THE MAHDWIYA ORDER AND ITS SAINTS

As such, it is the common belief among the Muslims that the twelfth Imam Muhammad Mahdi who disappeared while an infant and who is still alive though unrecognised by the people, would appear at some time. He will appear just before the Day of Resurrection. He will guide people to the right path and make infidels embrace Islam. He will rule for seven years. He will restore the sinking faith to its pristine freshness and fill the earth with equity and justice.

So many people pretended to be such a Mahdi. Any extra-ordinary event like a social or political upheaval brought forth a Mahdi and heralded the approach of the Day of Resurrection. But the question whether the Mahdi has or has not yet appeared forms the great distinction between the Mahdawi Sect and other Muslims in India, the former holding that he

1. It is based on one of the traditions of the Prophet.
became manifest and discharged his sacred office at the end of the ninth century after the Hijra (A.D. 1495).

In India a man in Delhi named Rukn-ud-Din claimed to be the Mahdi during the reign of Firozshah Tughlaq (A.D. 1351-1387). But a new chapter in the history of the Mahdawi Sect opened with Mir Sayyad Muhammad who was born in A.H. 847 (A.D. 1443) at Jawnpur whose material prosperity and intellectual brilliance were on the wane at the time. His father Sayyad Abdullah popularly known as Sayyad Khan was a man of piety and was the disciple of Shaikh Danyal Chishti.

The Mahdi movement assumed in India a definite form through his teaching. He declared that the fall of Jawnpur was a sign of the coming of the last days and he claimed to have heard a heavenly voice

1. Muhammad Qasim Firigha– Tariikh-i-Firigha(MS).
2. Myan Sayyad Yusuf- Matla-ul-Wilayat (MS); Muhammad Sulaiman- Rud-i-Kauthar, p.15; Muhammad Maulana Najmu-l-Ghafl- Mazahib-ul-Mazahib, Sayyad Ghulam Myan- Tariikh-i-Palangpur, p.65; p.749; Shah Abdur-Rahman- Sirat-i-Imam Mahdi, p.10; 
Contd.: 455.
whispering to him "Anta Mahdi" (Thou Art Mahdi).

Most of the earlier Mahdis had been associated with some political or economical movement but Sayyad Muhammad was a solitary example of a Mahdi who did not aspire to found a kingdom but confined himself to the restoration of the pristine purity of Islam. Miraculous events accompanying his birth are found recorded in books. He had great natural qualities and prodigious memory. He committed to heart the whole of the Qur'an at the early age of seven and received the much honoured title of Asad-ul-Ulam from his father's spiritual guide Shaikh Danyal Chishti at the age of twelve. He then became his disciple. Shaikh Danyal began to envy him his fluent exposition.

Sayyad Muhammad left Jawnpur for Mecca when he was forty years old. He had with him seventeen companions. Wherever he went, his learning and piety...
attracted towards him a large number of disciples.

He was fifty two years old when he proclaimed himself as the Mahdi before a large gathering in the holy city. Thereafter, when he returned to Gujarat, his claim to be the promised Mahdi received wide-spread publicity. As a result, in Ahmadabad, he had a conflict with learned religious men. People flocked to put a stop to the diffusion of the Mahdawi doctrines failed.

Sayyad Muhammad then went to the extent of declaring that men would be made by him to see the Lord of the world with physical eyes. His opponents became all the more excited to hear this. They met together and passed unanimously a "fatwa" for his execution. In A.H. 905 (A.D. 1499) Sayyad Muhammad left Ahmadabad and went to a village called Barli about three kos from Anhilwad Pattan. There he reiterated his claim to be the Mahdi.

There also the Ulama succeeded in getting a "fatwa".

1. Miyan Sayyad Yusuf- Mota-ul-Wilayat (MG);
   Muhammad Sulaiman- Tariikh-i-Sulaimani (MS);
   Sayyad Wali Sahib Sikandarabadi- Swaneh Mahdi Mooid, p.28-29;
   Maulana Muhammad Najm-ul-Ghani-Mazahib-ul-Madahib, p.752;
During the nine years of travel, he was able to convince Sultan Mahmud Begada (A.H. 863-917/ A.D. 1458-1511) of Gujarat, Ahmad Nizamshah Bahri of Ahmadnagar, Zubdat-ul-Mulk of Jalore, Shahn Beg Arghun of Qandhar, Mir Zunnun of Farah in Khurasan, Shaikh 'Abdallah Ni'azi of Biana, Shaikh Itahi of Bihar and even some of the Ulama, of the validity of his claims. His claim received enthusiastic response from numerous converts, royal and plebian alike.

He died in A.H. 911 (A.D. 1504) in Farah in Khurasan and his tomb may be seen there to this day.

The principal doctrines of the Mahdawiya Order are: Tark-i-Duniya (i.e. the renunciation of the world), Subbat-i-Sadiqin (i.e. the company of the truthful), Uzlat-az-khalq (i.e. the seclusion from the mankind); Tawakkul (i.e. the resignation to the Divine Will);

1. Maulana Sayyad Wali Saheb Sikandarabadi- Tarikh-i Sawaneh Mahdi Moud, p.32; Shah Abd-ur-Rahman- Sirat-i-Imam Mahdi, p.110;

2. Muhammad Sulaiman- Tarikh-i-Sulaimani (MS); Sayyad Qutb-ud-Din- Sharah-agida-i-Khundmir, p.33; Maulana Sayyad Walisaheb-Tarikh-i-Sawaneh Mahdi Moud, p.89.
Talab-i-Dīdār-i-Haq (i.e. the quest of the vision of God); Ushr (i.e. the distribution of one tenth part of the income) and Ḥikr-i-Kathir (copious Dhikr).
Sayyad Rājū, the martyr was born in A.H.1-08 (A.D.1601) at Jhalore. His father Ghūyāth-ud-Dīn who was known as Gāchū died when he (i.e. Rājū) was a mere child of three years of age. His mother Ummatullāh Būṣījī who was addressed in the household as Bādībū was the daughter of Mīyān Sayyad Mīrān. She lived a life of piety.

After the death of Sayyad Rājū's father, Mīyān Sayyad Mīrān left Jhalore with his family for Pālanpūr and settled there. He brought up Sayyad Rājū with immense care and endeavoured to the best of his resources in giving him proper education. Then the latter became the disciple of Sayyad Ashraf, the local saint who was very well-known. When he was found to be

1. It is situated in Rajasthan.
2. Malik Sulaimān-Khātīm Sulaimanī (KS)
3. In India, the elder sister is addressed as Bādī Bu by the Hindi-speaking people.
up to the standard in his ways of saintlihood, his
preceptor declared that he was capable enough to
work adequately in the cause of the propagation of
the Mahdawiya sect. Thereafter, he and his brother,
Sayyad Ibrahim left Palanpur with their families and
some followers from Unjhā (North Gujarat) with the
mission of the propagation of their sect. But after
some time his brother parted with him and went to
Cambay. In those days Nizāmkhān, the Jāĝūrdār of
Kherālū, who happened to visit Unjhā for his own work,
paid homage to him. Having been impressed with his
talk he successfully persuaded him to go with him to
Kherālū where he halted for some time. Meanwhile,
Nizāmkhān died. After passing some time in moving
from place to place, he settled at Palanpur in
response to the invitation of Mujāhid Khān, the Diwān
of Pālānpūr who was the follower of the Mahdawi sect.

1. A village near Vismager.
He established the Dārā of his community and preached the sect.

In the reign of Shahjehan, when the prince Aurangzeb was the viceroy of Gujarat, some of his counsellors inclusive of Ulamās like Abdul-Qawāl and Qāzī Abdul-Wahāb informed him that there were certain people in Gujarat who believed that the promised Mahdī had come and gone and that it was Sayyad Muḥammad Nur Baksh. On hearing this, Aurangzeb issued an order to produce some of his followers before him. When such people were presented before him, in reply to his questions, they said, "We are illiterate and have no much knowledge about the sect, but our saint who lives in Pālanpur, will acquaint you well with the details required." Then Aurangzeb ordered Askār Fozdār of Siddhpūr to present Mahdawi Sayyad of Pālanpur.

1. He was one of the early teachers of Aurangzeb. He was a very bigoted and rigorous censor. He was appointed to try Sarmad for heresy in 1660-61—Nawab Shams-ud-Daulâ Naṣīr-ud-ul-umrâ, p. 583, J

2. He originally belonged to Anhilwad Pattan. He rose later on in A.D. 1658 to the post of the Chief Qāzī of the Empire—Nawab Shams-ud-Daulâ Naṣīr-ud-ul-umrâ, p. 584, J
Accordingly Sayyad Daud, Sayyad Mirān, Sayyad Muḥammad and other followers led by Sayyad Rājū were sent to Ahmadābād. Aurangzeb asked them to declare their views about the promised Mahdī. "He has come and gone", said Rājū; "and according to him we do offer clandestine prayers and do not make any invocation after the prayers". Aurangzeb then turned to the Ulamās who spoke, "There have been many anti-Christ who pretended to be Mahdī but in the end they were slain by the champions of the Faith. The promised Mahdī will come towards the end of the world as is found in the traditions of the Prophet. None is prepared to believe that Sayyad Muḥammad Nūr Bakhsh is the Promised Mahdī." Then exclaimed Rājū, "Our sword will prove it". Prince Aurangzeb dispersed all from there. But Sayyad Rājū and his followers assembled outside the city at Rustombārī at Shāhībag and decided to prove their cause. After

1. Myān Sayyad Fakhlullāh- Intikhāb-ul-Mawālid (MS)
some time Sardar Shāhbeg, a noble made an assault on them with a small troop. The Mahdawīs fought valiantly and struck to their place. So Sardar Shāhbeg sought the help of the Prince who ordered to demolish their tents. A soldier named Ismaīl put an end to Rājū's life with his sword. This happened on Rabi’-uṣ-Ḥamdānī, 25, A.H. 1056 (A.D. 1649) and was buried at the same place, i.e. Rustombarī, a locality in Ahmadābād. The saint wrote in Persian a book entitled Shifā-ul-Mīmāmnīn containing exhaustive explanation of the beliefs and rudiments of the Mahdawīya sect.

1. Myān Gulābīhāi- Tarikh-i-Pālānqūr, p.170; Sayyad Qutb-ud-Dīn-‘Ursnāma, p.77; Myan Sayyad Faḍhullāh- Intikhāb-ul-Mawālīd (MS); Myan Malik Sulaiman- Khatim-Sulaimānī (MS).
SHAH 'ABDUL MAJID NURNOSHI (MAHDAWI)

Shah 'Abdul-Majid, better known as Nurnooshi, was born in Delhi. He was the son of Shah Sadu-l-lah who descended from Shaikh Farid Shakar Ganj. His great grand-father originally belonged to Arabia. He migrated to India and settled in Delhi from where Shah 'Abdul-Majid, during the reign of Sultan Mahmud Begada (A.H. 863-917/A.D. 1458-1511) proceeded to Ahmadabād and chose his abode at the locality known as Shaikhpūra on the bank of the Sabarmati. 

Shah 'Abdul-Majid and his brothers met Sayyad Muhammad Mahdi Jawnpuri who had been to Ahmadabād and lived there for eighteen months in the mosque known as Tājkhan Sālār in Jamālpūr. All the brothers were highly impressed with his spiritual knowledge and embraced his sect. Having found Shah Abdul Majid to be very sincere in his duties, he bestowed upon him the khīfāb of Haqqāmi.

1. Vide, p. 49
The mullās of Ahmadābād poisoned the mind of Sultan Muzaffar Shāh against Shāh ‘Abdul-Majīd. On being presented in the court Shāh ‘Abdul-Majīd declared that Sayyad Muḥammad, his preceptor was the Mahdí and the Khātim-ul-Awliya (the last of the saints). He further added that he would refuse to believe that he was an infidel. All those who were present hearing the statement considered him to be insane. The Sultan issued an order to pelt stones to him to death and as a result he had his end on Muharram 18, 918 (A. D. 1513). He was buried in Nempūr, a locality in Ahmadābād.

His son, ‘Abdul Karīm (birth A. H. 910/A. D. 1505) established his Dāirs at Dholqā and Mehsānā. He was also murdered on the same ground of propagating the Mahdī sect when he was eighty years old. His tomb lies by the side of that of his father.

1. It is outside the Astodia Gate.
2. Malik Sulaimān- Khātim-Sulaimāni (MS);
   Myan Faḍhullāh Intikhab-ul-Mawālid (MS).
AHMADSHAH QADAN

Ahmad was born at Qadanpur, a locality in Ahmadabad. His father Shah Qadan was a learned man of his time and he himself imparted education to him.

He happened to meet Sayyad Muhammad Jawnpuri in Ahmadabad. They had a talk on religious and spiritual subjects. Sultan Ahmadshah was impressed by his learning and knowledge and became his disciple.

He died in Qadanpur and was buried there.

The saint preached the Mahdawiya sect in Ahmadabad as well as villages nearby.

1. Situated outside the Jamalpur Ward. It had its name after the father of the saint - Mawlana Sayyad Wali Sahib - Sawaneh Umri Mehdi Moud - p. 229.
MIYAN SAYYAD 'ALI MAHDWI

Miyān Sayyad 'Āli was born in A.H. 901 (A.D. 1496) at Dabhōi. He was the son of Sayyad Muhammad Jawnpūrī who claimed to be the promised Mahdī.

He acquired his education under Shāh Naamatullāh, one of the disciples of his father.

Sayyad 'Āli with his followers shifted from Dabhōi to Dholqa where he established a dāira. He carried on his father’s mission of the propagation of the Mahdawi tenets.

Once it so happened that the aforesaid Sayyad Naamatullāh was being taken by some police officer and his party to the Sulṭān; Sayyad 'Āli on his way home saw them and enquired about the matter. The police officer said, “He has been called upon by Sulṭān Bahādurshāh (A.D. 1527-1536) to prove his declaration of Sayyad Muhammad as the promised Mahdī”. Sayyad 'Āli said, “I am the son of the promised Mahdi; I am

1. It is near Baroda.
2. Vide, p. 46
the proper person who can give the best proof for the same." So Naematullah was released on the spot and Sayyad 'Ali was taken in stead to Chāmpāner.

When he was presented before the Sultan, the latter asked him some questions and he gave proper replies to all of them; but the Sultan was not satisfied and as a result he issued an order to keep him in prison. After some time the intervention of Musamma Miyān Fir Muhāammad, a popular noble of the royal court resulted in his release. But his trouble did not end there. Another courtier named Sardār Khān who was against the Mahdawī movement managed to send him to prison and conspired with the jailor to tyrannize him. The latter ordered the saint to stand in an iron cage with the contrivance of rotation and then it was so rapidly moved round that the saint had giddiness of extreme type so much so that ultimately he got faint.

1. It is in Panchmahāl District.
2. He was the noble man of the Sultan's court.
His body in that condition was removed out of the cage to the fort of Bhadra wherein his body was put in a wall which was plastered up along with him. This tragic event happened in A.H. 933 (A.D. 1529) when the saint was only thirty three years of age.

1. It has been written in Persian as *
   - Sayyad Qutb-ud-Din-‘Uršnāmā’, p. 129.
BANDAGI MYAN IADSHAH

Myan Iadshah's father Myan Mubarak had accompanied Sayyad Muhammad Jawnpuri Almahdi to Gujarat to settle at Anhilwad Pattan. The saint was born there.

In his young age he travelled much and then started the work of preaching Mahdawiya tenets in Gujarat. Ultimately, he settled in the locality known as Tajpur at Jamalpur in Ahmadabad where he breathed his last and lies buried there.

He often used to say:

"نون کرو دنوست

1. Malik Sulaiman- Khâtim- Sulaimân (Ms)