

question

[What are the signs for the reemergence of the Master of the Age \[i.e. the Twelfth Imam\]?](#)

Concise answer

The topic of the signs of the re-emergence is a complicated one and calls for a thorough investigation of all the related narrations. However, in brief, the signs fall under two categories. One group consists of those signs which will certainly occur, foreshadowing the re-emergence: the rebellion of Sufyani, the rebellion of Yamani, the burst of a heavenly cry, the murder of an innocent soul, the sinking of the army of Sufyani into the desert ground, the rebellion of Dajjal. The remaining signs are not certain and as such might not occur.

But from another perspective, the signs can be categorized into four groups:

1. The social signs: that is, to put it in a nutshell, those social phenomena whose upshot would be the downfall of the then perverted human civilization.
2. The religious and Ideological signs: which constitute the collapse and distortion of the Divine religion.
3. The Natural Signs: changes such as alterations in the constellations.
4. The individual and miraculous signs: such as the burst of a heavenly cry, and the murder of the Innocent Soul.

Detailed Answer

A discussion regarding the signs of the re-emergence is somewhat complicated, for there are numerous narrations in the corpus of Shi'a ahadith, and add to that the narrations found in the Sunni sources and even the heavenly books of previous religions, such as Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and Indian creeds, and all these call for a comprehensive investigation and analysis. Furthermore, the related narrations must be weighed as to the authenticity of their lines of transmission and also the soundness of their content.

Based on the Shi'a narrations, it can be inferred that the signs fall under two categories. One group consists of those signs which will undoubtedly occur prior to the re-emergence, without any qualification or prerequisite; namely: the rebellion of Sufyani, the rebellion of Yamani, the burst of a heavenly cry, the murder of the Innocent Soul, the sinking of the army of Sufyani in the desert^[1], and the rebellion of Dajjal. The second group consists of signs whose occurrence is contingent on the materialization of certain conditions. There are many such signs.

However, as mentioned before, the signs of the re-emergence can be categorized into four general groups, which will be explained in brief.

a. The Social Factors

To summarize, the appearance of these factors represent the downfall of the then misguided human civilization. Some of these factors are as follows:

1. The prevalence of injustice all over the world, or in other words, the universality and globalization of injustice.
2. The perversion of rulers. It is imperative to note that what is meant by universal injustice and perversion of rulers is that the political regimes that will govern the world would be founded on social, political, cultural, and economic injustice, and hence the rulers would exercise their power based on a spirit of domination, imperialism, and despotism. It should not be inferred that just individuals or regimes would be nonexistent, but that the prevalent system of governance would be that of injustice.
3. Inflation and economic instability which are the concomitants of an unjust system.
4. The appearance of charlatans and Dajjal-like characters who will claim to be social reformers. The advent of Dajjal is one of the indisputable signs of the re-emergence to which all previous religions have also alluded. Dajjal literally means one who covers truth with falsehood and deceit. It is likely however, based on the signs mentioned in the narrations, that Dajjal is not a proper name of a single person rather it is a general title for all devious and deceitful individuals and regimes who deceive the masses and bar the path of truth. Some scholars have interpreted Dajjal as being a reference to contemporary Western civilization.
5. Charlatan and debased individuals will become speakers of their societies. Incompetent individuals will have authority in their societies.

6. Righteous and honest people will be put aside and replaced by dishonest and boastful characters.

7. The rebellion of Sufyani. However, regarding the question of whether Sufyani refers to a specific individual or is a general title for all deceitful individuals and regimes, there can be no definite answer. But what is clear is that the name signifies an individual or individuals and regimes that are capitalist, predatory, oppressive, backward, and which (or who) propagate superstitions. Their distinctive trait is their willingness to demoralize communities. The narrations prophesy that Sufyani and his army will vanish into the ground in the desert of Bayda’—an area between Mecca and Medina—and only one person will survive, the one who will spread the news.[\[2\]](#)

8. War, hypocrisy, and bloodshed will take over. In the narrations, it is divined that [global] war will break out whose instigators will be a people referred to in the ahadith as the Turk, which apparently constitute the ethnic groups who trace their ancestry back to Turk b. Yafith b. Nuh who today inhabit the regions of Mongolia, Punjab, Turkey, Siberia, Afghanistan, India, and in its broad meaning also includes the peoples of the Western hemisphere. The narrations also point to the killing of 23 people, but this is regarded as being among the unverifiable signs.

9. Revolutions will erupt in an effort to fight global oppression and corruption, some of which will succeed in organizing new governments. The rebellion and movement of Yamani, which is a symbol of the struggle of truth against deviation at the End of Time,

will be one such uprising. The movement of a certain Sayyid Khurasani who will be of the lineage of Imam Husayn b. ‘Ali (ع) and who will rise to uphold justice is another of the factors involved. These two movements—one of which will be in Yemen and the other in Iran—will be among the elements laying the groundwork for the re-emergence of Imam al-Mahdi (ع). The narrations augur that the regime that will be established in Iran will, firstly, invite the people to Islam and the path of the Ahlul Bayt (ع) and will, secondly, clear its territory—which will extend to Kufah—from injustice and corruption and will join forces with and obey the Imam (ع) when he re-emerges.

b. Religious and ideological factors

That is, the collapse and perversion of religion. It has been narrated from the Commander of the Believers, Imam ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (ع) that at the End of Time prayer will be abandoned; trusts will be dishonoured; lying will be considered permissible; usury will become prevalent; bribery will be all-encompassing; religion will be relinquished in favour of the material life; women’s counsel will be sought; family bonds will be severed; people will become licentious; murder will acquire normalcy; patience will be counted as a weakness; injustice will be prided on; the people of knowledge will be treacherous; the reciters of the Qur`an will be perverse; the mosques will be embellished and the minarets built high [but without the spirituality that is their substance]; promises will be broken; and desires will be ever diverse [and conflicting].

To put it more generally, the precepts of Islam will be neglected. However, this neglect will be relative; that is, it would be the prevalent mood of human society at the time. This is to such an extent that it has been related that when the Imam (ع) re-emerges he will bring a new way, a new book, and a new religion; meaning that Islam will be so contaminated with superstitions, the Qur`an so assailed with conceptual distortions [i.e. false interpretations] that their reality and inner truth will have been forgotten.

c. Natural factors

Also among the signs heralding the re-emergence of the Imam (ع) are the natural disasters mentioned in the narrations; such as the [prodigious] lightning of the End of Time; lunar and solar eclipses which will occur outside their natural timeframe; changes in the constellations and the atmospheric conditions (in water, air, sunrise, sunset, etc.). And of course these narrations are capable of being understood in relation to certain events that are taking place in this age, just as Ayatullah Murtada Mutahhari interpreted the “rising of the sun from the west” [which is counted among the signs] as the rise of Islam at the hands of Imam Khomeini from Paris.

d. The individual and miraculous signs

1. The Burst of a Heavenly Cry - According to the narrations, before or during the event of re-emergence, an angel will cry out from the heaven proclaiming the re-emergence of the Imam (ع). That angel will be the Faithful Jibra`il whose cry will be heard in all four corners of the globe. Everyone will hear it in his own

language without detecting the direction from which the cry originates. But at the same time the Devil will also call out, “Uthman was murdered while he was innocent” with the intention to confuse the people.[3]

2. The Murder of an Innocent Soul - The Innocent Soul will be the nickname of a certain Hashimite youth with a high degree of spiritual perfection. He will fight the Sufyani army and on being defeated will take refuge in Medina. When the Sufyani army reaches Medina, he will flee to Mecca. There he will invite people to the way of the Household of Muhammad (ص) but will be slain between the Rukn and the Maqam while innocent of any crime.[4]

His death will awaken the conscience of the people all over the world, which will in turn prepare them to pledge allegiance to the Imam (ع). Fifteen days after his death, the re-emergence will take place.[5] He is the Imam’s (ع) representative and envoy among the people.

There are also other signs mentioned in the narrations which we have not included here

[1] *Kitab al-Ghaybah*, pg. 252

[2] *Kitab al-Ghaybah*, pp. 279-282

[3] *Kitab al-Ghaybah*, pp. 253-254

[4] *Kamal al-Din wa Tamam al-Ni'mah*, pg. 331

[5] *Ibid.*, pg. 649