hazrat Niamat (R) offering his sword thus addressed Abdullah "I am the assassin of your son, take my sword and avenge the murder". Abdullah was greatly amazed at such an offer. He wondered how a daring bandit alluding royal contingent could approach him in such a sullen mood offering his neck and sword and leaving his person to the mercy of bereaved and helpless father. He asked inquisitively about the cause of so sudden a change in his behavior. Then Hazrat Niamat (R) narrated the facts about his reaching Santej and meeting the Imam (A) accidentally. Moved by his transformation and also the miraculous effect produced by the blessings of a great saint, Abdullah forgave Hazrat Niamat (R) and himself proceeded to join the Imam (A) as a devotee. Hazrat Niamat (R) sought pardon of all the persons whom he had caused some injury or other and then joined the Imam's (A) camp at Pattan. He was destined to become one of the caliphs of the Imam (A) and to die as a martyr.

Brief Stay at Sauda: On his way to Peeran Pattan Hazrat Mahdi and his disciples camped for a few days near a village called Sauda. As usual the Imam (A) delivered his sermon on Quran at that place also and many people were inspired as a consequence and became his devotees. A young boy who attended one such meeting was so much moved that he refused to go home and remained in the camp of the Imam (A). When his parents came to know about his intention they became wild with rage thinking that the strangers might be trying to kidnap their son with ulterior motives. The father of the boy approached the camp armed with a sword to get his son released but was spell bound after seeing and bearing the Imam (A). He forgot about the purpose of his visit and became the devotee. When Hazrat Mahdi (A) and his disciples started their onward journey, he also joined them along with his son. The son was apprehensive of his father and was avoiding him in order to escape the possibility of his father taking him back by force. After some time the father got hold of his son and instead of reprimanding him appreciated his devotion and assured that they should go together with the Imam (A). They sent word to the mother of the boy that they could not return back as they found the source of their salvation; and in case she was also desirous of the vision of Almighty, she might join them. This incident shows the charismatic impact of the Imam (A) on the masses whose souls were craving for salvation.

At Peeran Pattan: From Sauda the Imam (A) proceeded to the famous city of Peeran Pattan which was also known as Nehruwallah. Approaching Peeran Pattan he expressed satisfaction and remarked that the city was full with the faithful and he was feeling the warmth of love and faith. After entering the city he stayed at the Rest House of Qazi Khaden near Sarwar Khan's tank. There the renowned saint of the city, Shaikh Ruknuddin Majzoob (RH) extended his hospitality by sending sufficient quantity of bread and bananas through his disciples to the Imam (A) and his followers and asked for his apology for not meeting the Imam (A) on the occasion. Later on the Shaikh became the devotee of the Imam (A) when he happened to see him while the Imam (A) was proceeding to the Central mosque for Friday prayers. The Shaikh said that he already had a premonition about the Imam's (A) visit and his spiritual status. He paid homage to the Imam (A) with utmost respect. As the Shaikh was not strictly following Shariat the Imam (A) did not choose to meet him and proceeded after merely glancing at him.

Malik Bakhan (R), one of the descendents of Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique (R) the first Caliph of Prophet Mohammed (A), and who was one of the respected officers under Sultan Mahmood Begda became the disciple of the Imam (A). His family was locally known as the nobles of Barewal. All his relations including Mubarez-ul-Mulk, who were pious and rich became the devotees of Hazrat Mahdi (A). Among others the provincial Governor of Pattan Malik Yakub joined the circle of devotees along with all the members of his family after meeting the Imam (A) and hearing his daily sermons.

According to traditions narrated in Shawahid-ul-Vilayat Hazrat Mahdi (A) stayed at Peeran Pattan along with his staunch followers and disciples for about eighteen months. It was his practice to stay at one place along with all his disciples forming a *daira* (circle) which resembled a small locality containing huts and houses of the disciples. All were living near the Imam (A) closely in touch with him, always praying and being absorbed in God. The persons who renounced the world (*Tarekeen-e-dunya*) and joined the mission of the Imam (A) as whole-time servants of God were always busy in religious matters seeking the Imam's (A) blessings and spiritual guidance. They met their daily requirements strictly on gifts presented in the name of Allah. They did not seek any help from anybody in any form. They had strong trust in God (*tawakkul*) for providing them with the necessary means of sustenance. Their requirements were obviously meager. They wanted such food which was necessary for their survival and required humble clothing and shelter. The other followers were allowed to earn their livelihood. These were called the '*kasibeen*'. Such people, in a way, were instrumental in meeting the needs of the *Daira* by donating to the inmates, substantial part of their earnings. The Imam (A) by forming such a camp, wherever he lived, tried to present an ideal example of a "*Jamat*" which should by their piety selflessness and devotion proved that the rules of life lay down by the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) as enforced by him, were not impossible to observance. It was not a utopia of Divines which he formed. It was a camp of brave, dynamic and divine servants of God who would lay down everything belonging to them including their lives for the sake of his mission of revival of Shariat (Islamic Law) and attainment of highest spiritual glory through *Tariqat* (mystic way of life). It was not the wandering group of hermits and monks. It was in fact an army of "*Mujahids*" who were determined to exterminate the forces of evil which had by that time tarnished the image of Islam, not through use of arms but through their moral strength, not through force but through inspiration. Such was the group which surrounded the Imam (A) and which never parted company with him in spite of greatest hardship ever suffered by any human group in the long course of history.

During the last stay of the Imam (A) at Peeran Pattan many divines, nobles and scholars became his followers. Some offered fealty (*bait*) immediately after meeting him and hearing his inspiring lectures on Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (A). Some adopted the course of argument and discourse before accepting him as spiritual leader. Some did not accept his message at all as they were interested more in their vested interests than their duty as the faithful Muslims. This last category consisted mostly of *Mashaikhs* and *Mullahs* who depended on courts for their honors and *jagirs* and also on devotees for their donation to meet the requirements of their lavish life style.

Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) joins the Imam (A):

The most important and pious among the persons who joined the Imam (A) at Pattan was Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) who was destined to become the second caliph of the Imam (A). He had the privilege of being the son-in-law of Hazrat Mahdi (A) who liked him as his own son; and rewarded him with a very high spiritual status (*Hamil-e-Bar-e-Amana*) He belonged to a rich family of father Hazrat Syed Moosa who was an army Commander After the death of his father, as he had religious bent of mind, he relinquished search of a spiritual leader who would guide him. Malik Bakhan alias Malik Barkhurdar, who was an uncle of Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R), after meeting the Imam (A) became his devotee and informed him about Hazrat Syed Khundmir's quest for a real mentor, the Imam (A) replied that his object of visiting Pattan was to fulfill his desire. Malik Bakhan brought Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) to the camp of the Imam (A). When the true lover of God met his mentor and when their eyes met the lover immediately realized God. At that moment, his inherent love of God was so much awakened that the Imam (A) found him ripe for imparting the highest spiritual blessing through *Zikr-e-Khafi*. On being so honored Hazrat Khundmir was suddenly elevated to a state of rapture and deep absorption in

God (Jazba-e-Haq), He saw God in his glory and lost all the remnants of worldly attachments. According to a tradition he heard Allah asking him: "What gifts you have brought for Me on the solemn occasion of your spiritual elevation". He rapturously replied: "I have brought my head to sacrifice for Your cause; if I had hundred heads, I would not have hesitated in sacrificing all for You". This was in fact a premonition for his later martyrdom which he attained like his glorious ancestor Hazrat Imam Hussain (R).

At Pattan Hazrat Mahdi (A) married Bibi Malkan (R) who was the daughter of Hazrat Miyan Lad shah (R), a descendant of Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique (R). After the demise of his first wife Bibi Allahdadi (R), the Imam (A) during the course of his journey married another lady who was the daughter of a Raja and who recovered from her madness after receiving his blessings. The Raja presented her to the Imam (A) and she was named as Bibi Bhika (R). But unfortunately she survived for a short period. Then the Imam (A) married Bibi Malkan (R) at Pattan.

Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) seeks permission for ‘Kasb-e-Halal’:

Another important event which occurred at Pattan was the permission granted by the Imam (A) to his pious and eminent son Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) to work for gain (Kasab) for some time, before he decided to renounce the world. This event is significant as it throws light on the doctrine of “tark-e-dunya” (renunciation of world) as propounded by the Imam (A) in the light of the teachings of Quran. This concept is often misunderstood or rather distorted by his detractors. Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) before seeking permission asked the Imam (A) what would be gracious and rewarding between the two alternatives; one to renounce the world without owning or possessing anything worth while and the other to own and possess according to one's capacities and then to renounce for the sake of God. The Imam (A) replied that the latter is more rewarding and gracious. This shows that the Imam (A) never turbid ‘Kasab’ (earning means of livelihood and worldly assets) within the bounds of Shariat (Islamic law) as the Prophet (S) himself worked for gain before renouncing the world. The Imam (A) also was given jagirs and other honors by Sultan Hussain Sharqi which he declined to accept. In his youth he earned name, fame and glory not only through scholarship but also with his sword. After obtaining permission Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) went to Chapanair the capital city and stayed there for some time with Malik Osman who was one of the important officers in the service of the Sultan of Gujarat. The Sultan after coming to know about the desire of Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) for service offered him command of a cavalry unit and also granted two villages named Bairam Gaon and Sanchuri by way of jagirs. He married the daughter of Hazrat Syed Osman (RH), whose name was Bibi Kad Banu (R). When he received the command of the Imam (A) indirectly communicated through a letter he resigned his lucrative post and joined his reverend father and renounced the world formerly. He succeeded the Imam (A) as his first caliph; and due to his resemblance with the Imam (A) in his looks as well as in his devotion and piety, his followers started calling him 'Sani-e-Mahdi' out of affection and veneration.

In addition to the venerable personalities whose names are mentioned above, the under-mentioned luminaries also joined the pious fold of Hazrat Mahdi (A) at Peeran Pattan where he had unprecedented response to his call.

Hazrat Malik Maruf (R) and Malik Sharfuddin (R) Bariwal

These nobles were the maternal cousins of Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) and they were enjoying high positions in the Kingdom of Gujarat. The elder brother after hearing the inspiring sermons of the Imam (A) lost all interests in worldly attachments, left his post, abandoned his home and possession and joined the mission of the Imam (A) for the rest of his life. The younger brother Malik Sharfuddin

(R) went a step-further; and while he was still a bride-groom, abandoned his position, post and the beloved bride; and renouncing the world, he fell in sublime love with the Almighty.

Syed Kahnji Khidkiwall (R): He was a descendant of Hazrat Syed Mohammed Gesudaraz (RH). He also held a high position in the State. Following the example of Badewall brothers he became the devotee of the Imam (A) but he could not renounce the world in order to join the mission of Hazrat Mahdi (A). Subsequently he became a disciple of Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) by renouncing the world in his advanced years and died as a martyr along with the second caliph (R).

Moulana Mohammed Yousuf Suhait and Moulana Mohammed Taj Suhait (R):

These two brothers were the luminaries of Islamic learning in Gujarat. They were not only learned but were also famous for their piety, their captivating personalities and elegant oratory. These scholars were also inspired by the Imam (A) and had the privilege of becoming his disciples. Both of them were present at the time of the momentous proclamation of the Imam (A) at Badli. Once Moulana Yousuf Suhait (R) recalled a peculiar incident of his childhood when a Sufi who was his neighbor suddenly started making hue and cry on one day that the Promised Mahdi (A) was born and then disappeared for ever. Moulana's father, who was also a great scholar, noted down the date on which the Sufi made the strange declaration on a piece of paper and kept the same with him. After meeting the Imam (A) and becoming his devotee, Hazrat Yousuf (R) developed the urge to trace out the paper and compare the date with the actual date of the birth of Hazrat Mahdi (A). He searched the paper in his father's record but could not trace it out. He approached the Imam (A) in a pensive mood and on enquiry revealed the cause of his anxiety. The Imam (A) smiled and told him that the paper is kept in a book of his father's library and it could be found in between pages numbering so and so. When Hazrat Yousuf (R) traced out the book and the paper he was bewildered to see that the date was noted as 14th Jamadi-ul-Awwal 847 Hijri which was the actual date of birth of the Imam (A). His belief in the Imam (A) was further confirmed after this almost miraculous discovery. When such powers are revealed to such eminent scholars, there could be no doubt among the contemporaries about the Imam (A) and his claim.

Moulana Abdur Rasheed Hanafi (R): He was an illustrious descendant of the great Master of Fiqh Imam Mohammed Bin Haneefa (RH); and was among the reputed scholars of Pattan. He also confirmed the claim of the Imam (A) and became his devotee and was destined to die as a martyr advocating the cause of the Imam (A).

Moulana Malikji Mehri (R): He was not only a great scholar of Islamic studies but was also a famous poet known throughout Gujarat and other parts of India for his varied achievements. His pen name was 'Mehri' and he had the honour of being under the pupilage of Hazrat Allahdad Hameed (R). He became a staunch devotee of the Imam (A) and wrote elegant poems in his praise.

At Pattan when thousands of people became followers and devotees of the Imam (A) including many learned scholars, nobles and divines, some of the worldly-wise and self-seeking Mullahs who were highly influential, became his bitter enemies. Mullah Moinuddin was prominent among them. Most of his pupils and devotees were being influenced by the Imam's (A) message and he found himself isolated and let down. He along with some likeminded religious leaders brought pressure on the Sultan to expel Hazrat Mahdi (A) from Pattan. In those days the Governments were unfortunately under the baneful influence of such Ulema. By that time Imam (A) himself, at the command of God, was preparing to leave Pattan in order to visit other cities; but the Governor of the City was compelled by those Ulema to convey the order of expulsion. Hazrat Mahdi (A) after seeing the orders remarked:

“My king (Allah) has already ordered me to move on - ask my followers I have already directed them to be prepared for the onward journey”. According to one tradition Prophet Mohammed (S) once remarked that at the advent of Mahdi (A) the foremost among his detractors would be self-seeking and worldly-wise Ulema (Ulema-e-su). Every city which he visited provided proof of the truth of this tradition of the prophet (S) in case of Hazrat Mahdi (A).

CHAPTER VI

THE FINAL PROCLAMATION

From Pattan, the Imam (A), along with his disciples and staunch followers moved to Badli, a village near Pattan in 905 Hijra and stayed there for quite a long time. At this place while addressing a huge gathering which included many learned Ulema Scholars and nobles who became his followers and who were well versed in Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (A), and had the privilege of closely observing him in every aspect of his social, religious and spiritual life, the Imam (A) declared: "for many years I heard the call of Allah that I am the Promised Mahdi. In the beginning I thought that it might be a manifestation of satanic mischief to misguide me and I prayed for God's help in the name of the Prophet Mohammed (PUBH) and Hazrat Ali (R) to save me from such misconception. But God reassured me and warned me that I was not understanding the truth; and bestowed upon me the honor of prayed that I am not deserving and capable to bear the burden of such a high status. Then Allah replied that He knows better that I am deserving. Again I submitted that in case the command is in order to test me, I offer my whole being to be shattered I am so tested, when the command became mandatory. I proclaimed myself to be Mahdi for the first time at Kaba. Thereafter I received persistent commands and I submitted that the Muslims as they are, would be rewarded with salvation in case they follow the Shariat of the Prophet (S) and if I declare finally that I am the Promised Mahdi many of the Muslims might not accept me and they would be treated as infidels, as one who disobeys the command of God regarding the acceptance of Mahdi and the Prophet's direction in this regard is bound to be regarded as an infidel. Hence I was reluctant. But now I am faced with the final warning of my Master that if I further hesitate and disobey, I will be punished for this disobedience". After a pause in which the whole personality of the Imam (A) revealed fear of God and solemnity he proclaimed "At the command of God almighty, I proclaim before you all in full senses, without any worldly desire and without duress that I am the Promised Mahdi. As a testimony to my claim, I present the Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (A) which I am bound to follow absolutely as his last saint (Khatim-e-Villayat-e-Mohammedia). It is the duty of every person to accept me as such; in the light of Quranic injunctions and the traditions of the Prophet, the person who refuses to accept me as Mahdi shall be treated as an infidel." All the devotees and the disciples of the Imam (A) and the great majority of the persons present unequivocally accepted his claim shouting "Aamanna-o-Sadakhana". But a few persons did not accept him as Imam Mahdi (A) on that occasion, according to the "Maulud" of Hazrat Shah Abdur Rahman (R). In all probability the enemies of Hazrat Mahdi (A) might be following him after his departure from Pattan in order to watch his movements and activities; and as Badli was a nearby village, they might have attended the gathering in which the Imam (A) made his final proclamation. Such persons might have evaded responding on that occasion. As a matter of fact, right from the early days of his pilgrimage, his close followers realize through intuition and premonition that their leader was the Promised Mahdi (A). In fact they disclosed their spiritual experiences to the Imam (A), who confirmed their belief and asked them to wait till the proper time approached for formal declaration. The disciples who accompanied him to Makkah heard his first proclamation to the effect. The news of his claim reached India and wherever the Imam (A) camped and preached the people were aware of his claim. But the Imam (A) after returning back from his pilgrimage, concentrated more on delivering sermons on the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet Mohammed (PUBH) and exhorting people to relieve themselves from the temptation and lusts of this world and adopt Islamic ways of life. In the first 3 years after arrival in India from his pilgrimage, the Imam (A) did not lay emphasis on his claim that he was the Promised Mahdi before one and all and continued his religious and spiritual mission of the revival of Islam while preparing and training a strong group of staunch and selfless followers who would not hesitate to suffer greatest hardships and were even ready to sacrifice their lives not for any

personal ambition of the Imam (A) (which in fact was not there) but for the cause of revival of Islam by re-inculcating among Muslims the Quranic values and to make them adopt and follow the traditions of Prophet Mohammed (S) in their daily life. Whenever Hazrat Mahdi (A) was called upon to explain his concept of religion, he gave a concise and lucid reply stating: "Mazhab-e-ma-Kitab Allah-O-Ittebah-e-Rasoolallah." (My religion is the book of God (Quran) to follow and the Prophet (S). This eloquent statement, in a nut-shell, sums up the purpose of his mission as the Promised Mahdi (A). As a proof of his claim to the august spiritual position of Mahdi (A) he did not present his high learning, great and inspiring oratory or his highly charismatic personality or any miracles, but his total and flawless adherence to the Quran and its injunctions and the Sunnah of Prophet Mohammed (S). He challenged that if he deviated from Quran or the traditions of the Prophet (S) even in minutest details of his daily life, his claim should not be accepted and he should be punished according to the Muslim law. No saint after the Prophet ever claimed or maintained total and absolute adherence to the traditions of the Prophet (S). It was the glory of Hazrat Mahdi (A), by the grace of God that he claimed such total adherence and proved it through his hazardous life always watched by his able and learned disciples. Following the Prophet (S), he presented his life as an open book and there was nothing disguised or mysterious about it. Even the severest detractors and the worst enemies accepted him to be a highly learned and spiritual person holding the status of a perfect saint. Although those people did not accept him as the Promised Mahdi but they didn't dare to doubt him as an imposter. At the most they claimed that under stress of high spiritual absorption, Hazrat Syed Mohammed (A) claimed for sometime, to be the Promised Mahdi and his disciples began to believe and project him as such. They blame the disciples and followers without any logical justification. The followers of Hazrat Mahdi-e-Maud (A) were not ordinary men. They included many scholars of high repute, many saints of high distinction and many nobles and kings who had renounced the world and joined the mission of the Imam (A) in the name of God, in their love for the Prophet (A) and in their desire to bring about true Islamic revival. Such a high elite group of selfless and bold people could not be hypnotized or otherwise tempted to accept a false claim (God forbid).

After proclaiming himself to be the Promised Mahdi (A), the Imam (A) addressed letters to all prominent kings and Ulema to accept his claim after verifying its genuineness, in the light of Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (A) and his own life. In his letters he reminded them that in case he is found to be an imposter, it is their bounded duty to convince him about his fault, and if he failed to establish his claim to punish him with death, as his claim and teachings would mislead and misguide Muslim community. In case they found that his claim was genuine, it would be their duty to follow him in the cause of revival of Shariat and culmination of Tariqat (Takmeel-e-Tariqat) as it was the will of God, in assigning him the honor of being the Promised Mahdi (A). But in response to his letters, the Sultans who were not his devotees and were ruling over various parts of India and the Ulema who did not accept his claim kept quiet. They did not dare to take any action against Hazrat Mahdi (A) although after addressing the said letters, he stayed for about four months at Badli waiting for their response. Some of the Sultans who already became his devotees e.g. Sultan Hussain Sharqi, Hazrat Shah Nizam (R), Sultan Ghiasuddin Khilji and Sultan Mahmood Begda, remained his staunch followers, but his letters were ignored by other sultans and Ulema. They could not express their wrath, as from their heart of hearts they believed that the Imam (A) was a perfect saint and had devoted his whole life for the sake of revival of true Islamic values and he had no temporal interest or any personal ambition. They could not accept him as the Promised Mahdi because he was always digging deep into the very foundations of worldly power and wealth by preaching effacement of self and renunciation of worldly lusts. Such Sultans, and the divines and scholars who surrounded them, knew perfectly well that in the greed of wealth and power they had deviated much from the path laid down for them by the Quran and the Prophet (S). He addressed letters to many Hindu Rajahs also inviting them to accept Islam and enjoy the bounties of Almighty. But however their response was not encouraging.

Only a group of distinguished scholars sent by Mullah Moinuddin met Hazrat Mahdi (A) at Badli in response to his letters and held a religious discourse. The Mullah himself avoided to meet the Imam (A). They asked many questions during the course of that discourse and the Imam (A) gave convincing replies and the Mullahs were very much impressed. Many biographies of the Imam (A) describe the details of the various questions asked and the answers given. We are giving here only a few important questions and answers. First and foremost the Ulema asked whether the Imam (A) was making the claim to be the Promised Mahdi on his own accord or it was under the command of God. The Imam (A) replied that his claim was purely in strict obedience to the command of God to make such claim. He claimed that he received instructions and commands directly from God. The other question asked was why Hazrat Mahdi (A) was prohibiting work for gain and acquisition of knowledge when the Prophet (S) allowed it. He replied that he, as an absolute adherent of the Prophet (S) and in his capacity as Mahdi (A), could not and did not prohibit work for gain (Kasab) and acquisition of knowledge. What he insisted was that one should become a true Muslim by inculcating the habit of remembering God and fearing him, then one may do anything permitted by the religion. The Ulema asked how he could say that it was possible for pious Muslims to behold God during their worldly life itself. The Imam replied by quoting from Quran that one who is blind in this world shall be blind in the other world (with regard to the vision of God). He quoted Quranic verses which indicated that it is not impossible for the deserving to behold God with their own eyes. The Imam (A) reminded the Ulema that some of the learned commentators of the Quran (Mufassirin) did not deny the possibility of deedar during the worldly life. Hence, he with the authority granted by God was inviting the pious and deserving to seek God through spiritual elevation. When the Ulema asked why the Imam (A) was saying that the Vilayat (sainthood) is superior to Nabuwat (Prophetic status) the Imam (A) replied by quoting the tradition of the Prophet (A), that his sainthood is superior to his status as a Prophet. They remarked that this referred to the Prophet (A). The Imam (A) retorted "did I say that my sainthood is superior to that of the status of the Prophet (A) or that my sainthood is superior to the sainthood of the Prophet (A) or that a saint would be superior to a Prophet. Do you know what Vilayat means and what the implication of Prophetic status is"? The Ulema further wanted clarification on the assertion of the Imam (A) that faith in God increases and decreases whereas Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) said that it remains constant. The Imam (A) in reply, quoted a Quranic passage which clearly states that when the verses of the Quran are read before the believers their faith increases and they believe in God. But the Imam (A) giving due respect to Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) clarified that when he made the above mentioned comment about the constant nature of faith, the great jurist was referring to his own personal faith (Eman) which reached the stage of high perfection and at that point it could not increase or decrease. Then the Ulema asked why did he brand Muslims as Kafirs (infidels), the Imam replied, "I have presented Quranic injunctions. I never call any person a kafir. One who is branded as Kafir by the Quran, we call him Kafir." The Ulema further said that although they were impressed by his arguments, they were afraid of God in accepting him as the Promised Mahdi (A), how to solve this riddle. The Imam (A) posed a counter question "do you think that I am not at least as God-fearing as you are? Can I make a false claim ignoring the religious and spiritual consequences of such claim"? Then he quoted a passage from Quran which shows the consequences of a false claim. After this discourse some Ulema were convinced and accepted his claim but other returned uncommitted.

AT JALORE: After staying for four months at Badli, at the command of God, Hazrat Mahdi (A) proceeded towards Khorasan along with his disciples. On his way he stayed at many places and preached and enlightened the people with the true spirit of Islam. During this journey after staying for some time at Tharod and winning the hearts of local people he proceeded to Jalore which was then an important city having strategic importance. The ruler of this place, Zubdatul Malk Osman Khan Lodhi and thousands of native Muslims became the followers of Hazrat Mahdi (A). This ruler was the

Commander-in-Chief of the King of Gujarat, Sultan Mahmood. Before the Imam's (A) visit, he saw in his dream a saintly figure predicting about his acquiring a hidden treasure and vast state. This prediction proved to be true and after a victory in Deccan, the Sultan granted him the fort of Fonger and 393 villages and he became a regular ruler. He had an intense desire to see the saint who appeared in his dream and predicted about his material success and after attaining this, he was desirous of spiritual achievements as well, through his benefactor. When the Imam (A) visited his city and he came to know about his high spiritual stature and miraculous exposition of Quranic verses, he met the Imam (A) and realized that he was the saint for whom he was eagerly waiting. Inspired by the sermons of the Imam (A) he accepted him as the Promised Mahdi (A) and became his devotee. He issued an appeal to his subjects to accept the claim of the Imam (A) as it had been proved from all standards and criteria lay down by the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (A). This appeal and the impact of Imam's (A) personality and his inspiring sermons caused an atmosphere of moral and spiritual transformation of the entire Muslim population of the state of Jalore and about nine hundred scholars and religious leaders and thousands of Muslims became the devotees of Hazrat Mahdi (A). Moved by the hospitality and obedience of Osman Khan, the Imam (A) blessed him and his family and prayed for his prosperity and salvation. The descendents of Osman Khan ruled the State of Jalore, shifting their capital to Palanpur, for more than five centuries and remained staunch Mahdavi (History of Palanpur by Munshi Syed Gulab Miayari as quoted by Hazrat Syed Hussain Mahmudi in his book, "Al-Madhi Al-Maud"). The biographers report two miracles which occurred at Jalore. Once when Shah Dilawar (R) was helping the Imam (A) in ablution, he heard a voice from every drop falling from the face of the Imam (A) stating "Haza Khalifatullah Al-Mahdi" (here is the Caliph of God Mahdi). He wondered and asked the Imam (A) how in spite of such miraculous manifestations of his position some people are denying his claim. Hazrat Mahdi (A) replied that wherever he went every particle gave such testimony by the Grace of God, and many people heard it; but to perceive and hear such indications and voices one had to be endowed, with the senses bestowed on Shah Dilawar (R). On other occasion when Shah Nizam (R) was helping the Imam (A) in ablution and he was using a dried twig for cleaning his teeth, it occurred to the Shah that according to a tradition Mahdi could convert dry tree into nourishing ones. On the occasion it was merely a passing idea in the mind of Shah Nizam (R) and he did not mention it to the Imam (A). But the Imam (A), perceiving the idea of his disciple immediately thrust the twig in the ground and it miraculously turned into a nourishing plant. When he removed it from the ground it resumed the original condition. The Imam (A) after performing this miracle told the Shah (R) that to perform such miracles was the work of jugglers. Mahdi (A) was expected to do something great. The wording of the Hadis is true but according to the Imam (A), it meant that at the time of the advent of Mahdi (A) Muslims would be like dried trees and Mahdi (A) through his inspiration would infuse life in them and refresh their faith. Biographers report other miracles also which occurred during his stay at Jalore. At this place Miyan Shaikh Mohammed Kabir (R), Miyan Yousuf (R), Miyan Jamal (R), Miyan Ashraf (R), Miyan Kamal (R) renounced the world and joined the mission of the Imam (A). After staying for about four months at this pleasant city the Imam (A) proceeded to Nagore.

AT NAGORE: After Jalore he stayed and preached at Nagore. The Imam (A) became immediately popular at that place. After coming to know about his claim, the Governor of Nagore Moulana Malikji Moghul (R), who was an eminent scholar, met Hazrat Mahdi (A) along with many scholars, with the intention to discuss with him, many religious matters including his claim to be the Promised Mahdi (A). The Governor and the scholars were so much impressed by his personality and sincerity that they immediately became his devotees. Malikji was foremost in devotion. According to a tradition on seeing Malikji (R) the Imam (A) addressed him as the Prince of Lahoot (a heavenly abode). Originally Miyan Malikji was a prince of the ruling family of Kashmir but destiny after some vicissitudes of fate made him the Governor of Nagore. His good fortune to be addressed as the Prince of Lahoot is significant. It shows the spiritual eminence of Hazrat Malikji (R). He renounced the world and joined the mission of

the Imam (A) and remained with him for the rest of his life. At this place thousands of people accepted the Imam (A) as the Promised Mahdi. At Nagore, while the Imam (A) was delivering a lecture on the sacrifices of the devoted Muslim in the light of Quranic verses and emphasizing the glory of martyrdom, Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) enquired through his colleagues, who should represent the Imam (A) and who would be chosen for martyrdom on his behalf. Hazrat Mahdi (A) replied that God has chosen Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) for this honor.

In this regard the following Quranic verse is significant:

“So those who fled and were driven forth from their homes and suffered damage for My cause, and fought and were slain, verily I shall remit their evil deeds from them and verily I shall bring them into gardens underneath which rivers flow” 3-195.

The above mentioned verse of the Holy Quran is given special significance in the Mahdavia Annals, as it defines the attributes not only of the Prophet (S) and his companions but also those of the Promised Mahdi (A) and his companions. These attributes are (1) Hijrat (migration) (2) Ikhraj (expulsion) (3) Eeza (Persecution) and Mukhatila (to kill and being killed for the sake of God). These being the personal attributes of the Imam (A) as well as the Prophet (S), he on the occasion said that he fulfilled and manifested the first three of the above and the last attribute had to be manifested and fulfilled not directly by him but through some one in his place as it happened in case of the Prophet (A). As according to a tradition the Prophet (A) prophesied that no sword could slay the Mahdi (A), the literal expression of the last attribute could not be through his person. The whole hazardous life and the severe enmity of his adversaries and their helplessness in killing the Imam (A) in spite of his challenge which he made through his letters to the Kings and Ulema, proves the prophecy of the Prophet in this regard. The choice of Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) a descendant of Hazrat Imam Hussain (R), by the will of God to represent the Imam (A) in this attribute is significant. The martyrdom of Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) proved what the Imam (A) predicted about two decades earlier to this glorious end.

From Nagore the Imam (A) proceeded to Ajmer and after visiting the shrine of Hazrat Khaja Moinuddin Chishti (RH) continued his onward journey. According to some biographies Hazrat Mahdi (A) directly proceeded from Nagore to Jaisalmer.

AT JAISALMER: Jaisalmer which was one of the capital cities of Rajasthan, then ruled by a Hindu King famous for his courage and ferocity. By that time no Muslim Sultan could subdue him. At this place, a bull belonging to the group of disciples fell sick and was about to die. They were anxious to know whether in a Hindu Kingdom they could or could not slaughter the bull. The Imam (A) asked them not to waste the poor animal without slaughter in the name of God; and the followers obeyed him. On hearing about the cow-slaughter by a group of poor and unarmed Muslims, the King was enraged and personally came down to the spot along with his troops, He enquired at whose command they committed the “sacrilegious act”. The followers replied that they had slaughtered the bull at the command of their Imam (A). The Raja angrily asked them to present their Imam (A) to him. On this, Hazrat Mahdi (A) came out of his tent and stared at the Raja, who became spell bound; and dismounting from the horse he appeared before the Imam (A) in a way as if he is appearing before a superior King. In fact he was appearing before the emperor of spiritual realms. Mahdi (A) recited Quranic verses and explained the meaning to the Raja. On hearing the Raja was so much impressed that he fell down on his feet and accepted Islam. Addressing his troops he said, the creator of the cow had caused its slaughter for good; and who could dare to object. Many of his family members and several other people were converted to Islam. One of the Raja's sisters Princess Bhanmati who became a devotee was married to Hazrat Mahdi (A). She begot a son from Hazrat Mahdi (A) who was named

Hazrat Syed Ali (R). This worthy son was destined to suffer martyrdom later at Ahmedabad. When Hazrat Mahdi (A) decided to leave Jaisalmer in order to continue his onward journey, the Raja, considering the uncertain conditions of his border due to mischief of his rebels, offered armed guard. The Imam (A) declined to accept any protection and nothing could harm him. On the way to Thatta, there was a dangerous jungle passage infested by tigers, snakes and other harmful creatures. When some of the followers reminded the Imam (A) that the proposed route was very old and abandoned and a new route is available, he reassured them that nothing could harm him or his followers; and remarked that one of the objects of the advent of Mahdi (A) was to revive the old ways which the faithful had abandoned.

Facing all hardships he and his followers safely reached Thatta which was then the capital of Sindh. During his journey according to some traditions, Hazrat Khundmir (R) and few of his companions were lost in the jungle. After wandering for three days in the thick forest and after braving starvation and other hazards they were guided by an unknown voice proclaiming 'Haza Mahdi' (this is Mahdi), to join the Imam's caravan.

AT THATTA: At Thatta, the capital of Sindh; the Imam (A) and his followers were not received with enthusiasm. Malice, insult, harassment and conspiracy awaited them. In the beginning Jam Nanda the ruler of Sindh, sent a delegation of Mullahs to argue with the Imam (A) on the genuineness of his claim and also on the issue of deedar (vision of God). Hazrat Mahdi (A) with cogent arguments based on Quran proved that it is not impossible to see God with one's own eyes during once life time if God's mercy is available. The Ulema asked whether his contention is merely a hollow assertion based on jugglery at logic, or could he show any person who had actual experience of deedar (Divine vision). Thereupon the Imam (A) pointed his finger towards Hazrat Shah Nizam (R) and Hazrat Shah Dilawar (R) and asked the Mullahs to enquire from them whether they saw God. But they were not inclined to be satisfied and left the spot in utter dismay and frustration. They instigated Jam Nanda, the Muslim ruler of Sindh, to kill the Imam (A) in order to get rid of the 'menace' caused by his claim and preaching. The ruler sent a contingent under the command of one Darya Khan to punish Hazrat Mahdi (A). When the Commander reached the camp and saw the Imam (A) face to face, he lost his senses, fell down from his horse and after regaining his wits became so much impressed by Hazrat Mehdi (A) that he joined the divine group. When the ruler came to know about the apparent act of treason committed by his able Commander, he was greatly perplexed. Instead of sending another commander to attack Hazrat Mahdi (A) he decided to send his Murshid Shaikh Sadruddin (R), to meet him and ascertain about the genuineness of his claim and motives of his long journey.

Shaikh Sadruddin becomes a disciple: Shaikh Sadruddin was an eminent divine and scholar of high repute. Jam Nizamuddin the Ruler of Sindh was his devotee and as a consequence the Shaikh enjoyed unique influence and respect through out Sindh. The King directed him to meet the Imam (A) and ascertain the truth of his claim. The Shaikh himself was eager to have a discourse with Hazrat Mahdi (A) having heard about his claim and the tremendous following he enjoyed throughout Gujarat and other States. With ample preparations for the religious discourse the Shaikh proceeded towards the camp of the Imam (A), when he reached the spot, to his extreme consternation, he saw the Imam (A) dressed like a warrior. The Shaikh expected him to be clad like a scholar or a saint. On the occasion, the Imam's (A) attire could not attract the attention of the ostentations. Shaikh decided to go back without meeting him. But he heard strange voices emanating from the surrounding trees and stones proclaiming "Haza Mahdi" (here is Mahdi). Bewildered and impressed, the Shaikh returned to the camp of the Imam (A). By that time the Imam (A) had already commenced his daily lecture after evening prayers. The Shaikh joined the audience and heard the Imam (A) with rapt attention. The sermon on the occasion covered all the points which the Shaikh was desirous of raising. He was so

much impressed by the extraordinary eloquence, fecundity, saintly Might, and miraculous perception of what were the doubts of the new comer that he decided to stay for the night, for further discussion. Initially Shaikh Sadruddin hesitated to accept the Imam as the Promised Mahdi (A) although he was convinced about his sainthood. The Imam (A) reminded him that Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) brought altogether a new Shariat (system of religious rules) and cancelled the Shariats of earlier Prophets while claiming to be the Last Prophet (A) and most of his contemporaries accepted him. The Imam (A) enquired from the Shaikh that when he was absolutely following the Shariat of the Prophet (A) and was not making any innovations, and making the claim to be the Promised Mahdi (A) only at the Command of God, what prevented him to accept his claim. The Shaikh respectfully replied that in case the Imam's (A) claim was not genuine or authentic, he would have to face the wrath of Almighty. The Imam (A) retorted, "You are so much God-fearing, How you think that I do not have as much fear of God as you have." Then he quoted a Quranic verse which condemn and the people who make false claims in the name of God. Shaikh Sadruddin was almost satisfied. The Imam (A) asked him to stay for a few days in his daira and to observe Namaz and be engaged in Zikr. A room was allotted to him where the Shaikh remained for three days, practicing 'Zikr-e-Khafi' (roughly means silently remembering God, with rhythmic affirmation of He being the only object of worship and negation of self and other false objects inspiring worship, with every incoming and outgoing breath) taught by the Imam (A). The Shaikh was well versed in the prevalent practices adopted by Sufis for concentration and absorption in God. The Imam's (A) guidance in this regard transformed the Shaikh within three days. He renounced the world and formally accepted the Imam (A) to be the Promised Mahdi and remained thereafter as a faithful disciple. Similar doubt and fear was expressed by the Ulema at Badli and other places about his claim, although they recognized him as the saint of high eminence and the Imam (A) gave similar reply quoting the Quranic verse which states *"who doeth greater wrong than he who inventeth a lie concerning Allah and denieth His revelations? Lo! The guilty never are successful"* (Quran 6:21 translated by Pickthall) and asking whether he could ignore the implicit warning when the people expressing doubt were aware of it. Similar doubts were expressed by eminent scholars of later times while accepting the Imam (A) to be the saint of highest eminence but unfortunately they fail to realize the implications of the answer of the Imam (A) and its significance in the light of their own admission.

QAZI KHADEN (or KHAZI KHAZEN) becomes a Devotee: The other eminent person who became a staunch devotee of the Imam (A) at this place was Qazi Khaden. He was the chief Qazi (chief justice) of Sindh. He was the grand son of Qazi Zainuddin Bukhari and was with great qualities of head and heart. The Qazi was not only a scholar of high repute, a poet, a jurist and a linguist but was rewarded with spiritual eminence. His extensive travels throughout the then Islamic world broadened his vision which he used in the service of humanity. He died in the year 958 Hijra and his tomb is at Sustan.

When he visited the camp of the Imam (A) at Thatta incognito; the Imam (A) recognized him and called him by his real name. An interesting dialogue ensued and he was captivated by Imam's (A) inspiring personality and immediately accepted him to be the Promised Mahdi (A). Further details of the Imam's (A) discourse with Moulana Sadruddin (R) and Qazi Khaden (R) and description of their personalities can be gathered from Mahdavi and non-Mahdavi annals, we are compelled to avoid such details for the sake of brevity and also with a view to avoid unnecessary details of the life of the persons who met the Imam (A) and his mission, some details about the lives and personalities of the disciples and detractors are unavoidable, as the same are essential to project the events which were significant for better appreciation of the stupendous task which destiny presented to the Promised Mahdi (A).

Many other Ulema of Sindh, notable among them were Mirza Shaheen Bahkar, Shaikh Ilyas, Alam Arif and thousands of other people accepted the Imam (A) as the Promised Mahdi (A) and became his followers. Hazrat Mahdi (A) stayed at Thatta for about eighteen months. Afterwards Jam Nanda, at the instigation of some malicious Mullahs and his slave Dilshad, sent orders of expulsion against the Imam (A) and his companions through some local Qazi. When the Qazi met Hazrat Mahdi (A) and communicated the order of expulsion he remarked that he was not a subject of their ruler and he was not bound to obey his order. He said "I am staying here at the command of my Ruler. I am not interested in wealth or power. I am staying with a devoted group of the servants of God. Whenever I receive orders from Him I shall forthwith leave the city." The Qazi was adamant and said that according to Shariat it is binding upon the Imam (A) to obey the ruler especially when the Imam (A) was asserting that he was following the Shariat strictly. The Imam (A) posed a question to the Qazi "Is your ruler following Shariat" He then remarked in utter disgust: "The land of Gujarat belongs to the king of Gujarat, the land of Sindh belongs to the King of Sindh, all Kings have divided the territories among themselves, please show me a piece of land belonging to God where His servants could settle down and worship Him in peace." The Qazi conveyed the details of these parleys to the ruler Jam Nanda whose name was Nizamuddin. Subsequently when scholars and saints like Hazrat Sadruddin (R) and Qazi Khaden (R) and several others joined the fold of the Imam (A), and the masses were becoming his devotees the ruler Jam Nanda lost his patience. He, at the instigation of his slave Dilshad, mobilized his troops and assuming their command marched towards the camp of the Imam (A) in order to expel him by force. The Imam (A) also directed his devotees to take up arms and be prepared; observing the traditions of the Prophet (A), the battle between the troops of the ruler and the followers of the Imam (A) was avoided by the statesmanship of Darya Khan. But however Jam Nanda imposed severe blockade on the camp of the Imam (A). The troops continued the blockade or siege for some days. But this was also a failure. After the stay of more than a year, Hazrat Mahdi (A), at the command of God desired to leave Thatta. When the ruler came to know about his desire to leave the city, he was so much pleased that he offered the flotilla of his boats to facilitate the Imam (A) and his large group of devotees to cross the river, which at that time was in spate, as a part of their onward journey to Khorasan. The Imam (A) accepted the offer. When Hazrat Mahdi (A) and his group boarded the boats and commenced their voyage and reached the midstream, the sailors as part of a fatal conspiracy, made holes in the boats and jumped out and swam back to the river bank leaving all boats at the mercy of tumultuous waves, when the companions of the Imam (A) informed him about the treacherous act; the Imam (A) remarked: "One who looks after us on land will take care of us in the river as well." The divine group somehow managed to surmount the difficulties by putting pipes in the holes and draining out incoming water. After great struggle for life, all of them were safely ashore; and relieved from the clutches of the unscrupulous ruler, they reached Kaha.

AT KAHA: At Kaha the Imam (A) stayed along with his disciples for about six months. This city which was also known as Nasarpur was then ruled by one Ashraf Khan Panipati. After his arrival one local farmer complained to the Village Officer, that the horses of the Imam's (A) followers had spoiled his crop. The Officer rushed to the camp of the Imam (A) and told him "You claim to be the Promised Mahdi (A) but you cause loss to others, your horses have spoiled the crop of the poor farmers." Hazrat Mahdi (A) protested that the officer leveled charges without enquiry and asked him to personally see the farm. When he visited the spot he was amazed to see that the horses were standing around the farm without touching it. The officer Ashraf Khan realized the spiritual greatness of the Imam (A) and became his follower.

At Kaha the followers of the Imam (A) suffered great hardships due to lack of provisions. According to one tradition, in this journey, twenty two hundred persons were with Hazrat Mahdi (A), Out of them about nine hundred were accompanied by their families. About eighty four devout

followers died of starvation at Kaha. From Kaha, Hazrat Mahdi (A) sent back Hazrat Shah Niamat (R), Hazrat Shah Abdul Majeed (R), Miyan Yousuf Suhait (R) and Hazrat Shah Khundmir (R) to bring their families and to meet their relatives. From this place the Imam (A) sent a letter asking Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) to leave his post and join him. At this place at the command of God, Hazrat Mahdi (A) fixed twenty seventh of Ramazan as Lailat-ul-Qadar (the holy night of Ramzan which is the most auspicious and sacred in the entire year). About the determination of this night during the holy month of Ramazan there was doubt among all sections of Muslims. Now many sections of Muslims accept 27th as the sacred night. By way of gratitude to Allah the Imam (A) introduced a special prayer for the occasion apart from the usual prayers common among Sunni Muslims. This prayer (namaz of two rakats) is very enthusiastically observed every year by all Mahdavis, as obligatory, in the late hours of the night of 27th of Ramzan, under the Imam (A) (leadership) of their respective Murshid whom they held in high veneration. At this place only the Imam (A) married Bibi Bowan (R), a descendant of Hazrat Khaja Moinuddin Chishti (RH).

THE HAZARDOUS JOURNEY:

From Kaha the Imam (A) along with his followers proceeded to Khandahar. This journey towards the territory of Khorasan was the most hazardous of all the journeys which Hazrat Mahdi (A) along with his selfless and devoted followers undertook. The roads were primitive, the terrain uneven and mountainous surrounded by jungles infested by wild and deadly beasts and poisonous snakes. During the course of their expedition, many miracles occurred. While the caravan of the Imam (A) was passing by a village, its headman observed that a well armed and disciplined army is marching behind the group of devotees who were apparently in a helpless condition. When his observation was reported to the Imam (A) he remarked that a contingent of the invisible angels guarded the Khalifa of God as it guarded his Prophet (S) and only few people could observe such supernatural realities. On one occasion, when the Imam (A) camped for the night halt, a gigantic python surrounded the entire camp and was dangerously blocking the passage. When Hazrat Mahdi (A) was informed about this, he approached the huge reptile and spat at it then the snake left the spot, and Hazrat Mahdi (A) remarked that it was one of the rare creatures which were preserved by God to see the Promised Mahdi (A). Very often his followers could see at night an unusual rampart of copper around the camp for its protection. During the same long journey Hazrat Shah Nizam (R), in a state of deep absorption in God, forgot to fetch his new born daughter from the bag which he used as a cradle and hung with the branch of a tree on the way. When he realized his mistake he expressed his anxiety about the safety of the baby before Hazrat Mahdi (A). He said the Shah (R) that the Baby is in the safe protection of a powerful guard and asked him to go and find her out. When the Shah (R) returned back to the spot, he found that a tiger sitting under the tree guarding the princess and on seeing Hazrat Nizam (R) the noble beast suddenly left the spot. Such miracles are not uncommon with the saints and prophets. Such events, although amazing and remarkable for ordinary observers and subsequent readers of biographies, are in fact very ordinary manifestations of spiritual greatness of the chosen few. The Prophet (A) and Hazrat Mahdi (A) enjoy the most superior spiritual position even among the few on whom God had bestowed highest honor. Another miraculous event was the recovery of forty merchants who were stung by snakes while they were camping in a wilderness. One survivor met the Imam (A) on his way and reported the ghastly incident. He led the Imam (A) to the spot where all the forty merchants were lying dead due to snake bite. The Imam (A) prayed for them, blessed them and instantly they were all cured and restored to life. All of them became the devotees and confirmed that the Imam was the Promised Mahdi (A).

The Imam (A) purposely selected the most hazardous and dangerous short route to Khandahar, having full faith in God and also confidence in the devotion and courage of his followers. The followers suffered extreme misery and hardship during the course of this journey. Many had to survive

by consuming weeds and wild leaves. According to a tradition, at a crucial stage of this dangerous journey, the Imam (A) once climbed over a mount and watched the caravan of his devotees who were following him. He observed that many of them were half-naked, starved and sickly proceeding with sheer force of will and extreme devotion to the cause of God; and their only hope was to be blessed by His deedar (Divine vision) and to prove their unshakable belief in their leader as the Promised Mahdi (A). These brave and faithful disciples, in such an outwardly miserable condition, included ex-kings and nobles, well to do divines, and officers and their wives and children. They braved every hardship and faced every imaginable challenge of adversity with smiles of conquerors upon their dry and shrunk lips, with fire in their eyes and spiritual solace in their hearts. They opted for all this voluntarily for the sake of God and his perfect saint, their leader, the Promised Mahdi (A) as if to show and prove the highest limits of human endurance and glory of faith. Observing them in such a state the Imam (A) was so much moved that tears rolled down from his eyes and he prayed: "O God, you know everything about me and my followers; I have not retained anything valuable or dear to them which is forcing them to follow me. Their only right over me and their sole desire is to obtain through my guidance the pardon and approval; and ultimately the privilege of your blessing and Divine Vision. O God! Have mercy on all of us." The prayer of the promised Mahdi (A) was rewarded. God blessed all his followers with his forgiveness, pleasure and highest spiritual rewards.

AT KHANDHAR: After this ordeal of about a month's journey in the most difficult conditions, the Imam (A) and his followers reached Khandahar.

At that time it was the province of the Kingdom of Khorasan, which was ruled by Sultan Hussain. Shah Baig was then the provincial Governor having his headquarters at Khandahar. Allama Syed Hussain Mahmoodi the learned author of a comprehensive biography "Al-Mahdi Al-Maud" on the authority of the renewed historian Farishta gives some interesting details about Shah Baig. According to him, he was a good scholar and had great command over Islamic theology and other arts. He had the privilege of being the teacher of the crown prince of Afghanistan, Mirza Badi-uz-zaman. Due to his abilities he was promoted to the post of Governor of Kandahar. But after his elevation to that high temporal office he became profligate and developed pernicious addiction to wine.

By the time the Imam (A) reached Khandahar the local people already knew that he was claiming to be the Promised Mahdi (A). When they came to know that Hazrat Mahdi (A) had arrived and had camped near their city along with about 2200 disciples, they became antagonistic. In the medieval days, the arrival of strangers in large number was bound to create the feelings of suspicion and antipathy. When the strangers seemed to preach doctrines, which due to their ignorance, they thought to be contrary to their faith and when they came to know that the leader of the new-comers is claiming to be the Promised Mahdi, they became wild with rage. In such matters the rage of Ulema was bound to surpass that of the common people, Instead of directly meeting the Imam (A) and ascertaining about his claim they preferred to approach the Governor to compel him to attend the Jama Masjid (Central Mosque) on the occasion of Friday prayers for discourse. The Governor Shah Baig, instead of inviting the Imam (A) politely, preferred to send a contingent of troops to compel his attendance. The soldiers after reaching the camp for summoning the Imam (A) behaved rudely and had altercation with his disciples and indulged in beating some of them. When the disciples desired to resist them with arms the Imam (A) forbade them from violence, the soldiers were so impatient that they did not even allow the Imam (A) to wear his shoes. At this painful situation Hazrat Mahdi (A) remarked that for the sake of God, he would not mind walking a thousand miles bare footed, The Imam's (A) camp was out of the city and he had to enter the main gate of the city to reach the mosque. The mischievous officers purposely locked the main gate in order to test whether Hazrat Mahdi (A) could overcome that hurdle through his spiritual powers. When he saw the lock, he touched it with his finger and it gave way

instantly. The troops accompanying him were amazed but this miracle had little effect, at the moment, on the obstinate Mullahs. The Imam (A) went straight to the mosque and occupied his seat in the front row without caring about the antagonistic atmosphere. The Governor of Khandahar, who called the Imam (A) to the Mosque in such circumstances, joined the Friday prayers. According to tradition-reported by various Biographers, Shah Baig was dead drunk even on such solemn occasion and his asperity was apparent. Realizing the delicacy of the situation, one of the companions of the Imam (A) advised him that as the Governor is intoxicated not only by liquor but also by his youthful energy, it would be proper to deliver his sermon with tact. The Imam (A) replied "O brother, before me, people who are enamored with worldly lust and those who are purse-proud become sober; what is the importance of the frenzy caused by dirty water?" At the end of the prayer, the Mullahs created commotion and started hooting and abusing the Imam (A). The Governor due to his early scholarly background, in spite of his drunken condition, behaved in a manner better than the Mullahs and beyond the expectation of the Imam's (A) companions. He restored order by reprimanding them and asked them to hear what the Imam (A) said about his claim. The Imam (A), as was his habit, based his sermon upon a Quranic verse appropriate for the occasion. According to tradition, he chose the following Quranic verse as the subject of his sermon. Sura XI Aayat 17 and 18 as translated by Pickthal: *"Is he (to be counted equal with them) who relieth on a clear proof from his Lord, and a witness from Him reciteth it, and before it was the Book of Moses, an example and a mercy? Such believe therein and whoso disbelieveth therein of the clans, the Fire is his appointed place. So be not thou in doubt concerning it. Lo! It is the truth from thy Lord, but most of mankind believe not."*

After a few minutes of hearing, the Mullahs were dumb founded; and the Governor was so much moved that he was all praise and admiration for the sublime oratory and the way of the Imam (A) explaining the innate meaning of the Quranic verse referred to above. At the end of the lecture he fell on the feet of the Imam (A) and apologized for the rude behavior of his subordinates. The Imam (A) forgave and blessed all who were present. Then Shah Baig, the Governor, turned towards the Mullahs and enquired whether the advent of Mahdi (A) is proved by the traditions of the Prophet Mohammed (S). They replied unanimously that it is proved by a series of authentic traditions, but there is no uniformity in the symbols described in the traditions. The Governor proclaimed "If such is the position, I admit and confirm that Hazrat Syed Mohammed is the Promised Mahdi (A)" Moved by his faith and enthusiasm, the Mullahs also followed his example. He became a faithful devotee and arranged for the feast of the Imam (A) and his followers and offered many gifts. The Imam (A) accepted his hospitality only for three days, following Prophet Mohammed (S) in such matters, from among the Ulema and Officers of Khandahar. Mohammed Kashani (RH), Miyan Ashraf Hansvi (R), Miyan Danish Khurasani, Haji Mohammed (RH), Kabeer Khan (R), Kamal Khan (RH) and many others joined the circle of his disciples by renouncing every thing worldly. Soon afterwards, the scholars and nobles of the city of Koh, which was near Khandahar, also followed their example when the Imam (A) visited that picturesque township.

AT FARAH: After traveling a long distance from Khandahar, Hazrat Mahdi (A) and his followers reached the City of Farah and stayed in the rest house adjoining the garden of Malik Sikander Haji on the outskirts of that city. There the people already came to know that an eminent saint who was a descendant of the great martyr Imam Hussain (R) and who proclaimed that he was the Promised Mahdi (A) and had a great following had arrived and was staying in the vicinity of their city. The Qazi of the city was enraged when he heard about the claim of the Imam (A) that it was binding on every Muslim to accept him as the Promised Mahdi (A). He ordered the local police to seize all the arms and other properties belonging to the entire group and arrest them. The police arrived and started atrocities. Initially the disciples of the Imam (A) thought that there would be an encounter and the time had arrived when they would be called upon to fight and suffer martyrdom. They sought the guidance of

Hazrat Mahdi (A) who told them that he was not guided by expedience, caution or any other consideration, but he had to obey the command of God. The Imam (A) came forward and surrendered his sword to the police and all his disciples followed his example. They did not resist the police who seized all their humble belongings. The police, realizing that they were all unarmed, peaceful and saintly men, left the spot content with repine and abandoning the idea of arrest. On the night following that day of atrocity on the pious group, according to a tradition, the local Commander Sarwar Khan saw Prophet Mohammed (S) in his dream, who pointing a spear towards his neck was admonishing him about the acts of cruelty done to his son. He felt an unbearable pain in his stomach. Stunned by the dream and afraid of his malady, he enquired about the atrocities; and after being informed presented himself before the Imam (A) and apologized for what had happened. The Imam (A), at the request of Shah Nizam (R) forgave all and granted a glass of blessed water, to Sarwar Khan who was relieved of his malady immediately after drinking it. He ordered the police to return all the seized articles and asked the Imam (A) to give a list of articles lost by his group. The Imam (A) addressing the Commander said “We have not lost anything; the things which we eagerly cherish i.e. extreme obedience and love of God are with us”. He was very much moved and became the devotee and after admonishing the Qazi returned all the seized articles, He informed the Governor of the province of Farah Mir Zunoon about the arrival of the Imam (A), his popularity, spiritual eminence and his claim, The Governor, rightly thought that the matter was serious, He consulted the local Ulema and Mullahs who advised him a dual course to test the veracity of the claim of the Imam (A). Firstly Mir Zunoon advanced in war like pomp and posture, towards the camp of the Imam (A), as if to attack it. He and the Ulema thought that in case the Imam (A) was overawed and adopted obsequious attitude with the fear of impending devastation and death, it could be safely concluded that he was an imposter; otherwise his claim would be taken seriously. When Mir Zunoon reached the camp of the Imam (A), he found the Imam (A) delivering lecture, as usual, on Quran and his followers were absorbed in hearing him, unmoved by the approach of the advancing troops and unmindful of any danger. When nobody stared, the arrogant and pompous Governor personally advanced towards the platform disturbing the rows of the audience. The Imam (A) stared at him and commanded: "Mir Zunoon, sit down where you are". The Governor felt as if he had no option except to obey. He heard the Imam (A) with rapt attention and was greatly impressed by what he heard from the Imam (A). At the end of the meeting he greeted Hazrat Mahdi (A) and enquired: “according to one tradition ascribed by the Prophet, no sword would harm the real Mahdi (A), May I try it. The Imam (A) said if you want to test your sword, you are at liberty to do so”. Mir Zunoon advanced, sword in hand, and tried to strike at the Imam (A). He found his arm paralyzed. He tried with the other hand, it was also paralyzed. When the Mir stood helpless and amazed, the Imam (A) then came forward, touched his hands and Zunoon became all-right. The Imam (A) told Mir Zunoon “Sword is meant to cut, fire is meant to burn, and water to drown” the tradition implied that no one could over power the Mehdi (A) or could kill him. By seeing this miracle, Mullah Noor and Mir Zunoon loudly proclaimed that the Imam (A) was the Promised Mahdi (A) and the Governor in his enthusiasm offered his military might, if required in the mission of the Imam (A). The Imam (A) explained that it is far more preferable to crush the ego than to use the sword. He and his followers were not after any worldly power and glory. They were after God and He alone was their Protector and they did not require any military assistance or state patronage. Hundreds of soldiers and several Ulema who were on the spot immediately accepted the claim of Hazrat Mahdi (A) and became his followers. The Governor extended hospitality to all the followers of the Imam (A) who accepted it for only three days in keeping with the traditions of the Prophet (S) and refused thereafter to accept any invitation or present from the Governor. About one year passed in this atmosphere of initial antagonism and subsequent devotion.

The other course adopted by the Ulema was to arrange for a discourse with the Imam (A) on his claim, by that time the Governor and many Mullahs and Ulema became staunch followers of Hazrat

Mahdi (A) but some Ulema remained uncommitted and were desirous of further verification about his claim. Hence on the advice of the Ulema who were satisfied about the spiritual eminence and claim of the Imam (A) the Governor addressed a detailed letter to the King of Khorasan Abdul Ghazi Mirza Sultan Hussain stating in detail about the arrival of the Imam (A) in his territory. The Governor reported that Hazrat Mahdi (A) was the descendent of Hazrat Imam Hussain (R) and his noble pedigree is adored by saints of high eminence and scholars of high repute and achievement. He stated that the Syed (A) claimed to be the Promised Mahdi (A) and in his capacity as the Caliph of God. He asserted, in the light of the Quran and traditions of the Prophet (A), that it was possible to behold God during one's life time for those who are deserving. He enjoined upon all Muslims to cherish the desire to have the vision of Almighty. Moreover he claimed to be the absolute follower of the prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and his mission was to fight with the forces of evil and to eradicate evil customs and beliefs which had crept into the pure Islamic tradition and to revive the Shariat of the Prophet (A). Moreover, as Mahdi (A), caliph of God, his mission was to prepare the deserving Muslims for highest spiritual rewards culminating into marifat-e-Ilahi (mystic awareness of God) and Deedar (Vision of God). The Governor further reported to the King that on hearing about his claims, as an initial reaction, he tried to subdue the Imam (A) by show of force; but the Imam (A) was not perturbed and gracefully continued his mission. He describes the miracles of the Imam (A) which he and other nobles and Ulema witnessed and he also gave the details of the discourse of the Imam (A) with the eminent scholars of the city and gave testimony to the strict adherence of the Imam (A) to Quran and obedience to the Prophet (S), his pure and selfless life and his total aversion to worldly ambitions. Mir Zunoos reported to the King that after careful verification of the genuineness of the claim made by the Imam (A) he and most of the Ulema of Farah had become his disciples and invited the King to join the circle of devotees.

Sultan Hussain was a powerful ruler of Khorasan (now Afghanistan) having his capital at Herat. He was endowed with many virtues including scholarship and poetic talents. According to Allama Syed Hussain, he was the author of the book "Majlis-ul-Ushaq". This indicates his leanings towards Sufism. He was a great patron of scholars and saints and hence many scholars were attracted to adore his capital city and his kingdom. The said biographer, on the basis of historical evidence, has mentioned in his commendable biography of the Imam (A) that about twelve thousand scholars and divines were under his patronage throughout his kingdom.

Moved by the letter of Mir Zunoos, the Sultan called the scholars of his court and directed them to verify about the facts stated by Mir Zunoos and the claim of Hazrat Syed Mohammed (A), with care and caution, as the issue involved a delicate matter of faith. Notable among the Ulema consulted by the Sultan was Mullah Ahmed Saifuddin, the Shaikh-ul-Islam of his kingdom. There is confusion in the biographies about the name of this Shaikh-ul-Islam. In Shawahid-ul-Vilayat the name is given as Shah Baig by the venerable author on page 228 of 1379 Hijri. Edition; the Governor of Khandahar also had the same name as stated above. Hazrat Syed Hussain gives the name of Shaikh-ul-Islam as Mullah Ahmed Saifuddin in his book 'Al Mahdi-Al Maud' on page 342. But the same author describes the Shaikh-ul-Islam as Shah Baig on page 343. Shah Baig might be a title conferred on both the Shaikh-ul-Islam and the Governor of Khandahar. He was a great scholar, well-versed in all branches of Islamic theology and Sufism and had a large circle of devotees and pupils. Under his guidance the Ulema of Herat studied in detail for quite a long time about the concept of Mahdi (A) as propounded in the various traditions ascribed to the Prophet (A) and the Quranic verses and commentaries which hinted about it. They also studied about the controversial subject of the possibility of deedar (vision of God) during the worldly life of a Muslim, and other crucial problems of Fiqah (or Fiqh) in order to prepare themselves for the final discourse with Imam Mahdi (A). After these academic preparations the Shaikh-ul-Islam and other Ulema of the Court of Sultan Hussain prepared four basic and crucial questions or issues to form the basis of discussion with the Imam (A) and nominated a delegation of Ulema

consisting of (1) Mullah Ali Fiaz (2) Mullah Mohammed Sherwani (3) Mullah Darwish (4) Haji Mohammed Khurasani (there is a difference of opinion about the identity of the fourth member of the delegation among the chronicles. The probable names given, apart from the name mentioned above, are Mullah Abdus Samad Hamdani, Mullah Ali Sherwani, Mullah Aligul or Mullah Maqdoom).

The king appointed Mullah Ali Fiaz as leader of the delegation and the chief spokesman and directed him to conduct discourse with the Imam (A) on the issue already framed with consent and test the genuineness of his claim. If the Imam (A) failed to satisfy and was found to be an imposter, the King desired that he should be punished according to the Shariat (Islamic Law). The course adopted by the King and Ulema was most logical and it was in fact an Islamic way of determining the genuineness of any such high claim. The Imam (A) himself in his earlier letters addressed the kings of various Muslim states suggested the said course of action in the form of a challenge. But no king had the moral courage, sagacity or attachment to the cause of Islam, to respond to his call in a befitting manner. Either they were despondent, or despotic in dealing with his movement. But the king of Khorasan being a scholar imbued with high values of Islamic learning and being interested in the well being and coherence of Islamic society decided to adopt the above mentioned course.

The delegation of the Ulema arrived at Farah with royal authority to conduct the discourse with all pomp and preparation and the people of Farah became very eager to know about the outcome of the same. At this stage there are two courses, open to us i.e. (1) to translate almost verbatim the other biographers or (2) to venture in our humble way to comment upon the significance of the discourse in the light of the four question posed by the Ulema to the Imam (A) while borrowing some details from the narrative given by the learned biographers. We humbly prefer to adopt the second course.

The questions, as we have already stated, were not simple, requiring a simple answer. In fact each was an issue by itself which required very detailed discussion and there was every possibility of arguments, cool and heated, and every probability of unresolved controversy. As all the biographers agree that the said delegation of Ulema formulated the four issues for discourse after detailed study of more than two months on all subjects covered under them:

- i) The first question posed to the Imam (A) by the Ulema was:
On what basis you are claiming to be the Promised Mahdi?

The question was not simple as its wording apparently suggests. The learned Ulema might have guessed that the Imam (A) would base his claim on some or other Quranic verse or upon some or other traditions attributed to Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) about the advent of Mahdi (A). They were fully aware in the Quran there is no express mention of the name of Mahdi (A) or about his advent although there are clear indications contained in several verses. The traditions of the Prophet (Hadis), in this regard also are various; some of them are authentic and some are not so. Some traditions give cogent description of the attributes and qualities of the promised Mahdi (A) and some indirectly and symbolically suggest the same. Hence the Ulema might have thought that in case the Imam (A) based his claim on some Quranic verse or a set of traditions of the Prophet (A), then there would be enough scope for argument and by adopting the process of logical deduction or a process of comparison of one set of traditions with the other, they would have a chance to refute the arguments and the claim of the Imam (A). But the reply of the Imam (A), which took them by surprise, was not only brief but cogent, in the sense that it left no scope of argument as was desired by the Ulema. The Imam replied "I am not claiming to be the Promised Mahdi (A) on my own accord; God has consistently and persistently commanded me for years to proclaim myself to be the Promised Mahdi (A). Hence in obedience I have made the claim." The Ulema were bewildered by this almost prophetic way of answering such

questions. The Prophets and Caliphs of God do not base their claim on any set of arguments, or logic or on prophecies contained in earlier sacred traditions. They simply make a claim at the command of God. To substantiate or prove the authenticity of their claim they do not advance any argument but present their whole personality, their sublime character and their noble work. The Ulema already knew about the personality of the Imam (A), his spiritual eminence and his mission; and while giving the answer, he was before them in all his glory. Hence they had no option except total submission.

- ii) The next question posed to the Imam (A) was: From out of the four leading schools of fiqah (i.e. Hanafi, Shafai, Maliki and Hambali) which school do you follow?

As the readers are aware that the above four leading schools of Fiqah (or Fiqh) are named after their respective founders, Imam Abu Hanifa (RH), Imam Shafai (RH) Imam Malik (RH) and Imam Ahmed Hambal (RH). One must bear in mind that all the four Imams referred to above were not only learned scholars and jurists of high ability but also enjoyed spiritual eminence of saints. One must also bear in mind how their systems or schools of Fiqah developed. The rules of jurisprudence; or to be more precise and simple, the rules of interpretation of Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (A), on a particular issue relating to social, religious, political, economic aspect of the Ummah or persons forming part of the ummah, were laid down by the Prophet (S) himself. He with inspiration from God commanded that the answer to any question or clarification of an issue had to be found first in the commandments of Quran. If the Quran is silent on such issue or was not clear then the answer had to be found in the traditions of the Prophet (A) (i.e. what he said or did) and when the traditions also were to be silent the matter should be settled by ijma (congregation of learned or able men) and if ijma could not be held one had to use his own discretion bearing in mind the general spirit of Quran and Hadis (Hadith). The last course is called 'Ijtehad'. One who is well versed in Islamic Law is called a faqih and one who is capable of settling an issue, about which the Quran and Hadis are silent or not clear, is called a Mujtahid. The above mentioned four Imams were great Faqihs and Mujtahids. The Quran and Hadis contained guidance in all important matters relating to human life. But hundreds of issues could and did arise where no direct guidance could be had from either the Quran or the Hadis. Hence there arose the need for Ijtehad by learned men. All the above four Imams gave their honest opinions about such issues and there was difference of opinion among them. Hence the opinions and decisions of all these learned Imams constituted distinct systems of thought and their prudence and the followers of each system constituted an independent school e.g., Hanafi school, and Shafai school. But all these four Imams did not claim that their views were absolutely correct on any issue or they were incapable of erring, with passage of time became sub sects of the Sunni sect of Muslims and the adherents of these schools indulged in controversies which was a matter of both academic and vested interest of the Ulema of all times.

Imam Mahdi (A) being a Caliph of God and according to an authentic tradition of the Prophet (A), being in inherently innocent (masoom) was not bound to follow any school described above. Hence to the second question the Imam (A) replied that he was not bound to follow any school of fiqah as he was the caliph of God. He pronounced that he has not brought any new religion. His religion is Quran and the path of the Prophet Mohammed (A). On matters on which the Hadith were silent, he obtained divine inspiration and acted according to the command of God. The venerable Imams of fiqah were not endowed by divine inspiration and they had to depend on qiyas (guess). This answer of the Imam (A), the basis of which was a claim to divine inspiration and absolute adherence to the practice of the Prophet (A), did not give any scope of argument to the Ulema and they were very much impressed by it. As a matter of fact the acceptance of the second claim of the Imam (A) depended upon

the acceptance of the first claim or, in other words, the answer to the second question was a consequence or corollary to the answer of the first question.

- iii) The third question was what commentary (Tafsir) on Quran do you follow while delivering sermons on Quran?

This question was most unbecoming of the delegation of the Ulema considering their scholastic achievements. An ordinary orator, scholar or commentator on the holy Quran, while preparing for or delivering a lecture or sermon would rarely depend for guidance on any particular commentary. Such scholars or orator have to seek guidance from more than one commentary, if they are serious about their preparation. Writing of a commentary on Quran (tafseer) is in fact the act of interpreting or explaining the meaning and implication of Quranic verses. Hence the commentator (mufassir) uses his personal capacities of perception, deduction and interpretation. The Ulema, who were asking the said question to the Imam (A), might be accustomed to conventional way of discourse basing their argument on a particular type of interpretation of Quran. In case the Imam (A) relied on a particular commentary they might have based their argument on other interpretation. The answer given by the Imam (A) to this question also curtailed the scope of detailed argument which they expected, "The (Tafseer) before delivering my sermons on Quran. I am inspired by Almighty who reveals the meaning and implications of Quranic verses to me and I deliver my sermon, on the basis of such inspiration". Such reply from an ordinary person would have been interpreted as an idle boast intended to avoid argument. But at the time of discourse and before its commencement, the Imam (A) was actually quoting and interpreting Quranic verses and delivering sermon on the same and the Said Ulema had the privilege of hearing him. The sublime style of his oratory, his command over the most intricate aspects of interpretation of the sacred verses, his cogent, logical and persuasive explanations, convinced the Ulema that his claim to inspiration was genuine. They admitted that in spite of their vast learning they felt as if their scholarship is of no significance compared to the Imam's (A) knowledge and perception.

- (iv) The fourth question asked or the issue raised for discussion was about Deedar (vision of God). They asked: "on what basis do you claim that it is possible to behold God during the course of this worldly life?"

Hazrat Mahdi (A) answered this question in detail basing his arguments on the following citations from Quran according to various biographers. The English translation of the citations is as follows:-

- (i) Say: this is my way: I call on Allah with sure knowledge, I and who-so-ever followeth me Glory be to Allah! - Sura Yousuf 12-108. (Here Pickthal translated the word Baseerat as sure knowledge, the word refers to actual vision).
- (ii) Say! I am only a mortal like you. My Lord inspireth in me that your God is only one God. And whosoever hopeth for the meeting with his lord, let him do righteous work and make none sharer of the worship due unto his Lord. Sura Kahaf 18-110.
- (iii) Who so is blind here will he blind in the Hereafter, and yet further from the road. Sura Bani Israel 17-72.

The Imam (A) gave such a lucid explanation of the explicit and implicit meaning of the above mentioned citations from the Quran that the Ulema were convinced about the belief of the possibility of the vision of God to the deserving even during the life in this world. Moreover he asked the Ulema

"don't you know that there are other Sunni scholars who believe about the possibility of deedar?" The Ulema replied in the affirmative. The Imam (A) remarked that he confirmed their point of view. Then the head of the delegation remarked that under Shariat (law of Islam) to prove a fact two eye witnesses are required. At this point, mystic mood prevailed on Hazrat Mahdi (A) and he replied with emotion pointing towards his right and left: "If you want such testimony verify from the noble souls of Prophet Ibrahim (A) and Prophet Mohammed (A) (if you are so capable)". Then pointing towards Hazrat Shah Nizam (R) and Shah Dilawar (R) he said: "If you want living witnesses, according to Shariat, then these are the witness about the vision of God " the two caliphs of the Imam (A), then stood up and solemnly testified that by the grace God and with the training and blessing of the Imam (A) they had the privilege of the "Divine Vision" (Deedar). Moved by the deliberations the delegation remarked: "O, greatest saint, for us your testimony is enough". They accepted the Imam (A) to be the promised Mahdi (A) and renounced the world to join his mission. The leader of the delegation sent a detailed report of what transpired during the discourse to King Hussain confirming the truth of the claim of Hazrat Mahdi (A)

They also informed King about the strict adherence of the Imam (A) and his pious followers to the commandment of Quran and the Sunnah, their selfless and devoted lives and their pious dedication to reform in Islamic Society. Some biographers report that the members of the delegation were so much impressed and inspired by Hazrat Mahdi (A) that they initially declined to go back to the court of their king and preferred to remain in the Daira by renouncing the world. But the Imam (A) reminded them that they were sent by their king on a mission and they had to discharge their duty. The delegation prepared a detailed report about their discourse with the Imam (A) and their conclusions about his claim and his personality and sent it to their King through one of their representatives. The other members preferred not to be deprived of the company of the Caliph of God and remained in his daira. Sultan Hussain after seeing the report and after consulting with the Shaikh-ul-Islam Shah Baig and other scholars in detail accepted the Imam (A) to be the Promised Mahdi (A) and became his devotee. After this he sent some of the Ulema to the camp of the Imam (A) along with valuable presents and a request for his blessings. When the King and all leading Ulema became the devotees of the Imam (A), by accepting his claim, almost the whole population of that vast Muslim Kingdom followed their example.

The old and ailing Sultan of Khorasan was so much moved by what he heard about the spiritual eminence of Hazrat Mahdi (A) that he decided to travel all the way from Herat to Farah in order to pay homage to him. But unfortunately he died on his way. Hazrat Mahdi (A) after coming to know about the demise of the pious Sultan, offered funeral prayers in absentia, along with his followers, praying for salvation of the departed noble soul.

CHAPTER VII

THE LAST DAYS

Hazrat Mahdi (A) reached Farah in the year 907 Hijra and stayed there, according to some biographers, for about two years five months. During this period, for quite a long time, he stayed in the outskirts of the city as stated earlier but afterwards he shifted to the city proper and resided there by forming a *daira*, as was his practice, along with most of his disciples, in houses gifted to him by local people. The early days of his stay were marked by tumultuous opposition, and series of discourses but ultimately his claim was accepted and he enjoyed universal acclaim and veneration and spent the rest of his life in that city in a peaceful and serene atmosphere.

Return of Caliphs (R) with other companions:

The readers may recall that the eldest son of the Imam (A) left him at Pattan, with his permission to work for gain and was in service of the Sultan of Gujarat. When the Imam (A) reached Kaha (Nasarpur), his disciple Syed Salamullah (R) wrote a letter to Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) with the consent of Hazrat Mahdi (A) requesting him to join the Imam (A). Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) on receiving the said letter was so much moved that he lost interest in his job and became restless to join the Imam (A). He renounced the world, distributed all his wealth among his servants, and even desired to part company with his wife who was the daughter of a Vazeer of the Sultan, accustomed to affluence and ease. But the faithful wife insisted to accompany him and offered to face every possible hardship of a saintly life not only discharges her duty as a faithful wife but also to enjoy the rewards of the blessings of the Imam (A) and the benevolence of Almighty. Both the devoted husband and wife proceeded towards Khorasan and faced great hardships on their way. When they reached Radhanpur, they fortunately met two Caliphs of the Imam (A) viz. Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) and Hazrat Shah Niamat (R), who were also returning back to the last camp of the Imam (A) after short stay at Gujarat. These caliphs were carrying with them valuable gifts and sufficient provisions sent by the devotees of Gujarat who included the Sultan's two sisters, Raje Sone and Raje Moradi. After meeting this group at Radhanpur, Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) difficulties ended and he reached Farah and joined the Imam (A) along with Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) and the leading disciple of the Imam (A) Hazrat Shah Niamat. During this journey Hazrat Syed Khundmir (A) showed great affection and respect to Hazrat Syed Mahmood (A) and gave all the gifts sent to the Imam (A) in his custody. The Imam (A) was very happy due to the return of his son Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R). Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) and other disciples of Hazrat Mahdi (A) were particularly pleased by the obedience and devotion of his worthy son who was destined to lead his disciples after his demise.

By this time the Imam (A) reached the sixty-third year of his pious, rigorous and glorious life which was destined to end at Farah. During his last days the Imam (A) concentrated on imparting spiritual training of the highest order to all his five Caliphs, Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R), Syed Khundmir (R), Hazrat Shah Niamat (R), Hazrat Shah Nizam (R) and Hazrat Shah Dilawar (R), who had to succeed him in the leadership of the movement launched by him as his caliphs. He gave special attention to Bandagi Miyan Syed Mahmood (R) and Bandagi Miyan Syed Khundmir (R) who were younger than the other caliphs but were expected to bear higher responsibilities. A very highly disciplined, dedicated, selfless, and devoted group of disciples was already prepared and trained by the Imam (A) himself who had to assist the future caliphs. He blessed all his followers and Caliphs and spoke very highly of their religious and spiritual achievements. On the last Friday of his life, as he had premonition of the approaching end, he after Juma prayers, performed “vitar” prayer also which

signified that he would not live till the next Friday. His devotees knowing the significance of this event became restless and were struck with grief. In the congregation Moulana Mahmood, Moulana Shukoor was much moved as they could recollect that Prophet Mohammed (S) also offered vitar prayers after his last Friday prayer. On that momentous occasion the Imam (A) selected the same citation from Quran as subject for his sermon, which the Prophet (A) selected for his last Khutba declaring that faith both in its formal and spiritual aspect had been completely proclaimed before mankind. "This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed my favor unto you, and have chosen for you as religion AL-ISLAM." Sura V-3.

The Shariat was presented in complete form during the life time of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and the secrets of marifat and Tariqat (knowledge of the real and the mystic way) was revealed through the Prophet (A) only to the chosen few. The advent of Mahdi (A), according to traditions, was for the completion and perfection of Tariqat and revival of Shariat. Hence the Imam (A) at the end of his glorious life, at the command of Allah, proclaimed His message contained in the said citation from Quranic verse which implied that religion and faith both in its formal and spiritual aspects had been presented in complete form before humanity. It would serve as perennial source of inspiration for the faithful and deserving. Shortly afterwards fever afflicted the Imam (A) and he was bed-ridden. He called all his disciples and gave his last testament. He said: "death did not spare any Prophet or Saint; even Prophet Mohammed (S) could not service for long. I am also leaving this world. I have communicated to you whatever was ordained by God. My work was that of a teacher and preacher; what I preached, I practiced; now the burden is being shifted to your shoulder; if you lead a dedicated life practicing Islamic virtues. You will be rewarded; otherwise, you will have to repent. If anybody still entertains any doubt about my claim to be the Promised Mahdi (A) or he wants to test its veracity, he must, just after I am laid in my grave, try to see my body under the coffin cloth (Kaffan) and if you find my body then my claim was wrong and I was not the Promised Mahdi. Always remembering God and seeking his divine vision are important aspects of my message; if you adhere to Shariat I am always with you if you fail in your duties then I would not be with you." He further prohibited his followers from seeking the company of rich and powerful and acquiring in any manner the worldly lusts. He then predicted that the people who could not attain perfection in his life time and were still in the stage of development and training would attain the same under his noble caliphs. He also predicted the martyrdom of Hazrat Khundmir (R) representing him in this honor. In the last moments of his life, when he had to move from the room of his wife Bibi Buwan (R) to the room of Bibi Malkan (R) his other wife, in his usual routine, the Imam (A) insisted that he should be carried to her room. All prominent disciples and even Bibi Malkan (R) insisted that considering his extreme weakness, it would be advisable for him to remain where he was. The Imam (A) remarked: "Alas! you are all anxious for my comfort and are very kind to me at the cost of Shariat" then he struggled to get up and walked with the support of those present and moved to the room of Bibi Malkan (R) and was laid on a mat keeping his head on the laps of Hazrat Amin Mohammed (R). When Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) arrived, the Imam (A) asked him to sit near him and laid his head on his lap and reciting a Quranic verse, explained the implicit meaning there of to him the reader may refer to exhaustive biographies. Shortly afterwards, the Imam (A) breathed his last in peace and glory completing the mission of his life and setting an unprecedented example of total adherence to the teachings of Quran and Prophet (S) without a single flaw, the test of his claim and he proved by his acts that he was the Promised Mahdi(A). It was Monday 19th of Zul Qada 910 Hijra when Hazrat Mahdi (A) joined Almighty after setting an example of absolute love and obedience.

A dispute arose between the people of Rach (an adjoining town of Farah) and those of Farah for the place for burial of the Imam (A). The natives of Farah and Rach both had already become the staunch devotees of the Imam (A) and developed extreme love and veneration for him. The contention

of the natives of Farah was that the Imam (A), before his demise, was staying at their city and hence his tomb should be located there. The people of Rach contended that Hazrat Mahdi (A) used to visit their town specially for offering Friday prayers; and as they regarded it to be a manifestation of special attention, they claimed that the Imam (A) should be buried at their town. The nobles of Rach were more powerful and influential at that time compared to those of Farah. The dispute developed into an altercation and both parties unsheathed their swords and were about to clash when Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) and Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) appeased them and asked them to leave the matter to God's will. When the holy body was carried after funeral prayers in a grand funeral procession from the Idgah of Farah towards the village of Rach, in between the two places, at a beautiful spot, the carriers felt miraculously that they could not proceed. This signified the wish of the Imam (A) and the will of God in selecting his last abode. When he was laid in the grave, no less a person than the son of the Imam Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R), reminded the last test the Imam (A) suggested. Several people present on the occasion came forward and peeped into the sacred grave and Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) groping under the shroud found that the holy body was no more there. This important miracle might be to discard the probable doubt that during his life time, due to force of his will or hypnotic trance or any supernatural powers (which are possible of achievement even by lesser men) people might be spell bound to accept him as the Promised Mahdi (A). Such powers vanish when death engulfs the holders of such extraordinary gifts. But the true Prophet and saints and caliphs of God do not depend on life alone to show their greatness by the grace of God. Death cannot obliterate their spiritual influence and glory. The persons present on the occasion who observed this miracle were not ordinary people as has been emphasized earlier. Those who are sincere and who know about the lives of saints and prophets and who are familiar with miraculous events through knowledge and belief are bound to believe in all the miracles which God manifested through Hazrat Mahdi (A). In fact as the entire life of Prophet Mohammed (S) was miraculous, the life of Hazrat Mahdi (A) as his absolute follower (Tabe-tam) was a continuous miracle. It proved to what spiritual heights God could elevate his chosen caliph.

Shortly after the Imam's (A) demise when all important caliphs, disciples and devotees of Hazrat Mahdi (A) returned to Gujarat in order to continue his mission, the kingdom of Khorasan was attacked by a ferocious King Ismail Shah Safvi, He belonged to Imamia sect of Muslims and was very much biased and antagonistic to sunni Muslims. In fact during his life time Hazrat Mahdi (A) predicted about Ismail Shah's attack. He desecrated several graves and tombs of Muslim saints, scholars and pious men. After coming to know about the recent popularity and impact of Hazrat Mahdi (A) on Sunni Muslims, he decided to desecrate his grave also. With this perverted and sacrilegious motive he sent a contingent of his troops. When the soldiers approached the grave of the Imam (A) a sudden whirl wind shattered them and they withdrew in horror. After some time the invader visited the grave of Hazrat Mahdi (A) in person. When in order to win the approbation of Ismail Shah, his slave proceeded to erase the grave of the Imam (A), he was suddenly got sunk deep into the soil. On observing this miracle the audacious King was terrified and repented for his sacrilegious intentions, to express his repentance and devotion, the King got sprinkled rose water on the Imam's (A) grave and ordered for construction of a grand tomb for Hazrat Mahdi (A) along with a dormitory. According to another tradition quoted from Intekhab-ul-Mawalid, one Shah Khasim Iraqi who subsequently ruled over Farah commenced the work of construction of the tomb and it was completed by his brother Shaikh Birji. The Tomb still adores the sacred city of Farah and is an object of veneration not only of the local inhabitants but all the Mahdavis scattered all over the world.

CHAPTER VIII

TEACHINGS OF HAZRAT MAHDI (A)

Prelude: The purpose of the advent or annunciation (Baisat) of Mahdi (A) was Ahya-e-Shariat and Takmeel-e-Tariqat i.e. (1) to revive the Shariat (the rules of life laid down by the Holy Quran as observed by Prophet Mohammed (S) and (2) to complete or, to be more precise, to perfect the ways and rules of Tariqat Islamic Millat to be enlightened by the light of Tariqat.

Prophet Mohammed (S), by the command of God, laid down the rules of Shariat; and by setting personal example of strict adherence to the rules and by creating a pious group of devoted followers who were imbued with the spirit of Islam, laid down the foundation of the edifice of the last and perfect religion. The basis of both Shariat and Tariqat are the commandments of God as laid down in the Holy Quran. During the course of twenty three years of his pious and glorious mission, what the last prophet, Hazrat Mohammed (A) could do, by the grace of God, has no parallel in the long history of the world. He transformed the whole society around him. He proved by his acts and those of his disciples that the rules of Shariat are not impossible of observance. If a nation observed these rules sincerely, what heights of worldly and spiritual glory it could attain during the course of history and what benefits it could confer on human civilization is proved by the early history of Islam.

The promulgation and observance in all sincerity, the rules of Shariat, in a short span of twenty three years by multitudes under the sacred leadership of the last Prophet (A) was the greatest miracle. But all the followers could not be trained by the greatest Prophet (A), in the delicate straits of Tariqat; The Quran also commands gradual implementation of rules and preaching the tenets of religion in a wise and mild way. Hence the Prophet (A) himself observed and revealed the way of Tariqat (intimate knowledge of God) to the deserving few among his close associates. Of course they were in considerable number. The word "Vilayat" connotes roughly, the heritage of this divine knowledge. The source of all vilayat is God and Prophet Mohammed (A). The selected few who by the grace of God held this sacred heritage of Prophet Mohammed (A) are regarded as Valis (Saints). Hundreds of great saints were born during various periods of history, particularly those in which Islam suffered set-backs due to alien influences and Islamic society suffered deterioration and degeneration or when there existed such threat of degeneration; The Saints (Valis) not only did their best to revive the Shariat but in their own way, under divine guidance, promulgated and practiced the rules of Tariqat, in order to elevate the faithful to the heights of moral and spiritual glory. Apart from the four Caliphs of Prophet Mohammed (S) (1) Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique (R) (2) Hazrat Omer Farooq (R) (3) Hazrat Osman Ghani (R), and (4) Hazrat Ali Murtuza (R) and many leading Sahaba (companions of the Prophet) and Hazrat Imam Hassan (R), Hazrat Imam Hussain (R), Hazrat Imam Zainul Abedeen (R), Hazrat Imam Jaffar-e-Sadiq (RH), Hazrat Owais Kharni (R) enjoyed sainthood apart from other distinctions. All the other leading saints e.g. Hazrat Abdul Khader Jeelani (RH), Hazrat Ibrahim Adham (RH), Hazrat Shaikh Fareed (RH), Hazrat Bhakhtyar Kaki (RH), Hazrat Khaja Moinuddin Chishti (RH), Hazrat Khaja Nizamuddin (RH), Hazrat Khaja Naseeruddin Chiragh Dehlvi (RH), Hazrat Syed Mohammed Gesu Daraz (RH) and several prominent saints whose names are not included for the sake of brevity but whose spiritual pre-eminence cannot be overlooked by any devout Muslim, served the cause of Islam in their own time; and their moral and spiritual heritage has a great impact on the present day Muslim world. The order of saints had to reach a point of culmination into perfection as the order of Prophets culminated and reached the point of perfection and absolute glory through Prophet Mohammed (A). This concept of culmination (or end) of sainthood (Khatim-e-Vilayat) is not the

outcome of any philosophical guess work or mystic speculation. It has its solid foundation in the authentic traditions of Prophet Mohammed (A).

Preeminence of Mehdi (A): According to various Hadis (traditions of the Prophet (A)) the advent of Mahdi is proved; and almost all the sects of Muslims believe that a saint of high eminence would appear who would be a descendant of Prophet Mohammed (A) and who would follow Quran and the Sunnah absolutely and enjoy the status of Mahdi-e-Maud (the Promised Mahdi) as mentioned in Chapter II.

Some imposters, in various periods of History after the Prophet, due to political or other reasons, claimed to be the promised Mahdi. But the Muslim world shortly realized the motives and hollowness of their claim. The basic test of selflessness and strict adherence to the teachings of Quran and traditions of the Prophet (A) when applied to the lives and missions of such claimants revealed them in their true colors. A few eminent Sufis and Valis during the course of high spiritual experience cherished the mistaken belief for a short time that they were the promised Mahdi. As it was a bonafide mistake of one's spiritual status, God helped them to realize their mistake and they sincerely disowned their claim and continued their mission as perfect saints. The case of Hazrat Syed Mohammed Gesu Daraz (RH) who claimed to be the Promised Mahdi for about three days and renounced his claim is a typical example. But Hazrat Syed Mohammed Mahdi of Jaunpur (A) made his claim under the command of God and persisted in his mission with such consistency, devotion and sincerity against all odds that no unbiased person during his life time could disprove or deny his claim. The services rendered by him and the sacrifices, he and his followers made in the cause of true and perfect religion left an indelible mark of glory in the annals of Islam. The persons who were born afterwards, due to obvious difficulty arising out of the lack of personal contact or knowledge about the Imam (A) or his followers could not realize fully the genuineness and significance of his claim. One must appreciate their difficulties in this regard. Some, in spite of knowledge about his greatness, due to bias and prejudice, tried to undermine his mission and the work of his followers and created consciously or unconsciously many misunderstandings about Hazrat Syed Mohammed Mahdi (A), his claim, his mission and also the beliefs of his followers. The greatness of the Imam (A) can very well be perceived, by Muslims in general and Sunni Muslims in particular, when they come to know what he taught and what he acted upon.

The faith of the Imam (A): Wherever the Imam (A) went during the course of his continuous journey for preaching true Islamic values; he was asked "What is your religion" implying to what set of sectarian beliefs of Sunni Muslims, he conforms. The consistent reply of the Imam (A) used to be "Mazhah-e-Ma-Kitab Ullah-wa-itteba-e-Mohammed Rasool Allah" (My religion is Quran and strict adherence to Prophet Mohammed (S)). According to an authentic Hadis Mahdi (A) would follow the Prophet (A) in entirety and would not falter. Hazrat Mahdi's (A) life briefly narrated in earlier chapters shows how he proved these two aspects of religion i.e., following the Quran and Shariat. In the matter of Shariat, he enforced the rules so strictly that it is hardly possible to seek a parallel after the Prophet (A). All the five compulsory duties or mandatory obligations i.e. (1) Kalima (Affirmation of unity of God) and Prophet Mohammed (A) as his last Prophet (A), as the basis of Eman) (2) Namaz (five times daily prayers), (3) Roza (fasting in Ramazan), (4) Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah), (5) Zakat (giving in charity a particular portion of ones assets) and all the rules of morality and law promulgated by the Holy Quran and acted upon and enforced by Prophet Mohammed (A) and his great Caliphs were the obvious foundations of the teachings and faith of the Imam (A).

Over and above the said duties, in the capacity of the Promised Mahdi (A) as the caliph of God, he enjoined upon those of his followers who claim to be the lovers of God, some more compulsory

duties or mandatory obligations. e.g. (1) Tark-e-Dunya (Renunciation of world implying apathy towards worldly lust which come in the way of pure love of God), (2) Uzlat-az-Khalakh (Retirement, avoiding as far as possible mixing up with crowds), (3) Sohbat-e-Sadiqain (being in company with pious people. e.g. Murshids, Shaikhs and Fakhirs for seeking their guidance), (4) Tawakkul (reliance on God in all matters), (5) Zikr-e-kaseer (Always Remembering God and repeating His name): (6) Talab-e-Deedar-e-Khuda (intense desire to behold God), (7) Hijrat (exile or migration) etc.

These are not novel concepts introduced by Hazrat Mahdi (A). In fact these rules of spiritual progress are emphasized so much in Quranic verses and so strictly followed by the Prophet (A) and his pious companions and subsequent saints, that they already acquired the significance of compulsory duties for those who desired perfection and spiritual attainments. All the genuine saints and sufis followed these rules in some form or other. The following table given in the famous book "The Awarif-ul-Ma'arif" written by "Hazrat Shahabuddin Suhrawardi", shows how the earlier sufis and saints practiced and adopted the above precepts. These are shown in a Table of Tariqat.

Tariqat

	Columns	Precepts	Principles	Result
1	Towba =repentence	Ilm = Knowledge	Ehsan = Benevolence	Marifat = Divine Knowledge
2	Tasleem = Resignation	Sakhawat = regnerosity	Zikr = repeation of God's name	Hilm = Meeknessname
3	Diyanat = Fidelity to the orders	Khurb = nearness to God	Tark-e-Ma'asi = abandoning sins	Sabr = patience
4	Khushu-o-Khuzu = Humility of limbs and of heart	Deen = Faith	Tark-e-Dunya = Abandoing the world	Tabaat = submission
5	Raz = contentment	Tafakkur = Meditation	Khauf-e-Khuda = Fear of God	Adab = manners
6	Khilwat = retirement	Towakkul = reliance on God	Ishq-e-Khuda = Love of God	Sarkh = sincerity

The sufis and saints who enlightened the Muslim world developed different rules of Tariqat and Zikr. As a part of the Imam's (A) mission, he simplified the system of spiritual practices and showed the simplest and easiest path of Marifat. The compulsory duties enjoined as faraiz-e-vilayat-e-Mohammedia (the compulsory duties to deserve the spiritual heritage of Prophet Mohammed) as enjoined under the command of Allah, by the Promised Mahdi (A) are briefly described below:

Tark-e-Dunya (renunciation of everything worldly)

The concept of Tark-e-Dunya is very often misunderstood as asceticism by many. Generally it is understood as total renunciation of world, like the hermits and saniyasis or ascetics did. Some imagine it to be an admixture of asceticism and cynicism or an outcome to pessimism or negative concept of life. This mode of thinking might be either due to ignorance or due to too much psychological attachment to everything worldly particularly the luxuries of life. When our mind is so trained, due to the circumstances in which we live, our mind abhors the concept of abandoning the good things in life and we fancy that the concept is negative. Seen in proper perspective, it would appear that Tark-e-Dunya is a positive concept. When our aspiration is to win the favor of Almighty or to behold Him; and for this purpose to sacrifice everything for the attainment of this glorious object, to

abandon or undermine anything which comes in our way, would not be regarded as a negative approach. To serve humanity in a selfless manner, to abandon all lusts to gain the ultimate bliss and to strive for the salvation of one's self and that of mankind and to dedicate one's life for the attainment of such noble objects can hardly be regarded as negative tendencies. In fact too much attachment to everything worldly and glorification of worldly lusts and ambitions for the gratification of ego cannot help either in spiritual progress or moral attainments of an individual or for establishing peace and harmony in the society. Too much attachment to worldly gains and everything pleasant for this life by a person implies that he does not believe in the eternal life which commences after the end of this life. This is negation of "Aakhirat". What is deemed as a positive concept of life by the lovers of this world may in fact turn out to be a negative one.

Those who, by the habit of their mind, or due to the baneful influence of prevalent ideas of the modern era are inclined towards a tendency to take lightly or even ridicule the concept of Tark-e-Dunya, The following quotations from the Holy Quran may be informative on the subject. S. Hadid 57:20.

"Know that the life of this world is only play and idle talk and pageantry, and boasting among you and rivalry in respect of wealth and children; as the likeness of vegetation after rain, whereof the growth is pleasing to the husbandry, but afterwards it drieth up and then seest it turning yellow, then it becometh straw. And in the Hereafter there is grievous punishment, and also forgiveness from Allah and His good pleasure, whereas the life of the world is but matter of illusion"

In this verse the transient nature of worldly gains and pride is emphasized and the life of the world is described as an illusion. One who is carried away by this illusion is warned of grievous punishment and one who avoids it is promised Allah and His good pleasure.

Trans: - *"then as far him who rebelled and choose the life of the world Lo! Hell will be his home."* (79:37-39)

In the above and the immediately preceding lines the picture of Doomsday and hell is depicted and men are warned that on that eventful day, those who preferred the worldly lusts to against their duty towards God will be thrown in hell. In the subsequent verses, reward of heaven, is promised to those persons who are god-fearing and avoid to be carried away by the worldly lusts.

"Whoso desireth the life of the world and its pomp, we shall repay them their deeds therein and therein they will not be wronged" (11:15)

"Those are they for whom is naught in the Hereafter save the Fire. (All) that they contrive here is vain and (all) that they are wont to do is fruitless." (11:16)

The above passage of Quran is very eloquent on the point that such of those persons who seek sensual pleasures, the worldly glories or achievements get their desires fulfilled in this world only. But these are the people whose reward in the life hereafter (Aakhirat) is fire of hell. In that life, their deeds of this life will be of no use. Hazrat Abbas (R) commenting upon these verses said: "Even the hypocrites and ostentatious in prayers get their reward in this world only but in the life hereafter they shall be empty handed". Hazrat Anas (R) and some others, according to Ibne Kaseer thought that these verses are meant for Jews and Christians but Mujahid (R) is of the opinion that they are applicable to all the hypocrites and ostentatious in piety. In fact it applies to all men particularly Muslims.

In many other Quranic verses the worldly lusts and desires are condemned. Man is expected to seek the pleasure of Allah and his rewards in the life hereafter (Aakhirat). The worldly life is only a transient phase of human soul; but this phase had to be passed according to the commandments of Allah. As the temptations of world are powerful and easily perceivable, as compared with the rewards of the eternal life hereafter, which are a matter of faith and belief, ordinary people are tempted to treat the worldly gains as their ends. In a way they remain ignorant of the importance of life hereafter. Hence some divines have defined world (Dunya) as ignorance. To get rid of this ignorance and become conscious of the duties enjoined by Allah in order to seek His pleasure and reward is in a sense Tark-e-Dunya.

The world and worldly life is not abhorred or prohibited. Even the persons who by purity and sincerity attain the stage of formal and real renunciation of world, are permitted to gratify their natural urges e.g. to marry and to lead a family and social life. It is the degree of attachment with world and the attachment with Almighty that matters. In the preparatory stage one is allowed to work for gain and to take more interest in the things worldly, of course, within the bounds of Shariat. This stage for working for gain is termed as "Kasab-e-Halal".

The Holy Quran also permits enjoyments of the bounties of God in this world. But excessive attachment to this world, which is the cause of all evils, is prohibited. Hazrat Mahdi (A) made it binding on Muslim, to abandon the world in the light of Quranic injunctions and the traditions of the Prophet (A). He permitted his son Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) to undergo a period of working for gain (Kasab). He preferred Tark-e-Dunya of one who owns something or who has capacity to gain something significant and material in this world compared with Tark-e-Duniya of an incompetent and idle person. After passing through a period of Kasab, or if a person has intense desire to dedicate his life for the sacred cause, without undergoing the stage of Kasab a person may abandon the world. Such person is not expected to be an idle and incompetent being. He is expected to be a soldier (a mujahid), a reformer, a teacher or an absolute lover of God. Those who are not prepared, for the time being for the elevated state of one who abandons worldly desires and the cravings of ego and those who have to support their families and even those who opted for service of God, Kasab or working for gain is permissible provided it is within the bounds prescribed by Quran. When Prophet Mohammed (A) was asked what Dunya is, he replied "dunya is your Nafs or ego." We see in our daily life how people behave like fools and scoundrels for the gratification of their ego, by running after name, fame and wealth beyond the prescribed limits. The Quran, the Prophet (A) and the Mahdi (A) assure that such of those noble men who efface their ego or in other sense abandon the world are assured of heavenly bliss. This is how the enlightened Mahdavis understand the concept of Tark-e-Dunya.

Uzlat-Az-Khalkh (Retirement: Avoiding, as far as possible, mixing up with crowds). The Holy Quran, through its various verses, enjoins upon the Muslims to be always attached to God by always remembering him. Anything which prevents or comes in the way of this attachment should be avoided. Hence the staunch lovers of God and all saints preferred retirement and seclusion particularly in the initial stages of their spiritual progress. Hazrat Mehdi (A) said that for developing deep love of God (Ishq-e-Ilahi) one should live in seclusion and retirement avoiding company of crowds, including that of the near and dear in order to avoid all distractions and to be absorbed in meditation. For a lover of God, this attitude and habit is compulsory. Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) spent long days in deep meditation in the sacred cave of Hira near Mecca. All saints followed his example. Hazrat Mehdi (A) also passed through this stage of worship in seclusion.

Suhbat-e-Sadiquin: (Remaining in the company of pious and virtuous people). It is well known and common experience that good company benefits a man who is fortunate to enjoy it and bad company

spoils many a good natured persons. Even in the advanced age, one can be influenced by the company of the wicked. For people desirous of high moral and spiritual attainments, it is but natural to seek the company of those who are pious and virtuous. Hence Hazrat Mahdi (A) commanded his followers to remain in the company of Sadiqain, in order to learn about religious matters, to acquire good traits of character, to shirk sinful desires and to seek spiritual guidance. A true aspirant is expected to gather like a honey bee, the nectar of spiritual solace from the flowers which blossom in the garden of divinity. Such pious and virtuous persons are the really learned and divine people, the dedicated Fakhirs and Murshids. It is the rule of saints and their well established practice that a seeker of divine benevolence is bound to be selected and be attached to a Shaikh or Murshid through Bait (the pledge) of the Murid. One has to be very careful in the selection of his Murshid and also the Sadiqain whose company one has to seek as a compulsory duty. The murshid is bound to impart moral and spiritual training to his murid who must respect his murshid not only as friend, philosopher and guide but as a source of all spiritual guidance. The reader may recall how eagerly Hazrat Shah Nizam (R) and Hazrat Shah Khundmir (R) were seeking a perfect murshid, in spite of their moral, scholastic and spiritual achievements and how God led them towards Hazrat Mahdi (A).

Tawakkul: Another compulsory duty enjoined on the faithful and true aspirants is Tawakkul which means complete reliance and faith in God the destiny as laid down by Him. In all matters of our life we are expected, after doing our best, to leave the results to the will of God. In an advanced stage, Tawakkul implies that even for procuring means of day to day subsistence, one should not strive, or look on the causes; one had to look towards the Causer of causes. The Prophet Ibrahim (A) when he was about to be catapulted in fire by the tyrant Namrud, was asked by the great angel Hazrat Gibrael (A), why he would not seek the help of God, replied, if it was the will of God that he should be burnt alive, he would surrender to the Divine Will; he would not ask for anything against it. This is an example of complete Tawakkul. Hazrat Mahdi (A) and his followers strictly followed the rule of Tawakkul. Whenever God, by any means, provided something in cash or kind, they used to divide the same equally among themselves and used to consume their share to meet their basic needs and whatever remained they used to give in charity; and never stored anything even for the next day. The readers may recall how the followers of the Imam (A) did not store any provisions during their pilgrimage to Mecca and how God miraculously provided them with means of sustenance during their voyage. How they suffered at Mecca without asking for any favor from anybody and how they suffered extreme hardships during their long journey to Farah. Many of the devotees of the Imam (A) preferred death and laid down their lives after prolonged starvation, never preferring to go against the strict rules of Tawakkul. Due to inspiration which the Mahdavis derive from those martyrs, even during the days of present degeneration, we find some remnants of Tawakkul in their day to day lives.

Zikrullah (Remembering God):

Quran in its various verses has emphasized the importance of Zikr so much that it gains the position of compulsory duty. The Holy Quran abounds in verses which emphasize the importance of Zikrullah. The following are the quotations from such verses:

Translation:

“Remember God while sitting, standing or lying down”

At another place it is said:-

In your heart remember God with fear and humility (not loudly) day and night; do not be complacent; and again:

Translation:

One who omits remembering God we impose Satan on him, who is so near to such person.

Translation:

O believers, remember God abundantly.

And remember God in your heart and also in low voice with humility and fear of God (always) morning and evening and do not be complacent.

Remember the name of God morning and evening.

In various other Quranic verses God Almighty has emphasized the importance of Zikr for His pleasure and for the salvation of the faithful. The Prophet (A) also in many of his authentic traditions exhorted Muslims to always remember God. Zikr in its essence means and implies to be in perpetual consciousness of and absorption in God. In every minute act of daily activity, if a person remembers HIM and is conscious that all his acts and deeds are in accordance with the commands of God and for seeking His pleasure, the series of such acts also are broadly included in the purview of Zikr. But, there are ways and means of systematically remembering God (Zikr-e-Ilahi) which are broadly categorized by Hazrat Shahabuddin Suhrawardi in his famous book the "Awarif-ul-Ma'arif" (translated by Lieut.Col.H. Wilberforce Clark) as follows :-

There are three dhikrs (Zikrs): dhikr-e-Khafi (the silent dhikr) when in solitude, dikhr-e-Jahri (the audible dhikr) when in society; dhikr-e-Allah, the dhikr of God (Quran XXIV.37).

The third category is not explained by the author or it is not translated properly. Every type of Zikr is in fact Zikr-e-Allah.

As has been described earlier the Prophet (A) revealed the secrets of Ma'arifat (Divine knowledge) and Tariqat (the path to few of his selected companions). Subsequently all the genuine and great saints imparted these secrets to the deserving in the light of divine guidance and in their own way, suited to their time and temperament. The famous systems of Tariqat are:

(1) Qadria (2) Suharwardia and (3) Chishtia named after the every eminent saint who founded them. These systems (which are also called silsilas complying continuity of teachings) required very difficult spiritual practices, long periods of training and observance of difficult rites. All the great saints strictly adhered to Shariat while following the rules of Tariqat, but some misguided Sufis in the name of Tariqat and Ma'arifat, neglected to observe the rules of Shariat and consequently misguided their followers. The difficulties involved in the systems of earlier saints in the matter of Tariqat can very well be perceived by the following quotation from Brown's Book "Darwishes" pages 215 to 217 given under the heading "Dhikr, Muraqabah, Tauhid, Daur and Halat."

The statutes of nearly all the dervishes required them to repeat daily:

La ila ha il-Allah	:	No god but God.
Ya Allah	:	O God.
Ya Hu	:	O He.
Ya Haqq	:	O just One.
Ya Hayy	:	O living One.
Ya Qaiyum	:	O existing One.
Ya Qahnar	:	O Avenging One

These names (Asma-e-ilahi) refer to:

- a) Sab Sama: (the seven heavens)
- b) Anwar-e-ilahi: (the Divine splendor).

The exercises of murquihan (fearful contemplation) and of Tauhid (the Unity of God) are as follows:-

- a) On their heels, elbows touching, the dervishes sit in a circle; and simultaneously make slight movements of the head and of body
- b) Or they balance themselves slowly right to left, left to right; and incline the body forwards and rear-wards;
- c) Or seated, they begin these motions in measured cadence with a taint countenance, eyes closed, or fixed upon the ground; and continue them on foot.

The covenant-hall (wherein these exercises are carried out) is of wood; and is called the Tauhid-Khana (the house of unity).

The Daur (Rotary Dance), the dervishes holding each other by the hand put forward the right foot, increasing at every step, the strength and movement of body.

They uncover their hands, take off their Turbans form a second circle within the first: inter twine their arms, lean their shoulders against each other; raise the voice, and unceasingly utter - Ya Allah! Ya Hu!..... They do not stop till strength is exhausted. Each one leaves when he pleases.

To the Shaikh seated before the qibla the dervishes offer praise

The four senior dervishes approach the Shaikh; embrace; each other and place themselves, two on his right, two on his left

The other dervishes, arms crossed, head inclined advance boweth to the tablet where on the founders name is inscribed, putteth his hands over his face and beard, kneeling before. The Shaikh kisseth his hand; and taketh his place on the puslin (sheep skin) spread in a half circle in the hall.

The circle being formed, they all chant together the takbir-Allahu Akbar-the Fatihah-the Quran.

The Shaikh repeatedly pronounceth the words: "La-i-laha- il Allah: No god but one God".

One of the dervishes on the Shaikh's right chanteth the hamd to Mohammed (A), while the other dervishes, moving their body to and fro continue to exclaim Allah!

After a few minutes, they rise, approach each other, press their elbows against each others, balance from right to left and then from left to right - the right foot being firm; the left foot in periodical movement, the reverse of that of the body

All observe great precision of measure and of cadence. In the midst they cry: "Ya Allah - Ya Hu."

Pale of face, languishing of eye - some sigh some sob; some weep, some perspire great drops.

In the middle of a hymn, chanted alternately by two dervishes on the Shaikh's right, they accelerate their movements. One pulleth himself in the centre to incite them by example.

During this hymn, the dervishes take off their turban, bear their shoulders again each other; and compass the hall at a measured pace, striking their feet against the floor and all at once springing up and exclaiming Ya! Allah Ya Hu

When they would stop from sheer exhaustion, the Shaikh, making violent motion inciteth them anew.

The two senior dervishes take his place, double the quickness of the step and motion of body and all dance till entirely exhausted.

Halat (Ecstasy): Two dervishes take down from niches cut glasses, beat them red hot; and present them to Shaikh.

After breathing over them prayers and invoking the aid of the pir of the Order, the Shaikh raiseth them to his mouth, and then giveth them to the dervishes, who eagerly ask for them.

Transported to frenzy, the dervishes seize upon the glowing irons, gloat upon them, lick them, bite them, hold them between the teeth and cool them in their mouth! Others stick out

If they fall under their sufferings they cast themselves, without a complaint or a murmur, or a sign of pain into the arms of their brothers.

Some minutes after this, the Shaikh visiteth each; breatheth upon his wounds, rubbeth them with salive, reciteth prayers and promiseth speedy cure.

It is said that twenty four hours afterwards, nothing is to be seen of their wounds.

They call the red hot irons gul (the red rose) because the use of them is as agreeable to soul of the dervish as the perfume of the rose is to the voluptuary.

The above description, though slightly lengthy, and might even be exaggerated by an English scholar, gives the picture of difficult systems of Tariqat followed by the followers of earlier saints. Their sincerity of purpose and devotion cannot be questioned but what they actually did was not in conformity with the will of God and wishes of the Prophet (A).

Type of Zikr: - The earlier saints and sufis have categorized Zikr in various forms according to method, state of ones spiritual progress and aptitude. Broadly speaking Zikr has been categorized in five categories which are as follows:

- (1) **Zikr-e-Lisani:** i.e. oral repetition of the pious names of Almighty e.g. ya Allah, ya Rahim, Ya Rahman in a state of absorption and devotion concentrating on the qualities attributed to each name. This form is prescribed for the beginners.
- (2) **Zikr-e-Qalbi:** - Silent Zikr from the depths of heart. In this form God is remembered by concentrating in His attributes with full concentration of heart and mind. This is prescribed as a second stage for the aspirants of spiritual progress. It is said that after attaining perfection in this form of Zikr the aspirant begins to know the secrets of heart and becomes capable of perceiving the secret and hidden with regard to time and space (Kashf and Ilham).
- (3) **Zikr-e-Roohi:** - This type is a further advanced and sublimated form over and above the form described as Zikr-e-Qalbi. It is said that after attaining this stage of Zikr from the depths of one's soul, the aspirant becomes capable of observing the glories of the names and attributes of God. He attains the qualities of angels. For such Zakir to see things located at long distances, to hear the hidden voices and to travel thousands of miles in a moment become very easy.
- (4) **Zikr-e-Sirri:** - It is also called Mu'ania. This stage of Zikr is a further advancement over zikr-e-roohi. When an aspirant gets command over this type of Zikr, it is said that he becomes capable of Tajalli, which roughly means the capability of epiphany i.e. the capacity to behold manifestations of God and his unity in every object.
- (5) **Zikr-e-Khafi:** - This is also called "Mughaiba". This, according to the sufis and saints is the most superior stage and type of Zikr. In this stage the aspirant attains total effacement of self and ego, and everything animate or inanimate is obliterated from his spiritual perception. He remains absorbed in Tajaliyat (innumerable glorious manifestation of God) and he becomes totally absorbed in Almighty. The above description is borrowed from the classification and description given by Allama Shamsi RH in his brief thesis "Tanveer-ul-Hidaya". There is scope of difference of opinion and perception in the light of opinions of other scholars; but broadly speaking, the categorization is helpful in understanding at least in a rudimentary manner, the various forms and stages of Zikr.

One of the purposes of the advent of Hazrat Mahdi (A) was to simplify spiritual practices of Tariqat and make it complete and glorified in itself. The method of Zikr he taught was Zikr-e-Khafi. It does not mean simply the "Silent Zikr" referred to above. It means much more than that; the basis of it is the Kalima La-ilaha-il-Allah (there is no god but God almighty). Once the Imam (A) was asked to explain the essence of Quran in one sentence, Hazrat Mahdi (A) replied that the essence of all books of God given to his prominent prophets, particularly the Quran is La-Ilaha-il-Allah. By the command of God, he specified Zikr embodying this expression and taught Zikr-e-Khafi, connecting it to the process of routine breathing and special concentration. It involves negation of self and affirmation of God with every incoming and outgoing breath. The Imam (A) forbade, self torturing and self mortification techniques of earlier sufis and ostentatious display to draw attention or admiration. The solemnity, simplicity and purity of this superior form of Zikr taught by Hazrat Mehdi (A) to his followers

completed the objects of the Quran and the desire of the Prophet (A) in this regard. It avoided ostentation, and painful practices. The actual method, and details of practice and the manner in which one has to concentrate cannot be described in books of this type or any other writing. It has to be learnt from a perfect murshid, with all solemnity after getting accustomed to a life which is perfectly in accordance with Shariat. The Imam (A) enjoined as compulsory excessive Zikr. By passing through this state, fortunate and devoted, Muslims attain the state of Zikr-e-Dawam (permanent Zikr).

Talab-e-Deedar-e-Khuda: (Desire to see or behold God) Hazrat Mahdi (A) enjoined upon all Muslims to have the desire to behold God. The entire system of Shariat and Tariqat cannot be without any object or purpose. Apart from seeking the approval and pleasure of God the natural aim and object of a believer should be to see his Creator. On the possibility of Ruyat (beholding) of God during the life time in this world, opinion was and is divided among Sunni scholars and divines. One school of thought believes that it is impossible to behold God during the life in this world and it is only possible for the faithful Muslims to see God only in the other world i.e. during the eternal life after death. The other school believes that it is possible to behold God not only in the other world but also during life in this world. Both of these schools base their arguments on Quran and Hadis (Traditions of the Prophet). These contradictory schools were existing even prior to the advent of Hazrat Mahdi (A). A leading philosopher of Islam, Qazi-Ibn-Rushd, much earlier to the birth of the Imam (A), expressed the view that as God described Himself as the light of this earth and heavens (Allah-Hu-nurus-samavati-wal-Arz), it is possible to feel and behold Him. Even the ordinary creatures perceive light and light itself helps in the perception of all the objects, then how it can be argued that we cannot see or perceive light itself. This was the sum and substance of the argument of Qazi-Ibn-Rushd. Another great scholar of antiquity Shaikh Abu Nasar Farabi also admitted that it was quite possible to behold God. Allama Thuftazani in his book, Sharah Maqasid has written that originally the Muslims believed that it was possible to behold God; and the tradition of the Prophet (A) through which the possibility of beholding God in this world is proved, is narrated by twenty-one companions of the Prophet (A). Among the scholars born much after the advent of Hazrat Mahdi (A), Moulana Abu Shareef Syed Ashraf Shamsi (RH) in his famous work 'Tanveer-ul-Hidaya' argues that a matter which is proved through Quranic revelations and the traditions of the Prophet (A) whether it is subjective or objective, no scope remains for controversy. He further asserts that all the original scholars of sunni sect believed that, it is possible to behold God during this life time and it is certain for the faithful Muslims in Aakhirat (life after death). Twenty-one companions of Prophet Mohammed (S) narrated the tradition that he had the privilege to see Almighty at the time of Meraj. When it is argued that it is possible to behold God during life time in this world, it does not imply that it is possible for everyone to see Him without His grace. Only by the grace of God, it is possible for the pious and deserving to behold Him, to realize Him or to be absorbed in Him, according to their capacities. Hazrat Mahdi (A) was asked questions by almost all Ulema who had the privilege of meeting and holding discourse with him about this belief. He not only proved by argument in the light of the Holy Quran and the revered traditions of the Prophet (A), but produced before them such of his disciples who had that sublime experience. He, in his capacity, as the Caliph of God, enjoined upon all the faithful to have the desire to behold God, which is naturally the outcome of their devotion, worship and Zikr.

Hijrat (Migration for the sake of religion): The word Hijrat is often translated as migration and immigration but Ameer Ali, a renowned Scholar of Islam translated it as exile. The word exile also does not convey the true meaning of the word Hijrat. The word migration signifies change of one's native place or abode voluntarily but the word exile signifies migration under some compulsion; compulsion may be due to one's own sincere desire to preach. Hijrat in Islamic sense also implies abandoning ones native place and living at some other place under some compulsion. Hijrat in my humble view implies migration for the sake of religion. The Prophet's (A) Hijrat from Makkah to

Madina was undertaken when it became impossible for him and his devotees to profess and preach his religion safely at his native city. Earlier to his Hijrat he advised some of his followers to escape from Makkah and go to Habsha. Their migration and exile is described in Islamic annals as Hijrat-e-Habsha.

Various Quranic verses and the traditions of the Prophet (A) enjoin upon Muslims to migrate from their native place and live in exile somewhere else when it became impossible or dangerous for them to profess, practice and preach their religion at their native place. In such circumstances Hijrat becomes a mandatory obligation (farz). The people who live in exile for the sake of their faith (Islam) are promised great heavenly rewards and those who shirk from this duty at the cost of their faith are warned with punishment both by the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (A) (Hadis). Hence Hazrat Mahdi (A) also treated Hijrat as farz i.e. mandatory obligation. It is mandatory only when in certain place or country the practice of faith becomes impossible or dangerous for the faithful or is painfully obstructed. Please refer to Al-Mahdi-Al-Maud by Allama Syed Hussain page 451. Hijrat implies sacrifice for the cause of religion as it involves sacrifice of one's natural love for one's native place. Persons making such sacrifice and obeying the command of Allah, his Prophet (A) and his Caliph (A) are naturally venerated. But such of those who in spite of the prevalence of conditions which require Hijrat fail to abandon their native place were treated as munafiqs (hypocrites or pretenders) because of their behavior; the only conclusion which could be derived was that they loved their native place and their assets and attachments more than their faith. Hazrat Mahdi (A) and his venerable caliphs treated the persons who shirked the obligation of Hijrat without valid reason or without their explicit permission as pretenders.

About this mandatory obligation, some misconceptions are entertained by some people. Some think that it is always mandatory while others think that mere migration from their native place and settling down in some other is Hijrat. Hijrat becomes mandatory and compulsory only when the above mentioned conditions prevail otherwise mere shifting of abode has no religious significance. Even migration for the purpose of preaching of faith, which is an act of piety, can be treated as Hijrat. Hazrat Mahdi (A) and his disciples set an unprecedented example of Hijrat for the sake of purity and sublimity of Islam, which would be evident from the brief description of their lives given in the preceding pages of this book.

Ushr: Hazrat Mahdi (A) treated Ushr as a mandatory obligation over and above the mandatory Zakat. Zakat was required to be paid at the rate of two and half percent on all stocks, stocks in trade, and assets with certain exceptions e.g., Residential houses. Moreover Zakat was to be paid compulsorily, under the Quranic mandate and the traditions of the Prophet (A), by a person holding a certain monetary status (Sahib-e-Nisab) and that too on the stock or asset found under his ownership at the end of a year. In Quranic verses Muslims were not only commanded to pay Zakat to the deserving but also Sadqua and Khairat (charity) and enjoined generous spending of one's income and resources in munificence. Deriving inspiration from these verses the Prophet (A) always appealed for generosity and charity and his disciples and companions became accustomed to spend a great part of their earning and resources for helping the poor and needy. In the beginning the Zakat and Sadqua and other charitable contributions were voluntarily made purely as a religious duty. But with the formation and organization of Muslim society into a regular state with the Prophet (A) as its head, The Zakat was collected as a tax and become part of the consolidated fund of the Islamic State and it was spent for helping the poor and needy, for giving gifts to induce for accepting the faith, for reward of services and also for meeting the expenses of Jihad (holy wars). But other charitable contributions including Ushr which amounted to one tenth of one's income or produce derived from the soil and other resources remained voluntary but it was treated as a religious duty (wajib) and not a state tax.

Payment of Ushr was in vogue in the early period of Islam and Hazrat Omer (R) imposed and collected it as a tax during his reign as the Caliph at the rate of ten percent. All the Imams of Fiqah agreed that payment of Ushr is a religious obligation. They held different opinions about the things on which Ushr was payable, about the quantities of stocks on which it is payable. According to Imam Malik (RH) and Imam Shafai (RH) Ushr had to be paid on all produce of land which can be stored and which come under the category of edibles. Imam Hambal (RH) lays down the criterion of measurability for imposing Ushr. According to Imam Azam (RH), except fire-wood, wild woods and grass Ushr is 'Wajib' (compulsory) in all produce of land whether it is edible or measurable or not. According to him the rate of Ushr is ten percent. Honey is not directly derived from land but according to several Imams Ushr has also to be given from it. According to Omer Bin Abdul Aziz (RH) Ushr is not applicable to honey in any circumstances. Hazrat Omer (R) issued orders for collection of Ushr from pearls and ambergris (Ambar) according to history of Ibn-e-Khuldun which further states that Caliph Omer (R) imposed Ushr at the rate of ten percent on all commercial stocks brought for sale in Islamic cities. There is a difference of opinion among various Imams about the quantity of a particular product which is exempted from Ushr. Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) held the view that had to be paid whether the produce of land is more or less whether owner of the produce is rich or poor. For Ushr no minimum standard of living or meagerness of resources, afford exemption according to some Imams.

All the above mentioned differences of opinion regarding Ushr are due to the fact that Quranic commandments and even traditions of the Prophet (A) are not explicit on the point. Hence during the course of interpretation there was much scope of difference of opinion and controversy. But with the advent of Mehdi (A) the matter was settled once for all for those who believe him to be the Caliph of God as he under the command of Allah fixed the quantum of Ushr and made it a mandatory obligation for all Muslims to pay over and above the mandatory Zakat, by the rich and poor alike on all income, products or things having value derived by them at the rate of ten percent. His approach in this regard is more close to Caliph Omer (R), and Imam Abu Hanifa (RH). The various Quranic verses contained in the Suras of Baqara, Sura Talaq and Sura Tauba, and Sura Anfaal and various traditions of the Prophet (A) as interpreted by venerable Imams, make Ushr a mandatory obligation.

Hence Imam Mahdi (A) in imposing Ushr as a mandatory religious obligation did not make any innovation as has been argued by some of his detractors. The same is the case of all the mentioned faraiz-e-vilayat laid down and emphasized by him. These faraiz were always treated as "wajibats" (obligations and duties) and mustahib (desirable) under the commandments of Quran and Hadis and the treatment of things which are wajib and mustahib as faraiz (mandatory obligations) was not uncommon in Islam as is evident from the precepts and practices of various Imams of Fiqah and saints of high order. For detailed study on these aspects the reader may refer to "Kuhlul Jawahar" by Allama Syed Nusrat (RH) page 328 and 'Tanveer-ul-Hidaya' by Allama Shamsi (RH) page 113.

It is important to note that the Ushr as imposed by the Imam (A) can neither be regarded as a tax or neither a tithe nor a sort of an income tax as is wrongly described by certain biographers. For imposition and collection of a tax, a State and a Government and enforcement machinery are needed. The Imam did not establish an Islamic State. His Daira and Dairas of his caliphs could not be treated by any stretch of imagination as miniature states. Ushr resembles with tithe only in the matter of being one tenth of income or produce. But for collection of tithe feudal enforcement machinery and a regular organized church enjoying powers of state were required. The Dairas of the Imam (A) and his caliphs had no semblance of such organizations. The Dairas and their heads did not regularly collect the Ushr for meeting their expenses. Regular collection was totally against the principles of Tawakkul and the venerable heads of Dairas discouraged regular payments to them by the devotees. In fact whenever Ushr was paid by the Mahdavis to the inmates of Dairas, it was distributed equally among the members

immediately and also Dairas were maintained by voluntary gifts and not on regular taxes or tithes in the form of Ushr. Ushr was definitely a tax when it was imposed by Hazrat Omer Farooq (R) and other Caliphs of Islamic States but the Ushr contributed by Mahdavis and received by the Head or inmates of the दौरا was not in the nature of a tithe or tax. It does not imply that Ushr was purely voluntary and no regularity of payment by Mahdavis was necessary. If it was not accepted by one head of the दौरا or murshid due to afore mentioned reason a Mahdavi had to pay it to other deserving persons. In fact, it was correctly ascertain from the Mahdavi annals, Ushr was and is treated as purely a mandatory religious obligation, without any temporal sanction. The real sanction for such obligation was the punishment in Aakhirat (hereafter) and the fear of God. This sanction is more effective for the believers than any sanction or punishment attached to a tithe or a tax.

Dogana Lailat-ul-Qadr: - In all religions special sanctity is assigned to certain days and nights. In Islam also three nights are regarded as specially sanctified or sacred. Lailatul Qadr is the most sacred night among all nights of a year. Its sanctity is confirmed by a regular Surah of Quran, which is ninety seventh Surah of the scripture, the title of which is Surah Al-Qadr. According to this surah, the said holy night is better than a thousand month; on this sacred night the Holy Quran was revealed for the first time. The verse further reveals that on this night under the command of God, Gabriel (A) and other Angels descend with the Divine blessings of peace and protection. But the Quran does not reveal in what month the said holy night occurs. The Prophet (A) only gave a hint that it occurs among the last ten nights on the odd dates of the month of Ramazan which has its own special sanctity. The Prophet (A) also disclosed the bounties of Allah which are conferred on the night through his various traditions. But neither the Quran nor the Prophet (A) disclosed the exact identity of the same. He commanded his followers to seek this night among the last ten nights of the month of Ramazan bearing odd numbers e.g. 21st, 23rd, 25th etc. Hazrat Abdul Khader Jeelani (RH) in one of his books describes in detail the routine of the special prayers which the Prophet (A) offered along with his companions and family members during the last ten nights of Ramazan basing his description on the Hadis reported by the venerable disciple of the Prophet Hazrat Abu Gaffari (R). According to this tradition, the Prophet (A) used to offer special prayers till last week of Ramazan and he particularly offered prayers with special attention along with all his companions and members of his family on the twenty seventh night of Ramazan. But however he did not specify which night was Lailatul Qadr. Hence in identifying this night exactly, there was difference of opinion among not only among his companions but saints and scholars of later era. But in the light of the Quran and Hadis all agreed about the sanctity and special benevolence of Allah on this night. Some element of suspense in religious matter gives tinge of charm to a particular faith. Suspense about this sacred night was ordained for centuries and Muslims eagerly offered prayers till late in the night particularly during the last ten nights of the holy month of Ramazan. But Allah, out of mercy, revealed to his last caliph, Hazrat Mahdi (A) the exact identity of this night as the twenty-seventh night of the month of Ramazan and ordained him to offer special Namaz consisting of two rakats 'as a mark of gratitude'. Hazrat Mahdi (A) obeyed this command and ordained his disciples, under divine inspiration that they and all the Muslims shall treat twenty-seventh night of Ramazan as Lailatul Qadr and to offer the said special namaz as a token of gratitude every year as a mandatory obligation.

About this act of Hazrat Mahdi (A) also, some of the detractors of recent times criticized that it amounted to an innovation in Shariat. In fact many mujtahids of Sunni sect have treated many good things as obligatory and it is permitted under Sunni system of jurisprudence to treat something which is wajib or mustahib (preferable) as compulsory or mandatory. After all apart from Quran and Sunnah Ijtehad is one of the expounding sources of Shariat. Imam Mahdi (A) as caliph of Allah stands on a better footing and holds a far superior authority on Muslims in such matters than the other venerable mujtahids. It is beyond the scope of this biography to discuss such matters beyond a certain point. For

detailed discussion of such objections and replies given there to the readers may refer to "Kuhlul-Jawaher" by Hazrat Syed Nusrat (RH) paged 314 to 328.

All the faraiz-e-vilayat proclaimed by Hazrat Mahdi (A) and all his teachings are in strict conformity with the letter and spirit of the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H). The advent of Mahdi (A) was not for introducing innovations; but on the contrary it was for eradication of unhealthy and un-Islamic innovations which crept into Muslim thought and action during the course of about eight hundred years prior to his advent.

CHAPTER IX

THE DAIRA

Daira, which literally means a circle, is a peculiar Mahdavi Institution initiated, introduced and founded by Imam Mahdi (A) for serving the dual objection of his advent i.e. to revive pure Islamic rules of life (Ahya-e-Shariat) and to strive for perfection of the rules of spiritual elevation (Takmeel-e-Tariqat) among the ummah. For attaining the object of perfecting the rules of Islamic life, which includes individual and social life, as well as the rules governing the Islamic polity, Prophet Mohammed (Peace be on him) introduced various institutions, which developed during the enlightened rule of his four pious caliphs. Every religion, sect and movement has its own peculiar and distinct institution. Christianity has its churches, Judaism its synagogues, Buddhism its monasteries and paganism its temples. The missionary religions e.g. Christianity and Islam require a firm institutional base. In Christianity, the church was founded much after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (Hazrat Essa (A)). During his life time he had formed and led only a group of disciples called 'Hawaris'. When Christianity assumed the role of a missionary and dynamic religion churches were founded and other allied institutions developed. As Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H) was the last Prophet; and the last commandments of God in form of the Holy Quran had to be communicated through him, his mission had a unique glory. Right from the annunciation (baisat) of the Prophet (A), Islam was destined to be a missionary religion. Hence its institutional base had also to be firm and unique in many respects in order to constitute an "Ummah" which was destined to lead humanity towards the true and real path (Sirat-e-mustaqim). Although the Prophet (A) could constitute a group of followers and missionaries (mubalighin) during his stay at Makkah, the solid and firm institutional base was given to Muslims after his migration to Madina which ultimately became the capital of the newly formed Islamic State. Mosque is the basic and the most important institution in Islamic society. Hence before entering Madina, the Prophet (A) stayed for few days at Quba, a hamlet near Madina and founded the first mosque there. He along with his disciples participated in the construction of this mosque. As by that time, namaz became mandatory, a place for collective worship had to be constructed. Thereafter when the Prophet (A) shifted to Madina one of his most important and significant act was the construction of a central mosque which came to be known as "Masjid-e-Nabavi". The Prophet personally participated in the construction of this sacred edifice by carrying and laying mud, stones and bricks. Behind this mosque were constructed the simple quarters of the Prophet (A) and in front of this mosque was constructed a large pial which came to be known as "suffa". The entire complex which consisted of mud and stone structures with thatched roofs was destined to become the head-quarters of the Islamic State. Masjid-e-Nabavi served not only as the main prayer hall, but also as the lecture hall, the guest house, the court of justice, the official headquarters, the army headquarters and above all the chief institution for moral and spiritual training of the Muslims.

In the beginning the disciples of the Prophet who migrated from Makkah to Madina were living at their new abode in various localities of the holy city along with their hosts; but gradually, most of them shifted in their respective quarters built around Masjid-e-Nabavi. The Muslims settling down at Madina along with their native hosts who were converted to Islam formed a new circle or brotherhood resembling a daira. It grew into a regular Islamic state in a miraculously short time. The apparent causes of the almost immediate rise of this state and the community were (1) their unshaken faith in God (2) their total love and devotion to His Prophet (A), (3) their discipline (4) and their piety and total devotion.

Apart from faith discipline is the essence of the solid institutional base of a religious movement. The Holy Quran provides rules of discipline applicable not only to the personal life of men but also their social, cultural, economic and political life. It also lays down rules for the spiritual life of Muslims, e.g. Zikr and Tawakkul. Namaz which is preferably performed in a mosque and the jamaat constituted for the purpose under the leadership of an Imam, with its rows of Muslims offering prayers, is the best source of individual and collective discipline. Hence God and His Prophet (A) attached so much importance to it. The place where such worship had to be performed, under the leadership of the Prophet (A), which was Masjid-e-Nabavi, was naturally the centre of all temporal and spiritual activities of the pious Muslims of those days. When the community of Muslims at Madina grew into a state many other institutions e.g. the administration, the judiciary and the army developed. But their institutional form in the modern sense was rudimentary. But the devotion of their members could not be matched by the devotion of the members of any modern institution. The followers of the Prophet (A), according to their aptitudes served various departments of the newly formed Islamic State and the community.

Learning and knowledge is another important factor which strengthens not only the fabric of the society but also the arms of administration and the state. Hence the Quran and the Prophet (A) laid so much stress on learning and quest for knowledge both in the temporal and spiritual fields. Hence such of those disciples of the prophet, who by nature, were mostly inclined towards the attainment of knowledge, particularly spiritual perfection, formed a circle, a *daira*, under the leadership and patronage of the prophet (A). They were staying on the plain near the Masjid-e-Nabavi known as *Suffa* and those pious men were called *ashab-e-suffa*. They developed themselves into an institution or rather a school. Most of them were selfless people; they did not have any avocation, except meditation and quest for learning; they did not work for gain and they led a very simple life. The Prophet (A) and his companions and followers used to provide means of sustenance to them. They rarely undertook humble jobs to earn something to sustain them under trying circumstances only. The members of this school became very prominent in later day teachings of the Holy Quran and they also served as missionaries of Islam. Abuzar Gaffari (R) and Abu Hurraira (R), Abdullah Ibn Masood (R) and several other representatives of these institutions made great contributions in preserving the traditions of the Prophet (A) Quranic instructions both in the matter of social and spiritual life of Muslims. They were not merely a group of idealists or ascetics, but they, when called upon by the Prophet (A) or his caliphs, undertook not only the duties of missionaries but also served as soldiers, ambassadors and even governors of provinces. Basically they were attached to the department of learning and were engaged in imparting both conventional and spiritual knowledge. Many schools of sufis were inspired by them in later years. This institution has a unique significance in the history of Sufism and sainthood in Islam.

Before narrating the details about the nature and scope of operation of Mahdavi *dairas*, we have given the above background of Islamic institutions founded by the Prophet (P.B.U.H) in order to emphasize the significance of institutional base in a dynamic movement like one which was launched by the Promised Mahdi (A). He as the successor of the Prophet (A) and as the caliph of God, in the capacity of Imam (A), retained almost all basic and important institutions of Islam except the temporal institution of an Islamic state which was not included in the purview of his mission. He was not ordained or destined by Almighty to rule as a temporal ruler. He was ordained to rule in the spiritual domain. Hence the Islamic institutions required for the revival of Shariat and perfection of Tariqat were retained and revived by him. Mosque was always the centre of his activity. Even before proclaiming himself, under the Command of God, to be the Promised Mahdi (A), wherever he went on his mission of preaching Quranic commands, he stayed preferably either in the central mosque of the city or in its vicinity. He sometimes stayed in or around the tombs of eminent saints as he did at Gulbarga, Dowlatabad and other places.

When his following increased and a particular stage came in the progress of his mission, he on the insistent command of God proclaimed himself to be the Promised Mahdi (A). In his capacity as the Caliph of God, he ordained, under his command, additional compulsory duties as *faraiz-e-vilayat*, for all those who accepted him to be the Promised Mehdi (A) and particularly those who aspire for spiritual elevation and the vision of God. *Tark-e-Dunya* (renunciation of worldly desires and the urges of ego), *Zikr-e-Kasir* (mostly repeating the name of God or remembering Him, and be absorbed in Him), *Uzlat-Az-Khalq* (living aloof from the multitude), *Suhbat-e-Sadiqin* (living in the company of the pious), *Tawakkul* (total dependence on God for meeting once requirements) and *Talab-e-Deedar-e-Khuda* (intense desire to behold God) were the duties enjoined on all *Musaddiqs* (those who confirmed) as stated earlier in detail. To enforce these duties the Imam (A) introduced an institution called 'daira'. The main mosque or *jamat khana* where the Imam (A) led the prayers or delivered his sermons was the centre of this *daira*. The quarters of the Imam (A) and his disciples which used to be simple hutments or thatched rooms of mud and clay surrounded by fencing formed the *daira*. The *daira* followed him wherever he went on *Hijrat* (migration in the service of God).

The other saints who did dynamic work of preaching preferred to establish their *Khankhas* at particular places. These *Khankhas* served as seats of learning, headquarters of their mission, boarding houses and training camps for their disciples. The difference between the *Khankah* and *Mahdavi Dairas* was that the *Khankah* were permanent and static whereas the *Dairas* were in the nature of moving camps or moving models of Islamic way of life. They were shifted from place to place as the Imam (A) and his disciples frequently preferred *Hijrat*. The term *daira* implies the circle of staunch devotees and lovers of God who preferred to remain or migrate along with the Imam (A) after renouncing the world in the service of his mission. In the *daira* pious persons used to live along with their families, prayed, preached and practiced Islam along with the Imam (A) in his lifetime and afterwards, along with his venerable caliphs.

Daira served as a model society where in the lovers of God lived with the sole objective of projecting the glory of Islam and also to attain their personal, spiritual elevations culminating in *deedar* and their eternal salvation. It served as a head quarter of religious and spiritual mission from where instructions were issued and guidance was provided to all believers. It had its very strict and practices without observing them it was impossible for the inmates of *daira* to achieve their above mentioned objects in the light of *Shariat* and also *faraiz-e-vilayat*. *Hijrat* was also regarded as compulsory duty in certain circumstances and hence *daira* was shifted from place to place.

The Imam (A) included in his *daira* only such of those Muslims who had renounced the world by abandoning their posts, position and properties and took the pledge of joining his mission in the service of God and in total obedience to the *Shariat* of Prophet Mohammed (S) and accepting and confirming him as a promised Mahdi (A). Only the selfless devotees were allowed to live in the *daira*. Others who although confirmed and accepted the Imam (A) as the promised Mahdi (A), but did not renounce the world and did not feel themselves capable of joining his preaching mission and were attached to their avocation were treated as *Kasibs* and devotees and were allowed to live where ever they like. Such people were also attached to the *daira* which was a source of inspiration and instruction for them. But the *kasibs* were also enjoined that they should live pure and simple life in accordance with the Islamic *Shariat*, and should not be lost in the worldly lusts and desires. The *kasibs* were also called upon to act, as far as possible, in accordance with the *faraiz-e-vilayat*; and to adopt *zikr* and *tawakkul* as far as practicable; and to aspire for *tark-e-dunya* and vision of God. Even such *kasibs* were not allowed generally to reside in the *daira*. They were attached to the *daira* as devotees and were

donating their ushr (tenth part of ones income in cash or kind) and zakat to the members of the दौरا. The Kasibs used to visit the दौरا for seeking instructions and inspiration.

Prayer routine of Dairas:-

Hazrat Mahdi (A) and after him his pious caliphs maintained a very strict standard of Tawakkul (trust in God and depending purely on Him to meet their requirements) for the members of the दौरا. They had to observe very strict religious practices and spiritual exercises. Strict observance of the Shariat of the Prophet (A) and renunciation of world and trust in God were the most elementary requirements of their service. Over and above this, they were bound to be engaged in Zikr either collectively in the mosque or individually, from early morning till afternoon and also from early hours of the evening till late in the night. The collective Zikr was called Nowbat in which batches of devotees used to sit in sessions of silent Zikr at night time; hence for the whole night some batch or other was engaged in solemnly remembering Allah in a दौरا. These sessions of Nowbat were different in form with the loud oral collective Zikr which was in vogue in the Khankhas of earlier sufis. They were expected to develop extreme love for God and devotion to the Prophet (A) and the Imam (A). The members of the दौरا were strictly prohibited from working for gain even when they were starving due to want of means. During the pilgrimage to Makkah and during about twenty three years of the Imam's (A) continuous migration, hundreds of his disciples perished due to starvation.

Sawieth:-

Whatever came to the दौरا by way of Ushr, Zakat or gift or donation from the devotees, which was called "futuh", was equally distributed among the members of the दौरا. This system of equal distribution of futuh is called Sawaieth. These 'futuhs' were also not stocked or stored for meeting the future needs of the दौरا. When there was no immediate need, the gifts and donations were even refused. Regularity of payments by a person to the head of दौरا or any member there of was also discouraged severely as regular receipts would have been against Tawakkul.

Hazrat Mahdi (A) used to distribute futuh on the basis of Sawieth i.e. equally among the inmates of the दौरا. The Imam (A) and his disciples refused very often to accept their share of sawieth when they felt that they were not in dire need of it to sustain their lives. Once a devotee presented some money to Hazrat Mahdi (A), in the name of Allah, but he specified certain portion of it for the use of the Imam's (A) family and the remaining for other inmates of the दौरا. The Imam (A) told him that if he had brought the amount in the name of Allah, he had no right to specify the shares. When the donor clarified that he was presenting the amount only in the name of Allah and the Imam (A) could spend it as he like, then only Hazrat Mahdi (A) accepted the money and distributed it equally among all the members of his दौरا.

Once Hazrat Osman (R) who was the father-in-law of Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) the first caliph, sent some valuable clothes and money and edible articles to his daughter Bibi Kad Banu (R), On coming to know about this Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R), expressed his displeasure and asked her to go over to the house of her father with her exclusive gifts and use and consume the same at his place and to come back to his दौरا afterwards. The pious wife following the hint presented all the gifts to her husband in the name of Allah who distributed the same equally among all the inmates of his दौरا. On another occasion when Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) was taking his food, one of his companions came and informed him that some members of his दौरا are starving. He immediately stopped eating and repented for what he consumed. His wife presented her jewelery which was pledged and the amount realized was immediately distributed among the starving members.

The above mentioned facts reveal beyond doubt that Ushr or Zakat was not collected by the head or any member of the दौरا as a tithe or tax and no "bait-ul-mal" (consolidated fund) was kept at the Mahdavi dairas for meeting its routine expenses as was the case with the bait-ul-mal maintained by the Prophet (A) and his first four caliphs (R) who used the same for the expenses of the community and the State. The receipt and distribution system of the दौरا was more similar to the system followed in the Prophet's (A) life time for members of 'Suffa' school and that of the household of the Prophet (A) himself and not with the economic system of the early Islamic state.

The inmates of the दौरا were forbidden to store anything in order to meet their future requirements. The venerable disciples were strictly prohibited from asking for any favor from any devotee or visiting his house to participate in any function or accept any invitation for any feast or function. Very rarely the Imam (A) and after him his caliphs allowed their disciples to attend the feasts arranged by their devotees at their respective abodes. The extremely high standard of self respect and total dependence on God set by the members of the दौरا and their total disdain for anything worldly and their devotion to the Imam (A) were exemplary. After joining the दौरا, Hazrat Mahdi's (A) disciples were rarely allowed to leave it even for meeting their relatives. Amongst themselves they formed a brotherhood bound by spiritual attachment and the desire of selfless service.

Social equality:-

In the दौरا all were treated as equals as the Prophet (A) did in his life time, and piety was the only criterion of distinction. Community work was done by all irrespective of their social and spiritual status. All members, on special occasion e.g. construction of mosque and the दौरا quarters, collection of fire wood and water and mass cooking on special occasion, worked together collectively. Even the Imam (A) and his eminent caliphs personally participated in such activities. Those who abandoned the दौरا either due to slime tailing or due to their incapacity to live up to the high standard of moral and spiritual education and their inability to bear the hardships implicit therein, were not allowed to rejoin the model society.

Dairas were not States:-

The Mahdavi Dairas were not "tiny Islamic states" where the Islamic laws i.e. civil, criminal, economic and spiritual could be implemented as stated by certain biographers. They, perhaps, did not perceive the exact nature of Mahdavi Dairas in this aspect, there cannot be a state without a territory. Neither Imam Mehdi (A) nor his caliphs held or occupied any territory. Under compulsion of circumstances the Imam (A) had to shift his दौरا to many places during the course of his continuous Hijrat. Hazrat Khundmir (R) had to shift his दौरا to twenty different places during the course of twenty years. Hazrat Shah Niamat (R) shifted his दौरا to more than five places. The Imam (A) and his caliphs never accepted jagirs or territories although they were often offered such favors from the rulers. Another ingredient of a State is a regular government machinery and law enforcing agencies. The Imam (A) and his caliphs never established a semblance of government in the respective Dairas. He and his caliphs never enforced civil and criminal laws of Islam in their dairas. Some instances of punishment according to Shariat are reported in Mahdavi annals. But such instances, which are rare and wherein the culprits surrendered voluntarily for punishment cannot be regarded as enforcement of law by any state authority. In fact there was some organization in a simple form for managing the dairas which were in fact model Islamic societies or localities. There was no temporal sanction for enforcement of any law or rule. The sanction was only moral and spiritual in nature and it was in reality more effective than any temporal sanction. As no immovable property was held by any inmates of the

daira and their moveable assets were so meager that there was little or no scope of enforcement of Islamic civil law. As the members of the daira had great moral and spiritual attainments to their credit, there was no scope for enforcement of Islamic criminal law. In case of any contravention of any rule or slight deviation from the high standard, the head of the daira used to remove the defaulter from his daira and in case of lesser deviations admonition was the only punishment as far as the Mahdavi annals disclose.

The economic system of daira also was not similar to that of any imaginable State. Hence the dairas cannot be described as tiny Islamic States. During the life time of the Imam (A) there was only one daira under him but after his demise, under the instructions of his first caliph Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R), important caliphs and disciples of the Imam (A) established their Dairas at different places to spread the message of the Imam (A) more effectively on a broader scale.

Progress of Daira System:-

After the demise of the Imam (A) at Farah, Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) returned back to Gujarat to continue the preaching mission of the Imam (A). Subsequently, Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R), Shah Nizam (R), Shah Niamat (R) and almost all other eminent disciples of the Imam (A) returned back to India and for a considerable period settled down in the State of Gujarat, Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) established his daira at Bhilot in Gujarat with about nine hundred disciples. On coming to know about his arrival Hazrat Shah Khundmir (R) joined him at Bhilot along with his companions. As Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) was recognized by all as the successor and first caliph of the Imam (A), every prominent disciple of the Imam (A) was eager to live in his company. But Hazrat Syed Mahmood (RZ) decided to give a new dimension to the entire Mahdavi movement and wanted that the Imam's (A) mission should continue on a broader scale. He persuaded all the Caliph and prominent disciples of the Imam (A) to establish their respective dairas in different parts of the country first concentrating on Gujarat State. As a consequence of this policy, he established his daira at Bhilot and, Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R), first lived for sometime along with his followers at Bhadipur village and then established his daira at Jhanjiwada; Hazrat Shah Nizam (R) established his daira at Radhanpur and Hazrat Shah Niamat (R) at Pattan. Gradually Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) authorized Hazrat Abu Baker (R), Hazrat Ilhadad Hammed (R), Mian Yousuf (R), Abu Mohammed (R) and others to establish their respective dairas. Hazrat Shah Dilawar (R) preferred to live with the first caliph and took charge of his daira after his demise.

Establishment of various dairas under the caliphs of Hazrat Mahdi (A) and other prominent disciples at various places gave great momentum to the Mahdavi movement. Lakhs of Muslims were inspired by them renounced the world and joined these dairas. Those venerable disciples of the Imam (A) either under compulsion of the State authorities or voluntarily had to shift their dairas from place to place, Hazrat Shah Khundmir (R) was expelled from twenty places (according to some traditions twenty seven places) during twenty years of his work after the Imam's (A) death. Hazrat Shah Niamat (R) had to establish his daira at Pattan, Jalore, Ahmedabad, Ahmednagar and Khandes. Other caliphs also shifted their dairas to various places. Due to shifting of dairas to various places Mahdavi movement covered vast areas of eastern and southern India and its influence grew tremendously.

The dairas acted as mobile models for pure and pious Muslim community, reminded the common Muslims of the era of the Prophet (A) and his great caliphs, and they were attracted towards the call given from these preaching centers. The piety, devotion, resignation, trust in God and selfless service of the members of the dairas not only made the Mahdavi movement popular and respectable

throughout India and Afghanistan, it also left indelible marks of reformatory zeal on the bright pages of Muslim history in this part of the world.

As a part of his mission, the Imam (A) tried to eradicate many evil practices, heresies and innovations which crept into Islamic thought and practices due to pagan and other influences and vested interests and tarnished the image of Islamic society. To attain his objects in this regard, the Imam (A) did not resort to mere sermonizing but in fact presented his *daira* as a model Islamic society. The activities of the inmates of the *dairas* were not limited to their work in their respective *dairas*. They boldly preached the true faith and relentlessly condemned the prevalent evils in Islamic society, in all cities and villages and in the vicinity of their *dairas*, by consistent preaching. The Imam's (A) ideals in practical form were in fact presented through *daira* system of the Imam (A) and his caliphs. It created great impact on the Muslims of Afghanistan and India; and even the Muslims who did not accept the claim of the Imam to be the Promised Mahdi (A), were also moved and influenced and many un-Islamic practices were abandoned and a new zeal for revival of Shariat and reform of Tariqat ensured. To assess the exact impact is almost impossible but a discerning eye and an unbiased mind would definitely note a remarkable difference of thought and practice between the periods immediately preceding the advent of Mahdi (A) and after his advent for quite a long time among the Sunni Muslims in general. But unfortunately, with the passage of time, due to various reasons the Mahdavi *dairas* have lost their luster and efficacy; and at present, the word *daira* connotes at the best, merely a Mahdavi locality grave-yard. In fact, at present, it looks like a grave-yard of high ideals of Islam as any other locality of Sunni or other Muslim sects.

CHAPTER X

HAZRAT MAHDI (A) AS THE ABSOLUTE FOLLOWER OF PROPHET MOHAMMED (S).

One authentic tradition of the prophet preserved in Futuhat-e-Makkiya and other books is as follows:

Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) said, "Mahdi is from me, he shall follow my foot-steps and shall not falter" Almost all the important sects and schools of thought coming under the pale of Islam right from the beginning believed about the advent of a caliph of God, after Prophet Mohammed (S), who was named by Prophet (A) himself as the Mahdi (A). Hence we refer to such caliph of God as the promised Mahdi (A) as mentioned earlier. The promise about his advent was made indirectly in the Holy Quran and directly by the last Prophet (A) in his various traditions as mentioned above. The tradition referred to above is one, which is universally accepted as authentic. It has great significance, especially for the Sunni sect of Muslims who claim strict adherence to the Sunnah (the sayings and acts of the Prophet (A)).

It was the habit of the Prophet (A) to act upon every commandment of God revealed to him, through Quranic verses from time to time. Then he persuaded and commanded, first his family members, then his close companions and people at large to act accordingly. He created first a family unit, then a circle of friends and then a millat and Ummah (the entire group of Muslims) as units of obedient Muslims who followed the commandments of God and who were imbued by their moral and spiritual spirit. These groups were not isolated but interwoven by the sublime bonds of affection. In adopting this grand technique the Prophet (A) was inspired by God directly and also through Quran. The result was an unprecedented moral, spiritual and temporal revolution within a short span of about twenty-three years. Prophet Mohammed (A) could create Millat-e-Islamia consisting of persons who could justly be called the pride of humanity. Never in the long history of mankind such a large group of persons having all imaginable virtues was created and sustained in such a short time. This millat by its acts and deeds proved beyond any doubt that to follow strictly the Quranic injunctions is not impossible. The Prophet (A) himself set the highest example. What glorious results would follow by strict adherence to Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (A) in the daily life of Muslims and their national life is evident from pages of Islamic history narrating the glorious period of Khilafat-e-Rashida, the temporal and spiritual rule of the four caliphs of the Prophet Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique (R), Hazrat Omer (R), Hazrat Osman (R) and Hazrat Ali (R). What would follow if such adherence was neglected even slightly was revealed even during the rules of the last two pious caliphs and during the struggle and martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (R). The subsequent chapters of Islamic history are full with manifestations of the reality that in the degree in which the Muslims, particularly their leaders adhered to Quranic commands and the traditions and the example of the Prophet (A), they attained moral, temporal and spiritual heights proportionately. When darkness descended, gradually in subsequent periods, various Imams and Saints set examples of sincere adherence to the Quran and the Prophet (A) among their disciples and inspired them with the love of God and illumined the horizon of Islam for the time being. But unfortunately it is the destiny of mankind, to be engulfed almost always in darkness caused by the forces of evil. The place of sincere religious leaders and venerable saints was gradually occupied by fake sufis, various imposters, corrupt and cruel Muslim rulers and perverted and degenerated Sajjadas and Mashaikhs. The Muslim society, throughout the world gasped under the yoke of such spiritual and temporal tyrants miserably at the time of the advent of the promised Mahdi (A). Religion then was a source of temporal power and spiritualism a sedative to impose inertia on the

sincere but ignorant and restless masses of Muslims. Such was the time when promised Mahdi (A) commenced this glorious mission of the revival of Sunnah and perfection of Tariqat. While narrating the Imam (A) strict adherence to the traditions of the Prophet (A), many learned biographers have rightly emphasized his habits and practices in the observance of prayers and daily routine of life, his manner of speech, his behavior, and his exhortations to his disciples whenever they slightly faltered in the observance of sunnah. I would venture to focus the attention of the reader on this great aspect of the Imam's (A) life in slightly different light.

In the capacity of the last Prophet Hazrat Mohammed (A) was the greatest benefactor and lover of humanity (Rahmat-ul-lil-Alameen). As his promised Mahdi, Hazrat Syed Mohammed Mahdi (A), who was the last representative of the saintly heritage of Prophet Mohammed (A), also was the greatest lover of humanity. The Prophet (A) particularly loved his ummah intensely and dedicated his whole life for its moral, social, and spiritual well being and Hazrat Mahdi (A) followed his example absolutely in this regard. It was the practice of the prophet (A) to be always busy in teaching and exhorting his followers with a view to create a large group of devoted, selfless, god-fearing, bold and venerable persons and he succeeded in his life time. Similarly Hazrat Mahdi (A) spent his whole life to attain similar objects by similar means and was rewarded with success. As the prophet (A) struggled against the forces of evil and fought against infidels throughout his life. Hazrat Mahdi (A) as his follower similarly fought against the forces of evil in the same manner. Both the Prophet (A) and the Mahdi (A) adopted the course of persuasion, tolerance, magnanimity and consistency while preaching for the cause of Islam. But when need arose, Hazrat Mahdi (A), like his holy ancestor (A) drew the sword and personally lead the arrives in the battle and fought with courage, unyielding to forces of tyranny and unmindful of the numerical strength and worldly means and power of his enemies as has been narrated earlier in this book. As the prophet (A) was generous, bountiful and munificent, the Imam (A) also held these qualities in such a degree that even the great men born after the Prophet (A) could not withstand any comparison. As was the practice of Prophet Mohammed (A), the Imam (A), distributed everything which he received and always preferred starvation and led the simplest life totally devoid of luxuries. Hazrat Mahdi (A) once distributed among the poor the entire treasure sent by way of gift to him by Sultan Ghyasuddin Khilji at Mando and did not touch anything with his hands and lifting an invaluable chain of beads with his stick, threw it by way of charity, towards a musician who accompanied the procession of courtiers. For him the treasure and a few bushels of wheat had equal value he distributed the same with equal indifference. His capacity to inspire his followers by intense love and attachment was unprecedented after the Prophet (A). As the companions and disciples of Hazrat Mohammed (PBUH) were always ready to undergo any hardship, any humiliation, any pain and adversity for the cause of God, and were always ready to lay down their lives at his command, for the glory of Islam, the companions of Hazrat Mahdi (A) had equal devotion to him and his cause. This fact is proved beyond doubt by the facts preserved by favorable and unfavorable historians alike.

As the life of the Prophet (A) was an open page so also the life of the promised Mahdi (A). There was no secret, mystery or pomp attached to these holy lives which were spent under the keenest observation of their devotees. Both the Prophet (A) and the Mahdi (A) had great abhorrence of everything worldly and they felt uneasy in the company of rich and always loved the poor and helpless and they were always considerate about their problems. Like the Prophet (A) Hazrat Mahdi (A) was also affectionately attached to his wives and children and they were attached to him with extreme devotion. Hazrat Mahdi (A) rarely admonished his followers. Whenever such occasion arose, the admonition was extremely mild and it had benevolent effect on persons who had to face it. He discouraged every act which was against the Sunnah. Even during prayers he would not tolerate slightest deviation from the rules of Shariat even by such persons also who were deeply absorbed in the love of God and who reached great heights of spiritual attainments. He discouraged any show of

spiritual powers, miracles or strange manifestations of super-natural strength (karamrat); He always upheld the dignity of man. He was compassionate towards his followers and considerate towards his enemies. He was never bitter in argument or severe in expression. Although he was a learned scholar well versed in traditional branches of learning and was rewarded with the title of Assad-ul-Ulema even at a young age; he in order to keep up with the tradition of the Prophet (A) who was regarded as Ummi (unable to read and write), Hazrat Mahdi (A) never wrote a book or booklet; and not a single line of his writing was available for preservation by any of his most devoted disciples. With the obvious temptations of learning in the matter of writing something, can there be a better example of strict adherence of the last Prophet (A) than that of Hazrat Mahdi (A)? Of course this does not imply that he at any time discouraged learning or writing of books.

Like the Prophet (A), Hazrat Mahdi (A) was a great admirer of the learned and pious and he held them in high esteem. He showed utmost respect to all earlier saints and Imams and never failed to visit their tombs during the course of his continuous and long journey. He did not like flattery or extreme show of respect to him and always abhorred such acts as was the practice of the Prophet (A). Once when he saw a slave girl standing in front of his wife in a servile posture, he expressed grief at the sight and refused to enter the house till the pious wife released the girl from the bond of slavery for ever. Once when a devotee brought his shoes and tried to place it before his feet, Hazrat Mahdi (A) avoided him and remarked: "God has not sent Mahdi to make others carry his shoes. My mission is to enable His subjects to meet Him." He directed his devotees not to wait for him during joint prayers, if due to any reason, he could not reach exactly in time, remarking that he could wait for time, but time could not wait for him. He was so punctual in joining the daily joint prayers, that after hearing the Azan (call for prayer), if he happened to eat something, he used to abruptly end his meal and join the prayer. Till the end of his holy life, he strictly adhered to the minutest details of the Sunnah of the Prophet (A). During his early life when he was passing through a phase of deep spiritual absorption, for no less a period than about twelve long years; when he was almost unconscious of everything around him, he used to gain consciousness at the appointed time of compulsory prayers. He used to thank God that even in such deep spiritual absorption (Jazba); He gave him strength and urge to follow the Sunnah strictly. In similar conditions, many Sufis and Saints could not adhere to rules of Shariat strictly and their biographies reveal this fact beyond doubt. Hazrat Mehdi (A) detested the use of un-islamic practices, which were in contravention with Shariat even during the course of mystic experiences of the highest order. For example, he never allowed sama (the use of oral and instrument music) to instill among the devotees the love of God through inspiring poetry and music as was the practice of some very eminent saints. Hazrat Mahdi (A) never encouraged ostentation even in prayers or other religious practices. Like the Prophet (A), simplicity, sincerity and devotion were regarded by the Imam (A) essential ingredients of the system of spiritual development. He challenged that if he failed even in the minutest aspects of such adherence to Sunnah he should not be accepted as the promised Mahdi (A). Even his bitterest detractors had to admit his strict adherence to the Prophet (A).

CHAPTER XI

OPINION OF NON-MAHDAVI SCHOLARS AND HISTORIANS ABOUT HAZRAT MEHDI (A).

The greatness of a personality can be assessed not only by what his disciples, followers and admirers speak about him but also by the statements of others and even his detractors. Hence in this chapter brief quotations are given from authentic works of eminent scholars and historians belonging to Sunni sect with a few remarks wherever necessary.

Mullah Abdul Khader Badauni:

In his famous historical work Muntakhab-ul-Tawarikh (written in 1004 Hijri) Mullah Abdul Khader Badauni, writing about Hazrat Mahdi (A) says: “Mir Syed Mohammed Jaunpuri who was one of the greatest saints, proclaimed himself to be the promised Mahdi (A).”

Abdul Khasim Farishta:

The famous historian Abdul Khasim Farishta in his great work ‘Tarikh-e-Farishta’ page 296, Published in 1015 Hijri writing briefly about the Imam (A) says: “Syed Mohammed claimed in India that according to Shariat he was promised Mahdi (A). As many symbols and qualities attributed to the promised Mahdi (A) were found in him, people accepted him as such which is clear as broad day light.”

Mir Shair Ali Khan:

The writer of 'Tuhfat-ul-Kiram' (written in 1181 H. Page 111) writes: “Syed Mohammed was not a maker of hollow aims, he was a perfect saint; Many lovers of God became his disciples and attained spiritual height.” Referring to Shaikh Sadruddin of Sindh, he further writes; “the ulema and divines, who were capable of imparting learning and spiritual heights to thousands of people, also accepted Miran Syed Mohammed Jaunpuri as the promised Mahdi (A).”

Mohammed Hussain Azad:

The famous historian and writer Mohammed Hussain Azad, in his work: “Darbar-e-Akbari” writing about Hazrat Mahdi (A) states: “Syed Mohammed Jaunpuri (A) was in fact a great scholar, perfect in conventional and spiritual branches of knowledge. Not only common people accepted him as the promised Mahdi (A), but Sultan Mahmood Baigda, King of Gujarat also became his disciple. Syed Mohammed, apart from his scholastic and spiritual attainments had great will power and missionary zeal which made him travel extensively in India and ultimately he reached the domain of Iran.” (In fact the last stage of the Imam's (A) journey ended at Farah which is now a part of Afghanistan).

Shah Abdul Haq Muhaddis Dehlavi:

A notable sunni divine and scholar Shah Abdul Haq of Delhi, quoting from a book of another renowned sunni divine, “Shah Abdul Aziz”, “Tuhfa-e-Asna-i-Ashriya”, states that many sunni divines and ulema who were the contemporaries of Hazrat Mahdi and who were born just after his period, had great respect for him as a perfect saint. But in the matter of his claim to be the promised Mahdi, either

they accepted it or preferred to remain impartial and silent. But the worldly wise ulema bitterly opposed him and his mission. In his famous work 'Tazkira', Moulana Azad quotes, Shah Abdul Haq, as saying, "In the matter of perfection of faith Syed Mohammed Jaunpuri had the same degree of attainment as Prophet Mohammed (A) had, but the difference lay in the fact that in the case of the Prophet it was inherent and in the case of Syed Mohammed, it was due to absolutely following the Prophet (A). This genuineness of adherence reached the stage of what was inherent". Moulana Azad quoting this passage remarks: "what the disciples and followers speak in veneration is quite understandable but Shah Abdul Haq who was born slightly after the period of Hazrat Mahdi and who is an authentic and reliable writer also uses such high expressions of praise which cause confusion in one's mind at the first sight" page 51 of 'Tazkira' 1968 Edition.

Shah Abdul Aziz:

He was a respected divine of Sunni sect. In his "Asna-e-Ashriya" Tohfah-e-Asna-e-Ashriya he writes "Mir Syed Mohammed Jaunpuri openly proclaimed himself to be the Promised Mahdi. Nobody prevented him from his claim and nobody dared to kill him. Many Afghans of Deccan and Rajputana conferring upon them the title of Mahdavia followed him". He further says: "Syed Mohammed was one who knew the truth and he was absorbed in God"

Mian Hatim Sumbhuli:

According to Moulana Azad, Main Hatim Sumbhuli was a great teacher of teachers and a venerable divine. Mian Hatim remarked about Hazrat Mahdi (A): "there is no doubt about the attainments of Mir Syed Mohammed".

Moulana Abul Kalam Azad:

Compared to other writers Moulana Azad in his famous work "Tazkira" has narrated in more detail the history and significance of Mahdavi movement and had spoken very highly about Hazrat Syed Mohammed Mahdi (A) in the light of historical evidence gathered by him. His maternal grandfather Hazrat Moulana Jamaluddin alias Shaikh Bahlool Dehlavi had a soft corner for Mahdavia movement and was inspired by the achievement of Hazrat Mahdi (A) and accepted him to be one of the greatest saints although he was born in a later period. He suffered great atrocities from the conspiring ulema of Akbar's court and had to leave India and settled down at Makkah. He was a bold and God-fearing divine, and never surrendered himself to the will of opportunist ulema who then tried to give religious sanctity to the personality of King Akber the Great. They prepared an opportunistic circular praising the King in the manner contrary to Shariat. Hence Moulana Jamaluddin refused to sign and affirm the circular. His rivals knew that he had high opinion about Hazrat Mahdi (A) and spoke against the persecution of Mahdavis and their divines like Hazrat Shaikh Alai during the reign of Salim Shah at the instigation of the opportunist and world-loving ulema. Referring to them he once said: "the blood of these martyrs shall not go waste and the Afghan reign which tormented and killed the innocent and pious men would not last long." The Ulema asserted that he was converted to Mahdavi movement and tried to get him punished subsequently in the Court of Akber. He escaped the atrocities by migrating to Makkah. According to Moulana Azad, even during the reign of Akber, to be called a Mahdavi was enough to invite trouble and persecution. Moulana Azad takes pride in the support of his ancestor Moulana Jamaluddin in the following significant words. "In fact if the pages of history were blank about the piety and scholarship of Shaikh Jamaluddin and Shaikh Dawood and could reveal only one fact that they opposed Maqdoom-ul-Mulk (the courtier Mullah of Salim Shah) and supported Shaikh Niazi and Shaikh Alai and wrote a book appreciating Mir Syed Mohammed Jaunpuri, it would have

been enough to prove their great truthful glory and perpetual acclaim” (Tazkira - page 106: 1968 Edition). At another place in his Tazkira, Moulana Azad writes: “Syed Mohammed (A) was a native of Jaunpur and was born in 847 Hijra. His bitterest detractors admit that he was master of conventional branches of knowledge and was matchless in piety, abstinence and spiritual greatness. Even Shaikh Ali Muttaqi (who was a contemporary of the Syed and was his bitter detractor and who wrote a booklet against him) admits that the early days of Syed Mohammed's (A) life were spent in intense prayers, penance abstinence, great absorption in God and spiritual ecstasy. This condition remained for about seven years to which he was continuously fasting and used to lie down alone in some corner. During this period he used to hear unknown voice proclaiming ‘Antal Mahdi’. For years he tolerated this phenomenon. When repeatedly the same thing happened he proclaimed himself to be ‘Mahdi’. This was significantly the statement of a contemporary detractor who was compelled to admit half-heartedly the spiritual greatness of Hazrat Mahdi (A). In fact the above statement of Shaikh Ali Mutaqi is a mis-statement of fact about the Imam's proclamation. The facts stated in earlier chapters of this book show the real position in this regard as recorded by authentic sources. Then Abul Kalam Azad continues “When the vulgar sufis were busy in preaching and practicing heresies, the Syed raised his voice in favor of Shariat and the path of truth and told the people ‘Now there is no need for spiritual penance or zikr and absorption (here Moulana faltered). The highest penance now is to lead the children of God on straight path; and to establish Shariat you must risk your lives’. Sincerity of this love and piety of his heart made the call of the Syed so effective that thousands of people became his followers and name fame of his time became his disciples.” Speaking about the companion of the Imam (A) and their immediate successors, Moulana Azad Says: “Their manners were strangely so exalted and devoted that they reminded one about the qualities of faith of the prophet's (A) disciples, that was an audacious group of lovers of God which sacrificed the mortal relations of blood and worldly affections and desires for the sake of faith and love of God. By renouncing everything they joined as friends and sympathizers on the path of God. Rich and poor, high and lowly lined alike and except serving and guiding the servants of God and except for revival and establishment of Shariat (rules of life laid down by Islam) they had nothing to do with any other work. Gradually this quality became the mark of identity of the Mahdavis.” Of course Moulana Azad, in spite of his detailed study about the Mahdavi movement, the high qualities of the Imam (A) and his sainthood admitted even by his detractors, could not accept Hazrat Syed Mohammed as the Promised Mahdi (A). Might be with the psychological background of the fate of his remote ancestor, or due to lack of more convincing evidence for his sharp mind, he asserts in some passages in the book that the claim of the Imam might be an exaggerated assessment on his part during the course of his deep spiritual absorption. He blames the later followers of the Imam about their alleged over-enthusiasm and taunts that the disciples generally elevate their Master to such an extent that if they feel shy of calling him God they at least try to make him equal to the Prophet. After about five hundred years gap between the real claimant and the famed scholar with his various mental and psychological reservations, when in his work Tazkira his sole object of study was not the Imam (A) or Mahdavi movement, we can very well appreciate his difficulties in the matter of the claim of Hazrat Syed Mohammed (A). The Moulana however admits with honesty that many scholars and divines well versed in Islamic theology and history with great spiritual attainments (at least equal to Moulana Azad himself) accepted Hazrat Syed Mohammed's (A) claim to be the promised Mahdi. The question remains unanswered by the Moulana that how a person ranked among the greatest saints, who had no temporal ambition and who had sacrificed every pleasure for the sake of God and is faithful and who proved to be the absolute follower of the Prophet (A) in the matter of sunnat according to impartial evidence collected by him, could make a false claim not merely in spiritual ecstasy but consistently; and why he could not be punished, like Shaikh Alai (RH), who strived to prove the claim of Hazrat Mahdi (A), by ruler of his time in spite of his continuous journey for twenty-three years and prolonged stay in important cities of that period including Makkah. Does it not prove the tradition of the Prophet (A) that no ruler or king could overcome the Mahdi (A)? However, Mahdavi groups have

great regard and respect for Moulana Azad for his candid and bold approach. They have similar respect for all Sunni divines and scholars of repute who have served Islamic society at large and provided vision and clarity of thinking to the Sunni sect in particular.

Khairuddin Mohammed Illahbadi:

Referring to Hazrat Mahdi's (A) followers in his book 'Junapur nama' (Chapter V), Janab Khairuddin Mohammed says : "the people who were inspired by him (Hazrat Mahdi (A)) were always ready to fight for the cause of God, for establishing truth and good things and for the effacement of falsehood and disbelief, they did not yield to anyone. In the course of true faith they were always in the forefront and whatever they get or earned, they divided equally among themselves and did not store for the coming day". He further says: "I have personally seen many persons of this group and found many of them in a state with burning heart and tearful eyes. Their sole work is to have deep understanding of the Quran and to implement its injunctions. In general matters they follow Imam Abu Hanifa (RH), but in following the traditions of the Prophet they are very severe. They do not believe in guess work."

Khaja Hassan Nizami:

A famous scholar and divine of recent times Janab Khaja Hassan Nizami in his book "Sihah Satta-ki-Hadis-Ki-Peshenguian" page 64 briefly referring to Mahdavi movement and its impact says "In India, during the rule of Salim Shah Soori, one respectable person Syed Mohammed, claimed to be the promised Mahdi (A). Lakhs of Muslims accepted his claim. Even today at Hyderabad, Paalanpur, Jaipur, Mysore and frontier province, thousands of his followers are to be found". The period of advent is not historically correct.

Moulana Syed Abul Hassan Ali Nadvi:

Moulana Syed Abul Hassan Ali Nadvi popularly known as Moulana Ali Mian is one of the great scholars of Islamic studies and history of recent times. He is acclaimed for many of his writings in Arabic and Urdu, not only in Indo-Pak sub-continent but almost in the entire Islamic world. In his recent work "Tarikh-e-Dawat-o-Azeemat" written in four volumes, he has given lucid life sketches of such of those saints and divines who had a mission and purpose and were possessed not only of piety but also dynamism and spirit of sacrifice. But unfortunately his remarks in the fourth volume of the book (pages 52 to 57) about Mahdavi movement and Hazrat Syed Mohammed, the promised Mahdi (A), are most unfortunate. As the title of the book suggests, and considering the objects of writing the book, it would have been fair on his part to devote more time and attention on an impartial study of the pious personality of the Imam (A) and his mission and its impact on the Muslim world of the 9th and 10th century. All he could spare only four and half pages to such a dynamic and in his own commencing words, under sub-heading "'Mahdaviat', earth-moving movement." In this volume, he wrote in detail about the life and work of 'Hazrat Shaikh Ahmed Mujadad Alf sani' and almost the entire fourth volume is devoted to his life and work. With due respect to Shaikh Ahmed Sarhandi, if the author had deeply studied the life and work of Hazrat Mahdi (A) without bias, he would have been compelled to write more about him and his mission than the work of the venerable Mujadad. Moulana Azad's Tazkira is a work which had limited scope and it seems that Moulana Ali Mian, had a cursory glance over Tazkira while writing on Mahdaviat, as is clear from his reference to it. But what is written in Tazkira about the Mahdavis, could not inspire the learned scholar to study in detail the life of Hazrat Syed Mohammed Mahdi (A) and his mission and its impact on the revival of sunni sect in its true form, safe from the effects of Hindu paganism and fake sufism and its perversion and degeneration under the worldly wise opportunist and cruel ulema and Shaikhs. After all, what is sunnism, except the claim to

sincere adherence to the holy Quran and the Sunna (the traditions of the holy Prophet (A))? Then, is it not reasonable, considering the entire life and mission of the Imam (A) and its grand success and prolonged impact on Islam, to regard it as a very strong Sunni revivalist movement. Assume for a moment, that Hazrat Syed Mohammed, did not claim to be the promised Mahdi (as he did under the command of God) and did what he did in India and other places of Islamic world, then, could authors like Ali Mian, in spite of full realization of its impact, close their eyes to the enlightenment it caused? Accepting Hazrat Syed Mohammed (A) as the Promised Mahdi or not is a different matter but it is very unfair to ignore his services, tarnish his image and that of his followers and try to cause misunderstanding about their beliefs.

The following quotation from page no.55 of the book volume IV is a mis-statement of facts so glaring that it is most unbecoming of a scholar of the author's rank. He says strangely "in a condition of spiritual ecstasy (Sukr), or due to wrong assessment of spiritual hints he made definitely claims about himself many a time which it is difficult to interpret; which easily made his followers, (however laudable might be their initial zeal and however true and sincere their motives might have been) an anti sunni sect which based its beliefs on the said claims. Their successors and over-enthusiastic followers (as is the rule) further exaggerated; and in his veneration committed so many mistakes that they treated him equal to many prophets and more elevated than some of them. Some extremists and mistaken people treated him at par with or equal in rank to the Prophet (peace be on him) although they themselves believe that Syed Mohammed was a follower of the prophet and adhered to the Mohammedan faith; and some went to the extent of saying that if the book (Quran) and the traditions of the Prophet are not in accordance with his (Hazrat Syed Mohammed's) sayings and acts then the book and the traditions are un-reliable"!! (Can there be a worse distortion of Mahdavi faith?). "Similarly they committed mistake in believing that the Muslim who while awake or sleeping, with his eyes or in his heart does not see the Divine lights, he is not a Muslim." Cleavage widened between this sect and common Muslims with the passage of time, so much that the Mahdavis becoming a distinct sect, were cut off from the Sunni sect and all those objects failed for which this movement was launched and which probably were the objects of its founder. This statement about the beliefs of Mahdavis is made without reference to any Mahdavi author or any book written by any authentic writer. These most uncharitable, cruel and misleading remarks might have been the result of undue bias in the mind of the author and lack of proper study and care due to eagerness, from commercial point of view to complete the volume and make it ready for sale. With due respect to the author which he deserve for many good books on Islamic studies, one cannot avoid the impression after reading some of his works that the Moulana is commercially motivated, very often, in writing and publishing some of his books. Compare his simplistic biography of the holy Prophet (A) under the title "Nabi-e-Rahmat" with the works of Moulana Shibli Naumani, Moulana Sulaiman Nadvi and Abul Ala Maududi on the same venerable subject in order to appreciate this tendency on the part of Moulana Ali Mian. What he writes about Mahdaviat very briefly, in his otherwise reasonably good book shows how even a great scholar falters, when he does not pay proper attention to any subject, important or otherwise, if he is careless or biased or otherwise motivated at least for the time being. I hope the Moulana, in all fairness, would be careful in revising the relevant portions, after careful and unbiased study, in future editions of his work. In spite of his bias, certainly due to lack of proper study of the subject after wrongly giving the name of the father of the Imam as Yousuf, he admits at the commencement of his description of 'Mahdaviat' the impact of this movement in the following words:

"In the light of impartial historical study it can be said that during the course of two or three centuries, no religious movement or call, had so powerfully affected the Muslim society as this movement". After the study of what was written by favorable and unfavorable historians, we arrive at the following conclusions:

(1) Syed Mohammed Jaunpuri was among such highly gifted and spiritually strong men who are born after ages. From his youth itself, he was bold and brave and was dissatisfied with the circumstances prevailing around him in his period. He openly supported the cause of piety and truth (Amar-bil-maruf) and fought against the forces of evil (Nahi-an-il-munkar) and emphatically condemned everything contrary to Shariat. Due to this, in the same age he was given the title of 'Asad-ul-Ulema'. He was trained by Shaikh Danial. At this point in the footnote the Moulana laments that in books of biography and translation we do not find much about his life. After this the Moulana add "due to wrong guidance on spiritual matters during intense spiritual exercises in cave and mountains and also due to lack of proper guidance, some wrong hints might be given or understood by a person involved in such condition." Attributing such state of mind and spirit to the Imam (A) Moulana Ali Main mentions that during some journey, he claimed to be the Promised Mahdi and further admits that on several other occasions also he claimed to be so. Then Ali Mian proceeds by way of point no.

(2) Of his conclusions in the following words: "He was a great man of spiritual influence. Due to devotion, mystic exercises and inherent power and passion for the pious and truthful cause, his personality, his company and talk used to have magical effect on the audience; and due to these qualities it was possible not only for the common men but also for rulers to abandon everything including big estates and pomp, and by renouncing the world and by migrating from their native places to join him and to surrender themselves to him. This happened to Giasuddin Shah Khilji at Mandoh, the same thing happened to Mahmood Shah Guajarati at Chapanair. The very same (Phenomenon) was visible at Ahmednagar, Ahmedabad, Bidar and Gulbargah, multitudes after multitudes gave their hands into his and thousands joined in his caravan. In the territory of Sindh also where cities were shaken and it was difficult to control the people. At Khandahar also his lectures had tremendous effect and the ruler of Khandahar Shah Baig became his follower." (Does it not confirm what all is mentioned in the books written by Mahdavi biographers?). He further proceeds by way of point no.

(3) as follows on page 54.

"His life was the life of abandonment, retirement, piety and contentment and it was a life in which except God everything is renounced. During stay or journey, in his daira the same atmosphere used to prevail, prayers and remembering God (Yad-e-illahi) were visible. Food and everything was distributed equally among the members without any special preference and no concession was given even to the members of his household. In such atmosphere, no new comer could remain unmoved."

(4) "This movement created such selfless, audacious and self-denying preachers who could boldly perform the duty of expressing the truth even before Sultans and who in the path of truth and piety and in the denial of falsehood and everything wrong, faced extreme atrocities and laid down their lives happily for their cause. Men cannot remain unmoved after reading about them and they have to admit the efficacy of the company, training and inspiration of Syed Mohammed Jaunpuri." Then after briefly referring to Hazrat Shaikh Alai, he describes in brief the compulsory duties enjoined on Mahdavis, in the love of God, by Hazrat Mahdi. Can any impartial sunni scholar writing history of 'Dawat and Azeemat' deal with Hazrat Mahdi (A) so briefly, after fully realizing that his work and the sincerity and impact of his work can hardly be compared with any venerable persons selected as heroes in his books, (with due respect to the great personalities described in detail in Moulana Ali Mian's book). Can he in all fairness, tarnish the image of his followers by imputing total heresy of a gravity not to be found in the most perverted sects and sub-sect of Muslim i.e. "by alleging that according to some Mahdavi, if any thing found in Quran and Sunnat is found to be contrary to the acts of Hazrat Mahdi (A) and his

sayings then to that extent the Quran and Sunnat are unreliable.!! (This is what is written on page 55 last lines).

The Imam (A) was the greatest follower of the Quran and the Sunnat. He proclaimed that his religion is nothing but Quran and strict adherence of the Prophet (A). In fact this quality he showed as proof of his claim. How then, can the worst follower of any latter generation, however, totally misguided and misinformed, entertain the belief attributed by the learned Moulana, without reference to any book or name of the author. One may not accept the claim of the Imam (A) to be the promised Mehdi, after more than five hundred years, except through God's special grace as is the case of a non-Muslim to become a Muslim, fourteen hundred years after the Prophet (A) and accept him as the last and the greatest prophet (A) by simply reading biographies. But we expect that an eminent scholar and historian particularly when he belongs to the religion of Prophet Mohammed (A) have to be fair and impartial about the beliefs of others. In fact even if a Mahdavi asserts something which is contrary to the holy Quran and the Sunnat or traditions of the Prophet (A), such assertion cannot be attributed to the faith of Mahdavis. As regards Mian's claim that the Mahdavis due to their own acts became a distinct and different sect, I would like to remind him about his own book and in the very same chapter except what he mentioned wrongly about their beliefs. If sincerity of belief in the Quran and absolute adherence to the traditions of Prophet Mohammed is the cause for their isolation, and becoming a different sect or sub-sect of Sunni Muslims, in sectarian terminology, the Mahdavis are proud of such isolation. If their acceptance of Hazrat Syed Mohammed Jaunpuri as the promised Mahdi (A) is the reason for their isolation in spite of their adherence to the Quran and Sunnat, they are still proud. They shall never shirk from their duties and they shall never abandon Muslim society to become the tool in the hand of lustful rulers and Ulema and Mashaikhs contrary to the wishes of the Prophet (A) and Hazrat Mahdi (A). They had always been patient, broad-minded, and self-denying. Their present degeneration represents the general degeneration of the entire Muslim society of today. Now every sect or school of thought entertains only thoughts, good or bad, without any reference to any acts expected of true and faithful Muslims.

Syed Abu Zaffar Nadvi

(Professor: Maha Vidyala, Ahmedabad.)

Prof. Nadvi in his work, "Tazkira Allama Shaikh Taher Patni" states, while writing about one of the greatest enemies of Mahdavia movement Taher Patni, as follows:

"The writer had the opportunity of meeting Mahdavis at Dabhoi, Baroda, Gujarat, Hyderabad, Chenpattan, Mysore and Madras. They are peaceful people, forcefully asserting the claim of Hazrat Mahdi. In their beliefs and acts I found them following Hanafi school. They believe in the possibility of beholding god in this world (Deedar). They believe, with certainty, 27th of Ramazan to be Shab-e-khadr. On reading the biography of Hazrat Syed Mohammed Jaunpuri, and his teachings, I am of the opinion that he was the best man, most learned scholar and practical Sufi. His whole life was spent in obeying the commands of God and in following Prophet Mohammed (S). I Professor Zaffar has given the names of some eminent personalities who accepted Hazrat Syed Mohammed as the promised Mahdi (A) which include the names of Mian Syed Khundmir (R), Moulana Lad shah (RH), Moulana Yousuf Suhait (RH), Moulana Ahmed Shah Khaden, Moulana Hafiz Abuji, Moulana Salahuddin and others.

Akbar Shah Khan Najeebabadi:

The author of "Qaul-e-Huq" writes about Hazrat Mahdi (A) and his followers as follows:-

“In a period of darkness caused by ignorance, heresy, disbelief and meanness, Hazrat Syed Mohammed rose from Jaunpur to revive the Quran and Sunnat and to preach the same. Even his detractors write in detail that he himself was extremely and sincere in following the Quran and Hadis and the group of his followers had nothing else to follow. They propagated the rules of Quran and Sunnat from Jaunpur to Rajputana, Sindh, Gujarat and Deccan. What they preached and practiced persuaded eminent leaders, rulers and commanders to follow the Book and the Sunnat.”

The above quotations, which are translated, extracts of the works of eminent non-Mahdavi scholars reveal beyond all doubt that all the eminent scholars and divines unequivocally accept that he was a perfect saint of great learning, scholarship and status, having great spiritual powers and dynamism. No person doubted about his sincerity of purpose and purity and selflessness of his mission. No claimant to the title of the Promised Mahdi, in the long history of Islam, was revered so much by impartial history gaining political powers, wealth or fame and they were forgotten long back by the Islamic world and they do not have any following. Gulam Ahmed Qadiani cannot be regarded as the claimant to this unique title. He made varied contradictory claims including the claim to be a Prophet and also Messiah. He has no doubt substantial number of followers. Due to his beliefs and that of his followers, which are so grossly violative of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Prophet, that the sect founded by him is not recognized by majority of other Muslim sects to be in the pole of Islam. They are treated in Pakistan as a non-Muslim minority. Hence there can be no comparison between him and his followers with the followers of Hazrat Mahdi (A).

Hence Hazrat Syed Mohammed Jaunpuri (A), the Promised Mahdi holds a unique position among saints. The worst detractors also admit about his piety and sainthood. They do not accept him to be the Promised Mahdi (A) due to their own reasons. The recent scholars have to rely upon only the historical account and it is naturally difficult for them to confirm a person, however saintly he might be, to be the Promised Mahdi. This difficulty arises due to lack of faith in the traditions of the Prophet (A) about the Promised Mahdi (A) and their reluctance to accept the subtle references in the Holy Quran about the Great Imam (A) who had to appear after the prophet (A) to complete his spiritual mission. Psychologically, the belief that Prophet Mohammed (A) was the last Prophet and Islam became perfect through him, blurs their vision to see what is written about the Promised Mahdi (A) in the authentic books which preserve the traditions about the advent of Mahdi (A) and his position and status, effort has been cautiously made to efface gradually from the mind of Muslim world about the possibility and necessity of the advent of Mahdi (A). Under this misconception or prejudice or bias, they are reluctant to accept Hazrat Syed Mohammed as the promised Mahdi (A), in spite of their clear acceptance and admission that he was a great and dynamic saint who rekindled the torch of Islam through his mission. They fail to realize how a great saint, so selfless and dynamic having no political ambitions and no leanings to create a new sect or school of thought, totally devoted to the Quran and the traditions of Prophet Mohammed (A), could make a false claim. Instead of projecting the importance of the mission of the Imam (A) for the cause of Islam, unfortunately, they in various books, by various means tried to undermine it and tried to paint Mahdavis as a distinct and different sect by giving a distorted version of their beliefs. Unfortunately the Mahdavi writers also did not do justice to the personality and mission of the Imam (A) by not preserving the details of the glorious life of the Imam (A) and concentrated more on proving that he was the promised Mahdi (A). As the holy life of the Prophet Mohammed (A) is itself the proof of his being the last prophet (A) the glorious life and mission of the Imam (A) is the best proof of his claim to be the promised Mahdi (A). The quotations from non-Mahdavi writers are given in this chapter in order to present before the veneration obtained by the Imam (A) even from those who do not accept his claim and those who are his detractors. Quotations from other non-Mahdavi authors

who spoke very high about the Imam (A) are omitted for the sake of brevity; It is hoped that at-least some inspiration would be derived from the above quotations.

CHAPTER XII

THE AFTERMATH (Persecution of Mahdavis)

During the life time of Imam Mahdi (A) although many Mullahs, Mashaikhs and rulers left no stone unturned to harass him and his disciples, but no Mullah or Mufti could dare to issue Fatwa (judicial pronouncement on religious matters) either for his execution for his claim to be the Promised Mahdi or on any other ground; nor any hostile ruler could arrest him or take any action against him or his disciples. Although Jam Nanda, the ruler of Sindh made an attempt on his life and Mir Zunoon tried his sword but in vain. During his lifetime none of his disciples or followers suffered martyrdom or imprisonment. Considering the great perils which the Imam (A) had to face and the antagonism of many vested interests against him and the long period of his preaching mission in which he directly or indirectly condemned the existing perversions in Islamic society, and also in view of the fact that he migrated from place to place and often stayed for long periods in important cities where the power of the local rulers and the sway of perverted Ulema was so apparent, it is almost miraculous that he and his followers escaped severe persecution or punishment. His dominant personality, his spiritual power and the promised protection of Almighty was the real cause of his safety. But however, he had to face so many expulsions from various cities and territories that in extreme frustration he had to remark: “this land belongs to this king and that land belongs to that king; show me a piece of land belonging to God where His lovers can settle down in peace and worship him.”

After the Imam (A) passed away his eminent son Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) was accepted as his first caliph and he succeeded as the leader of the great mission. Remaining at Farah in Afghanistan for one year after the death of the Imam (A), all his disciples decided to return back to India in order to continue his mission of reforming Muslims and elevating their spiritual life. Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) was first to return back to Gujarat, on receiving a hint from the Imam (A) in his dream, then all the caliphs and disciples of Hazrat Mahdi (A) came down to Gujarat and at the desire of Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R), various daira (preaching centers) were established at various places in the kingdom of Gujarat. Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) established his camp (daira) at Bhillot six miles away from Radhanpur. Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) initially stayed at Pattan along with several disciples who opted to live with him. Hazrat Shah Nizam (R) along with several disciples settled down at Radhanpur. Similarly at the request of Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R), Hazrat Shah Niamat (R), Hazrat Illahdad (R), Shah Abdul Hameed (R), Mian Yousuf (R) and several others were asked to establish their respective dairas at various places. The policy of spreading the dairas over vast territories was adopted in order to effectively spread the message of Hazrat Mahdi (A) on a large scale. It proved very successful and within a short period lakhs of Muslims were attracted towards these centers of religious preaching and practice. Whoever came into contact with the said pious caliphs and disciples of Hazrat Mahdi (A), his entire life underwent great change. An aversion towards worldly desires, which are the cause of many evils, an extreme urge to lead a pure and pious life on principles laid down in the Holy Quran, as followers of Prophet Mohammed and Khalifatullah Imam Mahdi (peace be on them) became the common tendency of multitudes. Those were people who were so far under the sway of several worldly Wise, perverted and greedy, Mashaikhs, Mullahs, Khazi and Ulema of Gujarat. The Mahdavi movement hit at the root of their vested interest, in the same manner as the Islamic movement during the times of the Prophet (A) challenged the vested interests, and as a consequence they tried their best to crush all those who were the leaders of this dynamic force. The growing popularity of the disciples and caliphs of Hazrat Mahdi (A) in the kingdom of Gujarat and joining of many officers and soldiers in their folds was projected as a great threat to kingdom by their detractors.

Consequently a campaign of persecution was launched both by the Ulema and the rulers, the severity of which had no parallel in the history of Muslim rule in India. The Ulema gave several written complaints to the Sultan that due to the preaching of those pious men and their well organized and dynamic movement his authority was faced with grave threat and if these men of God and their ardent followers were not crushed in time, they would capture power and authority. At the public level they launched a campaign of vilification against those servants of God, inventing and propagating various invectives against them and issuing 'fatwas' for their murder.

As a result of the malicious petitions of the Ulema Sultan Mahmood Begda issued order of arrest again Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) and he was imprisoned for about one month with heavy iron chain tied around his legs which caused incurable ulcers. Mahmood Begda's sisters, who were the disciples of the Imam (A) intervened earnestly and got him released. But due to severity of imprisonment and the ulcers in his legs, after undergoing severe pain and agony he died as a martyr. Sultan Mahmood also had some soft corner for the Imam (A) but he became helpless under the pressure of powerful Mullahs.

After the death of Hazrat Syed Mahmood (R) the wrath of the Ulema and the rulers turned towards Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) who hailed from Gujarat and belonged to an influential and martial family as stated earlier; and who joining Hazrat Mahdi (A) became one of his most beloved caliph and son-in-law and a great advocate of his teachings. First the Ulema involved him in rancorous religious discourses, and then got orders of his expulsion from one place to another. According to Mahdavia annals he survived for twenty years after the death of Hazrat Mahdi (A) and during this period he was expelled twenty times from various places and territories, several of his followers were brutally killed and many suffered utmost cruelties at the hands of those Ulema who gave fatwas that to kill a Mahdavi would be a great act of religious service which would be more rewarding than killing a dangerous burglar. After the death of Sultan Mahmood the atrocities against the followers of the Imam (A) became more severe under his son Sultan Muzaffar. Many innocent and helpless Mahdavis were caught in the streets of towns and villages and their foreheads were stamped with red-hot iron. After suffering these atrocities for more than eighteen years, Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) decided to retaliate, seeking inspiration from Quranic verses about the duty of a Muslim, when faced with such a miserable situation. He cleverly obtained a fatwa from the very same Ulema who were directly responsible for those atrocities, that it was the duty of a Muslim to retaliate and kill such of those who shed the blood of innocent, pious and god-fearing Muslims then he himself gave a fatwa to the same effect and with great agility; planning and coverage he got killed some of the Ulema including Mullah Hameed and Mullah Anaruddin who were responsible for the murder of Mahdavis. He organized a small force of Mahdavis, who retaliated every act of brutality by appropriate vengeance. Mahdavis did not kill or harass a single innocent person and did not commit any act of treason against the state although the mobs instigated by Mullahs frequently burnt their houses and mosques. As a consequence of retaliatory measures many of the perverted Mullahs and so-called Ulema were so much terrified that they confined themselves in their houses and started praying for their lives. But they did not fail in their evil designs. They petitioned the ruler who sent a strong army under the command of Ain-ul-Mulk to crush Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) and his devout followers most of them were ill-equipped and ill-fed soldiers leading pious lives of preacher. The pomp and power, and the well trained and well equipped army of the King did not subdue their burning desire for martyrdom. In fact Hazrat Mahdi (A) predicted the glorious martyrdom of his beloved caliph long back and he lived mostly in the hope of this unique and supreme honor. Instead of retreat before a formidable force Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) and his followers decided to resist. A battle ensued at Khambel village in the year 930 Hijri in which on the first day after fighting with exceptional courage and valor, they defeated the royal army miraculously; Hundreds of soldiers and officers of the royal army were killed. Forty persons among the brave

followers of Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) who were posted at the Daira for protection of women and children were honored with martyrdom. He was severely injured as an arrow pierced into one of his eyes. After two days Ainul Mulk again gathered his formidable force and re-attacked the helpless and ill-equipped followers of Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) who by that time moved to Sudrasan a nearby village. In the second battle in which Hazrat Khundmir (R), who fought, with super human courage and valor in spite of his grave injury, was rewarded with the promised martyrdom after seeing his young son Syed Jalal (R) and his son-in-law and the most devoted followers being slaughtered by the enemy one after the other. In all about hundred Mahdavi divines perished in these battles. The enemy which was none else than the sunni Muslims, the follower of the faith of the Prophet (A), behaved in the manner of the most brutal Mongols and tartars against the most pious among their kith and kin. They mutilated the bodies of the martyrs; they beheaded the dead bodies, flayed their skin and chopped their bones. In fact Hazrat Mahdi (A), during his life time predicted about the martyrdom of Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) and stated that on the first day of the battle even if the armies of the entire world opposed him, they would be defeated; and in the second battle he would be adored with martyrdom, suffering great atrocities at the hands of the brutal enemy; his be flayed. The above mentioned sad events which occurred more than two decades after the Imam's (A) demise proved his prediction in all details and it is treated as one of the Hujjat (logic or proof) to prove the claim of Hazrat Mahdi (A). The details of these atrocities suffered by these martyrs in those battles and the situation in which Hazrat Khundmir (R) was placed need not be narrated in this book. Only a few painful facts are narrated in order to show the cruelties suffered by the Mahdavis of the early period. In Ahmedabad the beloved son of the Imam (A) Hazrat Syed Ali (R) was also imprisoned and buried alive.

Another caliph of Hazrat Mahdi (A) whose description is briefly given in earlier chapters, Hazrat Shah Niamat (R) was killed at Manuli village near the fort of Logadh in the year 935 H, along with sixteen of his follower. He did not adopt the policy of retaliation adopted by Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R). He was living at a distant place in his daira. His only offence was that he loudly pronounced the Tasbeeh which consists of proclamation of the basic tenets of Islam declaring that "God is one; Mohammed (peace be on him) is his Prophet, Quran and Mahdi (A) are our Imams." The antagonistic Muslim force living in the vicinity suddenly fell upon Hazrat Shah Niamat (R) and his sixteen followers, who were then sitting in their mosque absorbed in meditation and remembering God, and beheaded them. The tombs of these martyrs at Logadh are still the source of inspiration and objects of veneration to lakhs of Mahdavis and others.

In the later period Hazrat Shaikh Alai (RH) adopted Mahdavi faith after becoming the disciple of one Abdullah Khan Niazi (RH) who according to a tradition was the disciple of Shaikh Salim Chishti (RH). Abudllah Khan Niazi (RH) being inspired by Mahdavi movement started preaching its ideals and by establishing his headquarter at Biana, he started mobilizing people for the noble cause. He preached and practiced the strict principles of Shariat and adopted spiritual system and practices of Mahdavis. He became extremely popular due to his piety and spiritual prowess. He openly condemned the perverted Ulema who became sycophants of King Salim Shah Son of the famous Sher Shah. He formed a daira in which his devotees led a very simple and pious life and were very ardent in condemning the malpractices, immoral acts and anti-islamic customs adopted by the rulers and Mashaiqs under the baneful influence of local paganism and the desire to rob the illiterate and credulous masses. Shaikh Alai (RH) who belonged to a very influential family of Mashaiqs and who was a gifted theologian came under the influence of Abdullah Khan Niazi and adopted Mahdavi doctrines and became such an effective preacher of high Islamic values that the worldly-wise Ulema and the rulers saw a threat to their authority in his religious campaign. The perverted Ulema and the jealous Mullahs left no stone unturned to defame and demoralize them. But having failed in their attempts, they persuaded the Sultan to exterminate them.

First the leader Abdullah Khan Niazi (RH) was summoned to the camp of Salim Shah and as he found that the Mahdavi leader was straight forward and undaunted in expressing his faith and condemning the malpractices, and did not offer salutations to the Sultan in the prevailing customary manner, Mukhdoom-ul-Mulk, Mullah Abdullah Sultanpuri, instigated the King and got the venerable Khan so brutally whipped and beaten that the old man fell down breathless and unconscious. His followers carried him wrapped in a blanket and he survived. As reported by non Mahdavi sources this incident shattered his perseverance and after being expelled from the Kingdom, he led the life of a fugitive and disowned Mahdavi faith stating that his fate on the ghastly occasion was the reward of the company of the lovers of God. This incident took place, according to the author of Darbar-e-Akbari in the year 955 Hijra. The source of this information is “Darbar-e-Akbari” written by a biased Sunni historian. Such historians have also calimed falsely that even the Imam (A) disowned his claim. In fact Abdullah Khan Niazi never renounced Mahdavi faith. A man so dedicated and who could inspire persons like Shaikh Alai (RH) could hardly renounce his faith in any circumstances. His pupil Shaikh Alai (RH) proved to be more inexorable and continued his mission with exemplary zeal; thousands of Muslims adored him as their savior and hundreds of government officers, local leaders and soldiers became his followers. In order to avoid the atrocities of the Sultan he desired either to settle down in Deccan where Mahdavi movement already established its roots and the Mahdavis were in an influential position or to go on Hajj pilgrimage. But destiny willed otherwise, and he was arrested and brought before Salim Shah. He was undaunted in the presence of the King and exhibited such strength of character, courage, and firmness of faith which was reminiscent of the moral courage of Imam Ahmed Hambal (RH). His lecture before the Sultan and his discourse with the Mullahs of his darbar was so effective that for some time the Sultan and his courtiers were stunned. He refused to accept the food offered by the Sultan on the ground that it was sullied by wealth gathered through un-islamic and atrocious means. His outrageous behavior provided an opportunity to the defeated Mullahs to poison the mind of the Sultan against the Shaikh. But the Sultan by way of giving a last chance called Shaikh Alai near him and whispered in his ear that the Ulema had already given fatwa for his execution, he would forgive the Shaikh in case he renounced Mahdavi faith. But the Shaikh (RH) refused to comply with his demand and as a consequence, he was whipped to death and his body was dragged brutally in streets by tying it to the leg of an elephant. At that moment a terrible hurricane shook the camp of the Sultan. The tyrants left the body of the martyr in miserable condition but the multitudes gathered on the spot put so many flowers on it that it looked like a tomb of flowers. The dastardly murder of the pious Shaikh (RH) proved to be a cause for his detractors doom. Mullah Abdullah Makhdoomr-ul-Mulk who was the arch enemy of the Shaikh (RH) had to commit suicide and the treasures gathered by him and hidden shamelessly in the graves of his ancestors and relatives were confiscated by the government. The Kingdom of Salim Shah was destroyed within two years of the martyrdom of Shaikh Alai (RH).

After the martyrdom of Hazrat Syed Khundmir (R) for some time, due to the fighting spirit of the Mahdavis, their prestige in the worldly sense was enhanced in the minds of their enemies; and as their piety and service through their dairas, enhanced their popularity, they could enjoy peace for some time. But the threat of Akbar invasion of Gujarat became apparent and there was every likelihood of political commotion and strife. Hence many Mahdavis under the leadership of their Murshids or independently, shifted to Deccan. After the disintegration of Bahmani empire Sultan Nizam Shah established his kingdom. He was inspired by Mahdavi movement and became a Mahdavi. His daughter was married to one of the grand sons of Hazrat Mahdi (A). Many Mahdavis attained dairas of Mahdavis were set up in the Deccan plateau at various places which carried on the work of revival of true Islamic values and spiritual uplift. Mahdavis were given high positions in the armies of various southern States due to their exemplary, bravery and high character and devotion. They faithfully served their rulers and were held in high esteem by Muslims in general. But every where the cunning Mullahs and treacherous and

unfaithful officers conspired against them and managed either to persecute them or expel them from their new abodes. Afghan Mahdavis were employed in the army of Teepu Sultan and were faithfully serving him. But his Minister Mir Sadiq the notorious traitor, due to the conspiracy of some fanatical Mullahs, prevented Mahdavi soldiers from offering prayers on the 27th of Ramazan which is regarded as a sacred night by all sunni Muslims; and particularly the Mahdavis regard the night as Lailat-ul-Qadr with certainty. On this issue a riot was planned and more than a hundred brave and faithful Mahdavi Afghans were beheaded by procuring the orders for their execution from the Sultan, Moulana Syed Nusrat in his famous work 'Kuhl-ul-Jawahar' doubts about the authenticity of this mass execution of Mahadavis but he confirms that many Mahdavis were expelled from the kingdom of Teepu Sultan on the advice of Mir Sadiq, the traitor.

Subsequently many Mahdavis settled down in Asafia kingdom and enjoyed positions of honor in the army as well as administration. Here also common Sunni brotherhood was friendly towards them. But some Ulema and Mullahs who had North Indian origin were always conspiring against them. They indulged in writing offensive pamphlets and books against Hazrat Mahdi (A) and his disciples and always tried to mislead the Muslims by misrepresenting and mis-interpreting Mahdavia beliefs and doctrines which are in no way contrary to the holy Quran and the Hadis (traditions as preserved by sunni Imams). By these shameful acts they always tried to create a breach between Mahdavis and Sunni painting the Mahdavis as a distinct misguided and antagonistic sect. Their evil designs caused great hardship to the Mahdavis even in the Asafia Kingdom of Hyderabad. After the fall of Southern Sultanates, when Hyderabad became the centre or rather a symbol of Muslim rule in India with sufficient autonomy under the British Suzerainty, not only Mahdavis but Muslims belonging to all sects migrated in sufficient number to this State. A new Decanni brotherhood and citizenship developed and not only various Muslim groups and sects but also Hindus and Muslims lived peacefully for quite a long time under the secular rule of Asafia kings. Whichever kingdom Mahdavis chose as their abode, they served their rulers with fidelity and sincerity. Almost all historians, including their detractors admit their military prowess and martial qualities. Their religious heads continued their silent work of moral reform and spiritual upliftment through their dairas and were held in high esteem by all classes of Muslims. But some officers and moulvis who migrated to Hyderabad at a later stage always tried to sow seeds of discord either between Mahdavis and Sunni or between Shias and Sunnis in order to gain some influence taking advantage of sectarian rivalries. Moulvi Abdul Kareem was one of such Mullahs who in the heat of argument with a Mahdavi Jamadar Yaseen Khan about one Hadis which he was showing to the Moulvi from "Sahih Bukhari" threw the book on the floor of a mosque. This collection of tradition is revered by Mahdavis and Sunni as a sacred book. When Yaseen Khan became wild at the odd behavior of Moulvi Abdul Kareem he personally gave a slap on his cheek and with the help of his supporters brutally beat him in the mosque. Yaseen Khan's supporters came down from Chanchalguda in sufficient number to rescue Yaseen Khan or to protest against the Moulvi's insolence. Anticipating an attack Moulvi Abdul Kareem gathered some armed Arabs and Pathans. When the Mahdavis advanced towards his mosque, suddenly his supporters opened fire and several mahdavis were either killed or injured. In their fury the Mahdavis ambushed against their rivals, broke open the door of the mosque, killed the musketeers and slaughtered the Moulvi. This incident was merely a local riot. But in spite of the efforts of the government to contain the tension, some Ulema and Mullahs led by one Syed Noorul Awlia issued fatwas from the pulpit of Mecca Masjid for general massacre of all Mahdavis living at Hyderabad. Sectarian hatred assumed unforeseen dimensions and a mob of about one lakh persons in which detachments of local armies with their cannons also joined and attacked the village of Chanchalguda which was just near the main city. Mahdavis who were mostly in military service and who were living in that village also mobilized their forces. But they were hardly four or five thousand in number and were compelled to organize their defense. A grim battle ensued in which at the initial stage by a clever maneuver, the Mahdavi soldiers, occupied the cannon and suddenly started shelling

the Sunni forces. The consequence was utter confusion in Sunni rank and in spite of their large number they were bitterly defeated in the battle and suffered heavy casualties. The King, the army officers and the entire city was bewildered at this unexpected defeat and loss of life. Many Mahdavis were also killed and they were also shocked and horrified at the outcome of the unfortunate battle. The Asafia ruler Nawab Sikander Jah apprehending that the Mahdavis might attack the city as they were emboldened by their unexpected victory sought the help of the British contingent and besieged Chanchalguda. When the officers, on enquiry, were satisfied that the Mahdavis did not propose to revolt against the ruler and they fought the battle only in self-defense, the army did not attack the Mahdavis. But in order to appease the great majority of his Sunni subjects, the ruler was compelled to issue orders of expulsion of all Mahdavis from his state. In total obedience to the orders abandoning their homes and jagirs which they enjoyed for more than a century, all Mahdavis left the State and lived in exile for about six years without any grudge against the ruler and without committing any act of violence anywhere against their Sunni brothers. During this trying period of exile most of the Mahdavis settled down at Kurnool and other places braving many hardships. At Hyderabad the ruler and many kind-hearted Sunni officers and Raja Chandulal the then Prime Minister repented for the atrocities committed against the Mahdavis. The common Sunni also realized the unreasonableness of their sudden and furious reaction to a small riot and the bitterness gradually subsided, the houses abandoned by the Mahdavis were not looted or illegally occupied; on the contrary, they were safeguarded and restored to them when the expulsion orders were withdrawn. The learned author of "Kuhl-ul-Jawahar" Allamma Syed Nusrat (RH) gives an impartial and vivid account of this unfortunate battle and persecution of Mahdavis in his famous work which he wrote in reply to the book 'Hadye Mahdavia' written by another malicious Moulvi Zama Khan who was more antagonistic towards Mahdavis than Moulvi Abdul Karim. This Zama Khan also suffered the fate of Abdul Kareem and he also caused another persecution of Mahdavis, half century after the said unfortunate battle. He also came down from North India and tried in various ways to bring about a rift between Sunni and Mahdavis.

The above mentioned historical facts form part of a gloomy chapter of sectarian persecution in the Islamic history. The most surprising part of this gloomy chapter is the fact that Mahdavis almost always suffered atrocities at the hands of Sunni who are closer to them in all matters of fiqh, religious beliefs and spiritual heritage and practices. The Imam Mahdi (A) and his caliphs always proclaimed that their religious faith is strict adherence to the holy Quran and Sunna (tradition of the Prophet (A)). In fact Imam Mahdi (A) proclaimed that if he was found to be faltering or failing in strict adherence to the above fundamental principles, he should not be accepted as the Promised Mahdi, can any person belonging to the Sunni sect deny that he is bound by faith to follow the above principle. In fact Mahdavi movement directly and indirectly acted as a sunni revivalist movement but many of the biased sunni Ulema, Mullahs and Mashaikhs who were jealous of the popularity of Mahdavis among the sunnis and who saw in it the downfall of their vested interests, always tried to tarnish the Mahdavi upsurge and compelled it and branded it as a distinct sect. The Mahdavis still call them groh Mahdavia (Mahdavi group) and not Firqa-e-mahdavia which term is used by others for them. Such of those Sunni Ulema and Mashaikhs whose minds were unbiased and whose hearts were full of love towards pure Muslim brotherhood and whose souls had an inward urge to have the Divine Vision, either joined the Mahdavi movement or had a soft corner for it.

In spite of severe persecution of more than five hundred years, Mahdavis fortunately did not become a prejudiced, fanatical or a disheartened class. They have forgotten every injury or injustice and they always try to be more close to the sunni brand of Muslims and in spite of their comparatively small number, they could provide to the Muslim world, in the recent past, leaders like Bahadur yar Jung and teachers like Allamma Shamsi (RH) and Allamma Saadathullah Khan (RH) whose followers and pupils

belong to all classes and sects of Muslim community and who left indelible marks of service to the Muslim society.

In these days of general degeneration of Muslim world in moral, religious and spiritual spheres, is it not useful to derive inspiration from the life of the promised Mahdi (A) and is it not the duty of the Mahdavis to provide a living model of Islamic society as was established by Prophet Mohammed (S) and his venerable caliphs and the promised Mahdi (A) and his pious caliphs, the challenge is great; but nothing is impossible by the grace of God.

Please Note: -

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