

THE MAHDI THE PROMISED AND AWAITED LEADER

Muslims have always shown great interest with respect to the belief that someone referred to as 'The Mahdi' will emerge at some point in time. This has always made them very curious in knowing who will be the Mahdi, and when he will emerge.

While this curiosity and keen interest in this matter is justified, and Muslims need to have knowledge regarding this matter, some people, over the past years have capitalized on the naiveness of many Muslims, and have incited them to false and deviated teachings.

Muslims living at this time know very well that many people in the past have claimed to be 'the Mahdi'. However, it is very clear that they were all imposters and liars who deceived the Muslims. Hundreds of such claimants became manifest in different cities and at different times, however, none from among them proved to be the true Mahdi. Although they all had followers, they were liars who tried to misguide the Muslims.

Until today, the Ummah is still awaiting the arrival/ emergence of the Mahdi, which itself shows that the promised leader and saviour of the Muslim Ummah in the last days, has not emerged as yet.

At the present time, in the midst of the flames of war between the Israelis and the Palestinian Muslims, this claim has resurfaced again. Claims are being made by some Muslims that the Mahdi has emerged, and the believers should take the oath of allegiance from him. In different circles, some are preparing to receive and welcome the Mahdi with the firm belief that he is here in the world. Invitations are widely given for Muslims to join groups and unite together for the Mahdi. These and much more are taking place at present, with a number of Muslims accepting such teachings and claims, and with a greater number being confused about this entire matter.

With all that is taking place, the question to be asked is, 'Has the Mahdi truly emerged'. If he has emerged, who is the person who has made this claim? If no one has made this claim, then about whom is this claim being made?

In other words, who is that person who is being regarded and considered as the Mahdi? Does that person know that others are considering him as being the Mahdi? If he knows this, then has he responded to their claim by admitting that he is the Mahdi or has he rejected this claim?

These are questions that must, and should be answered, seeing that everyone who claimed to be 'the Mahdi' in the past, turned out to be a liar and imposter. It is essential upon every single

Muslim to protect his Imaan (faith), and also protect himself from falling prey to misguided and deviated teachings.

It is therefore essential upon Muslims to know about the Mahdi so that they would not accept a false person to be the righteous and guided leader, about whom the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) has spoken about.

In this regard, it must be clearly understood that the belief that the Mahdi will emerge in this Ummah, is one which is well-established in the teachings of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), and so, it is from the beliefs of Ahl Sunnah Wal Jamaah.

While speaking about this, the Messenger of Allah is reported to have said, ‘The Day of Judgement will not come until the earth is filled with oppression, tyranny and enmity. Then a person from my household (family) will emerge who will fill the earth with fairness and justice, just as it was filled with oppression and tyranny’. (Mustadrak Ala Sahihain – (Mustadrak Al Hakim) from Abu Sa’eed Al Khudri Hadith No. 8669; Ahmad Hadith No. 11313; Sunan Ibn Majah Hadith No. 6823. Hadith graded As Saheeh (sound).

In another tradition narrated by Abdullah bin Masood (R.A), the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W) said, ‘If there was only one day remaining of this world, then Allah will lengthen that day until he raises on that day a person from me (my progeny) or from my household (family). His name will correspond to my name, and his fathers’ name will correspond to my father’s name. He will fill the earth with fairness and justice, just as it was filled with oppression and tyranny. (Sunan Abu Dawood Hadith No. 4282; Tirmidhi Hadith No.2231. Hadith graded as good and sound (Hassan and Saheeh)).

In this manner, a number of other traditions have been narrated on this topic which are all graded as being good (Hasan) and sound (Saheeh).

The teaching established from these narrations is that during the last days before the end of the world, Allah will raise a person from the Prophet’s family (from the progeny of the Prophet ﷺ) and appoint him as a leader. His name will be Muhammad, and his fathers’ name shall be Abdullah. Through Allah’s help, he will remove oppression and tyranny from the earth, and will replace these with fairness and justice.

Another hadith clearly establishes that Allah will make him a leader over the Arabs and by extension, over all Muslims. The hadith narrated by Abdullah bin Masood (R.A) states that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, ‘The world will not come to an end until a man is made a ruler over the Arabs who will be from my household (family) and his name will coincide with my name’. (Sunan Abu

Dawood Hadith No. 4282; Tirmidhi Hadith No. 2230. Hadith graded as good (Hasan) and sound (Saheeh) by Imam At Tirmidhi).

While explaining the above hadith, the scholars have stated that a special mention has been made of the Arabs, in the statement, 'a ruler over the Arabs' since they are the origin and rulers. Allama At Teebi has stated, 'non-Arabs have not been mentioned in this tradition, however, they are also intended (that is, the Mahdi will be the ruler over the Arabs and non-Arabs). It is so because when he becomes the ruler over the Arabs and they all agree and unite as one, they will all have authority over all other people'.

Mulla Ali Al Qari has also stated, 'it is possible to say that the mention of the Arabs in the hadith is perhaps due to the fact that they will be dominant at the time of the Mahdi, or they may be the leaders (at that time), or the Prophet (ﷺ) considered it sufficient to mention only the Arabs, but he meant that the Mahdi will be the ruler over the Arabs and non-Arabs'. (Tuhfah Al Ahwazi Vol. 6 pages 485, 486 Qadeemi Kutub Karachi; Mirqaat Al Mafatih Vol. 10 Pg. 89 Faisal Publishers).

As mentioned by the great scholars of Islam, there are many Ahadith which have been narrated regarding the Mahdi and his emergence during the last days. Therefore, it is the truth, and a Muslim is required to believe in his emergence whether he lives to see his time or not.

In this regard, Allama Muhammad Abdur Rahman Mubarakpuri has stated, 'The statement of the emergence and coming of the Mahdi is the truth, and it is sound and correct. And Allah Knows best'. Qadhi Ash Shawkani has also written in his Al Fath Ar Rabbani, 'That which was possible to determine from the Ahadith mentioned about the awaited Mahdi is fifty hadith and twenty-eight Athaar (narrations)'.

He (Qadhi Ash Shawkani) then said, 'And all that we have mentioned have reached the level of Tawatur, just as it is not concealed from those who possess knowledge (awareness). (Tuhfa Al Ahwazi Vol. 6 page. 485 Qadeemi).

It is therefore essential upon all Muslims to believe in the emergence of the Mahdi, as mentioned in the books of Aqeedah.

Besides having the name of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), the awaited leader has also been given the title of 'Al Mahdi', as mentioned in several Ahadith.

In this regard, Saeed bin Al Musayyab narrates from Um Salma (R.A) who said, 'I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) saying, 'The Mahdi is from my progeny, from the children of Fatimah' (Sunan Abu Dawood, Hadith No. 4284).

In another hadith, Abu Saeed Al Khudri (R.A) stated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, 'The Mahdi is from me. He has a clear/ distinct forehead and prominent nose. He will fill the earth with fairness and justice as it has been filled with oppression and tyranny, and will rule for seven years'. (Sunan Abu Dawood Hadith No 4255).

These Ahadith, as well as others, clearly show that the name 'Al Mahdi', has been used for the awaited and promised leader of the Ummah.

The Time of the Mahdi

The aforementioned Ahadith explain that 'the Mahdi' will emerge at a time when the world will be filled with oppression, injustice and tyranny, and Allah will send him to restore peace and justice, so that people will live in, happiness, justice and goodness.

Ahadith further show that the Mahdi will be raised by Allah during the last days when the Muslims will be under severe hardships and sufferings. In this regard, Abu Saeed Al Khudri (R.A) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, 'Severe trials shall come to my Ummah at the end of time, from their rulers. No trial more severe than this was heard of (before). Until the earth will be straightened for them, and until the earth will be filled with injustice and oppression. A believer will find no refuge to rescue him from the oppression. At that time, Allah will send a man from my family who shall fill the earth with fairness and justice just as it was filled with injustice/ tyranny and oppression. The dwellers of the heaven and earth shall be pleased with him. The earth will not hoard up anything from its seeds/ produce, except it will take it out. And the heaven will not hold back anything from its rain, except Allah will pour it on the earth. He will live on the earth for seven, eight or nine years. Those who are alive would wish that those who have died before were alive at that time, (so that they may benefit from the goodness and blessings of that period of the Mahdi). (Mustadrak Hakim Hadith No. 8659 Graded as Sahih (Sound))

In another tradition of Abu Saeed Al Khudri, he narrates that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'The Mahdi will appear (emerge) in the last (part) of my Ummah. Allah will grant him rain and the earth shall bring forth its vegetation. He (the Mahdi) will distribute wealth appropriately and livestock will become plentiful. The Ummah will become great (again), and he (the Mahdi) will live (as a ruler) for seven or eight years' (Mustadrak Ala Sahihain Hadith No. 8716. Graded as Saheeh (sound)).

The above two narrations establish that the Mahdi will emerge in the last part of this Ummah at the end of time. At that time, the earth will witness such mischief, trials and tribulations, which it had never seen before. On account of this, it will be filled with tyranny, oppression, injustice and cruelty which will surround the believers from all directions. This will be wide spread, and the believers will suffer severe hardships and difficulties and will be so oppressed

that there will be no one to turn to, and no place from which they can gain protection and be rescued. They will become totally hopeless and will begin to think/ say that no Mahdi will come.

Regarding this, the great Suni scholar of Usool Ad Deen, Imam As Safarini (A.R) writes in his 'Lawami Al Anwar Al Bahiya, 'Nu'aim bin Hammad has cited from Abdullah bin Abbas (R.A) that he said, 'The Mahdi will be raised (by Allah) after a state of hopelessness until the people will say, 'There is no Mahdi'. (It means that the Muslims will be suffering so much at that time, that they will lose hope in the coming of the Mahdi. On account of this, they will ask, 'Will the Mahdi come?').

'The helpers of the Mahdi shall be from the people of Shaam (Syria) and their number (amount) will be three hundred and fifteen men, the same as the number of the companions at Badr. They shall travel towards him from Syria until they take him out from the valley of Makkah from a house at Safa. Then they will take the oath of allegiance from him, although he will dislike it. He will then perform two rakaats (of Salaah) with them at Maqam Ibraheem'.

Abu Hurairah (R.A) also narrated that the Bai'ah (oath) shall be taken from the Mahdi between the black stone and Maqam Ibraheem. He will not wake up any sleeping person, and shall not shed the blood of anyone. (Lawami Al Anwar Al Bahiya – As Safarini Vol. 2 page. 82)

Allama Safarini has mentioned from Nu'aim bin Hammad from Ali (R.A) who said, 'The place of birth of the Mahdi is Makkah from the household of the Prophet (S.A.W). His name shall be the name of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his place of migration will be Bait Al Maqdas. As for the place of his Bai'ah, this shall be done in Makkah between the Rukn (black stone) and the Maqam on the night of Ashoora (10th Muharram). (Lawami Al Anwar Vol. 2 page. 81).

Allama Safarini further writes, 'The traditions and narrations regarding the Mahdi are many, and the scholars have stated that at the beginning of his emergence, when he will be young (some narrations have mentioned that he will become manifest at the age of 40 years, and others have stated at the age between 30 and 40). He will be fearful for his life and will run away from Makkah secretly. He will then return to Makkah and the believers would see him at the Mataf (place of Tawaf) at the area of the Rukn (black stone). There, they will coerce him upon taking the Bai'ah upon leadership. Then he will turn (travel) to Madinah and with him will be the believers.' (Lawami Al Anwar Vol. 2 page. 82).

It is also evident from the Ahadith and narrations that the Mahdi will emerge during the last days prior to the end of the world. In fact, the Ahadith mention that the Mahdi will be at the time of Isa (A.S.) and will meet him.

Imam As Suyuti has mentioned in his book from Jabir bin Abdullah (R.A) that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, 'A group from my Ummah will continue to fight upon the truth until Isa bin Maryam (A.S.) descends at the Bait Al Maqdas during the time of Fajr Salah. He will come to the Mahdi, who will say to him, 'Go ahead, and lead us in Salah, O Prophet of Allah'. Isa (A.S) will say, 'In this Ummah, some of them are leaders over others'. (Al Haawi lil Fatawa Vol. 2 Pg. 78 Maktaba Rashidiya)

In another tradition, Jabir (R.A), states that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, 'Isa bin Maryam (A.S.) will descend, and the Muslim leader the Mahdi, will say, come, lead us in Salah'. Isa (A.S) will say, 'Indeed, some of you are leaders over others, and this is an honor from Allah to this Ummah'. (Al Haawi lil Fatawa Vol. 2 Pg. 61; Sahih Muslim Hadith No. 156).

In another tradition narrated by Abu Saeed Al Khudri (R.A), the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) clearly stated, 'There will emerge at the end of time and when Fitnahs become widespread, a man who is called 'Al Mahdi' whose giving will be blessed'. (Al Haawi lil Fatawa Vol. 2 Pg. 60).

The above traditions make it evident that the Mahdi will emerge and become manifest to people at the end of time, not before that. This is further supported by other authentic traditions which state that he will emerge around the same time when Isa (A.S.) will be sent by Allah. Both will meet and the Mahdi will lead him in Salah.

An important point to note is that Isa (A.S.) will be sent by Allah to fight the Dajjal, which will take place at the end of time. Therefore, when the Mahdi emerges (at any given time), it follows that Isa (A.S.) will also be present around that time or a short while after the Mahdi emerges. The Dajjal will also be present around that same time. Therefore, if a claim is made that the Mahdi has emerged, then one must look to see if the Dajjal is present in the world, which will indicate that the time for the descent of Isa (A.S.) is near.

The great Scholar and Commentator of Jami At Tirmidhi has written on this and stated, 'Know that what is famous among the general Muslims through the passage of time is that it is well-established that at the end of time, there will be the emergence of a person from the family of the Prophet (ﷺ) (Ahl Al Bait) who will strengthen this Deen. He will bring justice and the Muslims will follow him. He shall rule over the Muslim lands and will be named Al Mahdi. The appearance of the Dajjal and what is after that from the signs of the Hour that is evident from the authentic traditions, will come just after him. And that Isa (A.S) will descend after his emergence, who will kill the Dajjal or Isa (A.S) will descend with his emergence, and he (the Mahdi) will support him in killing the Dajjal, and he (Isa A.S) will be lead by the Mahdi in his Salaah'. (Tuhfa Al Ahwadhi vol. 6 pg. 474 Qadeemi Kutub Karachi)

From the traditions of the Prophet (ﷺ), it is established that both the Mahdi and Isa (A.S.) will perform Salah Al Fajr together along with other Muslims.

Thereafter, the Mahdi and his followers will join Isa (A.S.) to fight the Dajjal. The fight will continue until Isa (A.S.) kills the Dajjal. After this, both Isa (A.S.) and the Mahdi will establish justice, equality, peace and goodness on the earth, and will spread Islam through the different lands. This will continue until the Mahdi completes his time, and dies a natural death.

Another important point for Muslims to note, is that based on traditions and the explanations given by scholars of Islam, the information regarding who the Mahdi will be, and when he will emerge, will be kept concealed from the people and from the Mahdi himself, until that time when Allah officially honors him with that rank and ability to be the leader. This means that the person who will be chosen as the Mahdi, will be unaware of this honor prior to being chosen by Allah. This is similar to that of a prophet who remained totally unaware of his prophethood prior to his appointment by Allah.

Regarding this appointment of being the Mahdi, the Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'The Mahdi will be from us, the Ahl Bait (household of the Prophet ﷺ). Allah will grant him the ability and make him suitable for this honor/ position in one night (overnight). (Sunan Ibn Majah Hadith No.4085 from Ali (R.A).Musanaaf Ibn Abi Shaiba.Hadith graded as Saheeh by Shaikh Ahmad Shakir.) (Al Haawil lil Fatawa Vol. 2page., 55)

While explaining the above hadith in which the Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'Allah will grant him the ability in one night, 'Mulla Ali Qari writes, 'Allah will make his affair good and raise his rank/ status in one night, or in one period of the night, where those who have power and authority will be unanimous upon his leadership (Khilafah)' (Mirqaat Al Mafatih vol.10 Pg.90 Faisal Publishers New Delhi)

Hafiz Ibn Katheer has also explained the above statement of the Prophet (S.A. S) and said 'Allah will bless him and grant him ability. He will inspire him and guide him, after he was not like that (and was not aware of this position)'. (Hashiya As Sindhi, Sunnan Ibn Majah Vol. 2 Pg. 1045 Al Bushra Karachi 2018. An Nihayah Fil Fitah Wal Malahim).

The great Scholar, Shaikh Abdul Ghani Dehlawi writes in his commentary of Ibn Majah on the statement of the Hadith, 'Allah will grant him the ability and the capability in one night', (he says), it means, 'Allah will grant him the ability to rule and to be the Kalifah (leader) suddenly in one night'. (Hashiya Fakhr Al Hasan Gangohi, Sunnan Ibn Majah Vol. 2 Pg. 1045 Al Bushra Karachi 2018).

From this hadith and its explanation given by the Scholars of Hadith, it becomes clear that the Mahdi will not be known, nor will his qualities of leadership and rule come to light until he is officially appointed by Allah.

He would have no prior knowledge of his appointment as the Mahdi before its occurrence, and so too, no one from his family, friends and the Muslims will have knowledge of this before this rank/ honor is given to him. As mentioned in the tradition of Ali (R.A), his appointment as the Mahdi, will occur overnight (in one night), where he will be granted the divine ability and inspiration from Allah, and will then become aware that Allah has made him the Mahdi. Before this, the knowledge was kept hidden from him and everyone, and so, no one before this time could recognize that he will be the Mahdi.

This same point has been mentioned by other scholars in their books. In this respect, the reputable scholar of Fiqh and Hadith, Shaikh Mufti Mahmood (DB) writes in his book, 'Based on the study of the traditions, it is seen/understood that the emergence of the Mahdi has been kept concealed until a fixed time. When the time reaches for his emergence from Allah, then suddenly, it will be made manifest to the people.

It is to be noted that until his emergence, the Mahdi will not be aware of his rank. This is evident from the narration of Ali (R.A) in which he states that the Prophet (S.A.W) said, 'The Mahdi is from us, the Ahl Al Bait, Allah will grant him the ability in one night'. (Sunan Ibn Majah).

"In the commentary of this hadith, Shaikh Abdul Ghani Dehlawi (A.R) writes, 'Allah will bless him with the ability to rule and become the leader suddenly in one night'. (Al Anjah Ala Hamish Ibn Majah).

'Allama Ibn Katheer (A.R) has stated in the commentary of this hadith, 'Allah will bless him, inspire him, and grant him divine ability and inspire him. He will guide him. (to this rank) after he was not like that' (Nihayah fil Fitan Wal Malahim Vol. page. 31).

Mufti Mahood further writes, 'The abilities and good qualities of the Mahdi will be kept concealed and hidden until his emergence. On account of this, before the time of his emergence, no one will be able to recognize (know) him as the Mahdi. When the fixed time of his emergence arrives, then in one night, Allah, through His complete power, will create in him all the abilities for leadership/rule. Due to this, his rank as the Mahdi will become so clear and apparent that even a simple person will easily recognize his status as the Mahdi'. (Dhuhur Mahdi – Kab, Kahanaur Kis Tarah pgs. 109,110 Noorani Makatib, Idara As Sideeq Dabhel, Gujrat).

The great scholar of the Indopak continent, Shaikh Maulana Badr Alam Meerathi, Muhajr Madani (A.R) has also written on the above matter and stated, 'The above hadith clarifies a great

concern. It is that some people of weak Imaan (faith) may want to ask the question, that when this great person who is known as the Mahdi is so well-established and famous, then how can knowing and recognizing him be concealed and hidden from the people. Especially, when it is seen and known that at the time of severe trials and difficulties, Muslims will naturally wait and look out for the Mahdi. However, the words of the hadith which states, 'Allah will grant him the ability (to be the Mahdi) in one night, clarified this concern and made it clear that though these qualities and abilities may be found in this person, his internal disposition and spirituality which are all under the complete will and decree of Allah, will remain concealed.'

'When the time reaches for his emergence, then in one night, all his internal specialities and features will be seen openly and publicly, as if it is a manifestation of Allah's power that before the time of his (actual) emergence/appearance (as the Mahdi), no one will be able to recognize/know him. When the time arrives, then through the power of Allah, all his abilities and capabilities to be the Mahdi will be known even to a blind man'.

The great scholar then sent a very important message at the end and said, 'The coming of the Dajjal is well established through the sound and authentic Ahadith, but this is a matter which is concealed/hidden from everyone (as to who is the Dajjal). When it is known that this matter will appear at a time of great trials and mischief, then to demand information regarding when the Mahdi will emerge and when the Dajjal will appear, is itself a Fitnah (mischief) of its own. (Tarjaman As Sunnah Vol. 4 pages. 404,405 – Dhuhur Mahdi pages. 110,111).

The Prophet (ﷺ) also mentioned about the place of origin and emergence of the Mahdi. About this, Um Salmah (R.A.), the blessed wife of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) states that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, 'There will be discord when a Khaleefah (ruler) dies. A man from the people of Madinah will come out and flee to Makkah, and the people of Makkah will come to him. They will take him out (from his home), but he will dislike it. They will then take the Bai'ah (pledge allegiance) from him between the Rukn (i.e the Black Stone) and the Maqam (the station of Ibraheem A.S). An army will be sent to (attack) him from Shaam (Syria), but they will be swallowed up (in the earth) at the place of Al Baidaa, which is between Makkah and Madinah. When the people will see that (i.e. honor given to the Mahdi), the Abdaal of Shaam (Syria) will come to him, and the best people of Iraq will come, and they will all pledge allegiance to him. Then a man from the Quraish will appear, whose uncles are from Kalb. He will send an army to them, but they (those who pledge allegiance) will gain victory over them'.

'Wealth will be distributed and he (the Mahdi) will establish the Sunnah of their Prophet (S.A) among the people. He will spread Islam to its neighbors on the earth. He will remain for seven years, after which he will die and the Muslims will perform Salaah over him'. (Sunan Abu Dawood Hadith No. 4286 Hadith Graded as Good (Hasan).

While explaining this hadith, the great scholar, Mulla Ali Qari 'writes in his famous commentary, Al Mirqaat, 'Differences will take place among the people of authority, at the time of a Muslim ruler. A man will come out from the City of Madeenah and flee to Makkah for safety, for fear of being delegated with the position of leadership or fear of Fitnah'.

'Allamah At Teebi writes, 'this man will be the Mahdi, since Imam Abu Dawood has narrated this hadith under the chapter of 'The Mahdi'.

'After his affair becomes known, the people of Makkah will come to him and take him from his house, but he will dislike it, since he will have no intention of being the leader or will dislike it due to the fear of Fitnah. The people will then take the pledge of allegiance from him while he will be between the Black stone and the Maqam of Ibraheem (A. S.)'.

'When the army from Sham (Syria) will attack him, they will be swallowed in the earth at Al Bada'i. Upon this, the people will recognize him as the leader, and the Abdaal of Sham (Syria) will come to him'.

'In An Nihayah, it is mentioned that the 'Abdaal' of Syria will be the Awliya, the pious and righteous servants of Allah. The singular (of Abdaal) is 'Badal'. They are named with the name 'Abdaal' because when one dies from among them, he is replaced by another' (Badal is an Arabic word which means 'to replace'.)

'After his emergence, the Mahdi will remain for a period of seven years on the earth and will then pass away'. (Mirqaat Al Mafatih Vol. 10 Pgs 92-94 Faisal Publishers New Delhi).

Another sign of the emergence of the Mahdi is mentioned in the tradition of the Musannaf of Abdur Razzaq. The tradition is from Ali bin Abdullah bin Abbas who said, 'The Mahdi will not emerge until a sign rises with the sun (Musannaf Abdur Razzaq Hadith No. 20775). The great Scholar, Mufti Nizamuddeen Shamzi has recorded this hadith in his book and said, 'This hadith is sound (Sahih) and all the narrators are reliable (Aqeedah Dhuhur Mahdi Pg. 53 Idara Dawat Islam Karachi 1992).

It is also narrated from Thawban (R.A.) that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, 'When you see blackflags coming from Khurasan, then go there, for among them is the Khalifah of Allah, the Mahdi' (Ahmad Hadith No. 22746; Baihaqi in Dalaa'il An Nabuwah; Hakim in Al Mustadrak). While explaining this narration, Mulla Ali Qaari writes 'It is possible that 'black flags' is figurative of the great number of Muslim armies from Khurasan. (Mirqaat Al Mafatih Vol. 10 Pg. 100 Ibid.).

Another tradition from Thawban (R.A.) states that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, 'Three people will fight over your treasure. (referring to the treasure of the Kaaba – Ibn Katheer).

‘All of them will be a son of a Khalifah. The treasure will not be achieved by any one of them. Then the black flags will appear from the east. They will fight you in such a manner that no people has fought you before’.

Thawbaan (R.A.) narrated, ‘Then he mentioned something which I cannot remember’. The Prophet (ﷺ) then said, ‘When you see him (the Mahdi) then take the oath of allegiance from him, even if you have to crawl on ice. For certainly, he is the Khalifah of Allah, the Mahdi’. (Ibn Majah Hadith No. ____?; Hakim who said it is a sound (authentic) hadith which is in accordance to the conditions laid by Imam Bukhari and Muslim).

Many Scholars have stated that regarding the Mahdi, there are some narrations that have been mentioned in some books upon which reliance cannot be placed.

From these, is the tradition of Abdullah bin Umar (R.A.) which states, ‘The Mahdi will emerge and over his head will be a cloud. In it, there will be an announcer who will announce, ‘This is the Mahdi, the Khalifah of Allah’. (Bihar Al Anwaar by Majlisi)

Another tradition mentioned by Ibn Umar is that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, ‘The Mahdi will emerge and over his head will be an angel who will announce, ‘This is the Mahdi, follow him (Ibid)

Regarding the above two traditions, the Scholars of the Science of Hadith have stated that in these narrations there is the narrator Abdul Wahab bin Dhahak, against whom the expert Scholars of Hadith have written. About him, it is stated that the Scholars are unanimous upon his weakness. Abu Dawood has said about him, ‘He fabricates Hadith’. Al Hakim has said, ‘He narrates fabricated Ahadith’. (Al Kamil fi Dhu’afa Ar Rijal Vol. 6 Pg. 515 according to the Tahqeeq done by Sheikh Adil Ahmad and Sheikh Ali Muhammad. Dar Al Kutub Al Ilmiya Beirut 1997).

The great expert Scholar of Hadith, Hafiz Ibn Hajar Al Asqalani has also written about the narrator Abdul Wahab bin Dhahak and said, ‘Abdul Wahab bin Dhahak bin Alsan Al Urdhi is ‘Matrook’ (abandoned/ renounced). Abu Hatim has considered him a liar’. (Taqreeb At Tahzeeb Vol. 1 Pg. 626 Qadeemi Karachi). On account of these statements, Scholars of Hadith have not relied upon the above narrations.

The great Scholar of Hadith Imam Al Hafiz Abu Muhammad Abdur Rahman bin Abu Hatim Ar Razi writes, ‘Abdul Wahab bin Dhahak As Salmi was the storyteller of the people of Sulaimah. The Scholars said, ‘he used to lie’.

Ar Razi also narrated from other great Scholars of Hadith that he, Abdul Wahab bin Dhahak used to narrate many fabricated Ahadith’. (Al Jarh Wat Ta’deel Vol. 6 Pg).

A narration is also cited by some which states, 'There will be differences until a hand will appear in the sky and an announcer will announce certainly your leader is so and so'. Some have stated, the announcement will be, 'Behold the truth is with the family of Muhammad' (Al Malahim Wal Fitan, Syed Ibn Tawoos Vol. 1 Pg. 13 (Shiite author)).

These and other similar narrations are written in books, many of which represent the beliefs of the Shias regarding the Mahdi, and are relied upon by Shia Scholars and authors.

The traditions quoted at the beginning clearly establish that the Mahdi will emerge at a time decreed by Allah. This time is known only to Allah, no and one possesses this knowledge, since it is a matter of the unseen and future because it has not occurred as yet.

There are certainly a number of signs around us and in the world which do not only indicate to the times of the Dajjal and the Mahdi, but they also indicate to the end of time.

While these signs are witnessed through the world by Muslims, these cannot be considered as definite signs that give 'Ilm Al Yaqeen' (knowledge of certainty) which tell us that this is definitely the time of the Mahdi and he will emerge at this time. This knowledge is known only to Allah, and no man, angel or Jinn possesses this knowledge.