A Survey into the Lives of the Infallible Imams

This text provides a good analysis of the lives of the Infallible Imams while presenting the different methods, struggles, and circumstances of each Imam and how they may have acted similarly or differently. However they have all acted as Allah (SWT) desired of them and that if each of the Imam were in the same position as the other Imams, they would've behaved similarly.

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Foreword

In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

The invaluable legacy of the Household [*Ahl al-Bayt*] of the Prophet (may peace be upon them all), as preserved by their followers, is a comprehensive school of thought that embraces all branches of Islamic knowledge. This school has produced many brilliant scholars who have drawn inspiration from this rich and pure resource. It has given many scholars to the Muslim *ummah* who, following in the footsteps of Imams of the Prophet's Household (*'a*), have done their best to clear up the doubts raised by various creeds and currents within and without Muslim society and to answer their questions. Throughout the past centuries, they have given well-reasoned answers and clarifications concerning these questions and doubts.

To meet the responsibilities assigned to it, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) has embarked on a defense of the sanctity of the Islamic message and its verities, often obscured by the partisans of various sects and creeds as well as by currents hostile to Islam. The Assembly follows in the footsteps of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (*'a*) and the disciples of their school of thought in its readiness to confront these challenges and tries to be on the frontline in consonance with the demands of every age.

The arguments contained in the works of the scholars belonging to the School of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (*'a*) are of unique significance. That is because they are based on genuine scholarship and appeal to reason, and avoid prejudice and bias. These arguments address scholars and thinkers in a manner that appeals to healthy minds and wholesome human nature.

To assist the seekers of truth, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly has endeavored to present a new phase of these arguments contained in the studies and translations of the works of contemporary Shi'ah writers and those who have embraced this sublime school of thought through divine blessing.

The Assembly is also engaged in edition and publication of the valuable works of leading Shi'ah scholars of earlier ages to assist the seekers of the truth in discovering the truths which the School of the Prophet's Household (*'a*) has offered to the entire world.

The Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly looks forward to benefit from the opinions of the readers and their suggestions and constructive criticism in this area.

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating the genuine Islamic teachings as preached by the Prophet Muhammad(*s*).

We beseech God, the Most High, to accept our humble efforts and to enable us to enhance them under the auspices of Imam al-Mahdi, His vicegerent on the earth (may Allah expedite his advent).

We express our gratitude to Professor Murtada Mut ahhari (May Allah bless his soul), the author of the present book, and Mrs. Zaynab Muhammadi 'Iraqi, its translator. We also thank our colleagues who have participated in producing this work, especially the staff of the Translation Office.

Cultural Affairs Department
The Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) World Assembly

Introduction: A Comparison between Imam al-Husayn's (‘a) Path and That of Other Imams (‘a)

Dissimulation [Taqiyyah]

The comparison between Imam al-Husayn's[1] approach and that of other Imams is a topic worthy of research and discussion. Many view Imam al-Husayn'smethodology as being contradictory to that of other Imams, such as Imam al-Hassan[2] (‘*a*)[3], Imam al-Sajjad[4] (‘*a*), Imam al-Baqir[5] (‘*a*), Imam al-Sadiq[6] (‘*a*) and even that of Amir al-Mu'minin[7], ‘Ali (‘*a*), suggesting that the rest of the Imams followed a dissimilar doctrine to Imam al-Husayn(‘*a*). This belief ultimately triggered problems and created confusion in the hearts of the believers; given that they needed to know who to follow in their deeds and practices, it is necessary for the follower to know which doctrine he must refer to.

To clarify this topic of discussion, I must add that "dissimulation" [*taqiyyah*] [8] is the attribute by which the Shi‘ahs have been recognized and that it is something which has been advocated by the teachings of the Divine Imams. It is perceived as an exclusive characteristic of the Shi‘ah. So much so that the terms "Shi‘ah" and "dissimulation" as well as "Hatam al-Ta'i"[9] and "generosity", are conceded as implicants of each other.

All of the Imams acted in accordance with dissimulation during their lifetime, except Imam al-Husayn who did not dissimulate and instead chose to rise up against the corrupt government. If dissimulation was justified, why then did Imam al-Husayn choose not to act upon it, even though all the necessary grounds were laid for him to do so? And if dissimulation was not justified, why did the rest of the Imams dissimulate and order their followers to do so?

Moreover, this in itself is a fundamental debate regardless of whether the methodologies of the Imams were similar or if they differed. Assuming that they all followed one methodology, all chose to dissimulate or none did so, this in itself must be debated, taking into consideration the principles of jurisprudence[10] and Islamic theology (including whether or not dissimulation corresponds to Qur'anic teachings and logic).

Although widely attributed to the Shi‘ah branch of Islam, dissimulation is also present among non-Shi‘ahsit is on the same level as the belief that alterations to the Qur'an are part of the Shi‘ism. Albeit, supposing a group of Shi‘ahs are able to alter the Qur'an; the same numbers of Sunnis[11] are able to carry out such a task. The number does not change according to one's belief. Of course, if a Sunni scholar cannot distort the Qur'an, then neither could a Shi‘ah scholar. However, this issue was only raised as an example and we do not intend to focus on it here.

To further clarify the issue of dissimulation, it must be noted that there have been other examples where contradictions in the doctrine and behaviour of the Imams were observed, not only in the issue of dissimulation. For example, the Prophet (*s*)[12] might have acted differently from Imam ‘Ali (‘*a*), or both acted the same, whereas Imam al-Sadiq and Imam al-Baqir (‘*a*) acted dissimilar to them. These discrepancies have been noticed on many occasions and I shall mention some of them in further

examples. Therefore, given that we believe in the infallibility of the Imams, that their deeds are as much a testament as their word, whose conduct should we pursue?

Since we believe that the Prophet (*s*) has directed us towards them, we have accepted the leadership of Ahl al-Bayt[13] (*'a*) and regard their sayings and deeds as testament. Therefore, we are more affluent in evidence and sayings than the Sunnis. We have more traditions [***hadith***s] and valuable prayers (which themselves act as gates to Islamic culture and education, and must be discussed separately) than the Ahl al-Sunnah. Since they do not have as many traditions as we do, this places Shi'ism in a richer state. Those who have counted the number of ***hadith***s in the Sunni *Sihah al-Sittah*[14] and *Al-Kafi*[15] have said that there are not as many ***hadith***s in those six authentic books as there are in *Al-Kafi*. I have not counted the number myself, but those who have read the books have said that it contains more than 16,000 ***hadith***s, making this book a jewel for the Shi'ahs. For this reason, the Shi'ism has never seen the need for *qiyas*[16] (analogical reasoning) and *istihsan*[17] (juristic preference), which has always been a source of pride.

I would, however, like to add that there is no doubt that having a large number of ***hadith***s and references can be regarded as a strong point for the Shi'ahs. However, as a result of numerous errors, they can also be considered as a setback for the Shi'ahs. Having fourteen leaders, each of whom announces different routes and traditions may result in perplexity, confusion and chaos. This will only pave the way for those who wish to use religion in their own interests, to achieve their immoral aims by spreading corruption.

They will be equipped with holy forces, using the ***hadith***s and deeds of the Imams as proof justification for their actions. In this way, they misguide everyone else to act in the way they desire. All this will only result in dispersal, chaos, lack of morals, and social principles. Pity the nation which lacks morals and social principles, allowing everybody acting upon their own ways of thinking. The saying "once a patient has too many doctors, there is no hope for recovery" is on the same basis with what is mentioned above.

Beyond doubt, if all these apparently different methodologies are not researched, examined and explored, we will still see these negative effects even if we have several leaders with different approaches, or leaders that have the same approach but express it differently in different places and we will not be able to resolve these differences to reach a specific aim. This will lead us to chaos as mentioned before.

As an example, if we look at the lives of Prophet Muhammad(*s*) and Imam 'Ali (*'a*), we see that they lived in poverty, wearing patched clothing and feeding themselves on oat bread. Also in the *Qur'an* it says,

"Indeed, you have in the Messenger of Allah an outstanding exemplar for him whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah much."[18]

This implies that all people are obliged to follow the Prophet's path and customs. They must all live on low class levels and wear patched clothes. On the other hand, when observing the lives of Imam al-Mujtaba[19], Imam

al-Sadiq or Imam al-Rida[20] (*'a*), we see that they did not live in the same fashion as the Prophet. They lived well, ate good food, wore good clothes and appreciated the superb aspects of life.

Once, Imam al-Sadiq (*'a*) paid a visit to a wealthy person. He found the wealthy person in a small house. The Imam asked him, "Why do you not buy yourself a bigger house?" He replied: "This is my father's house, in which he used to live." The Imam then asked, "If your father was lacking common sense, does that mean you should be foolish like he was? Do you want to pay the price for your father's senselessness for the rest of your life?"

It is such apparent contradictory issues in Shi'ism that make it look like it has this weak spot. But the same example can be used to show that not only is it not a weak point but a point of strength. For an introduction, let us assume two cases:

1) when an infallible leader [*imam*] lives among us for 20-30 years, the changes, transformation, twists and turns that take place and the way the Imam acts towards them are not enough for us to master all the necessary aspects of religion and become familiar with the outlooks and features which we will be required to base our lives on in this changing world. This is because religion, like all other theoretical and practical studies, has its own statements and adjustments and orientations.

2) But if the same leader lived with us for 250 years, facing a variety of matters, and showed us ways of solving and dealing with such issues, we would become better accustomed to religious teachings and free from extremity and aridity. According to the logic expression "free of taking something as a cause that is not the cause"[21], we would be better able to escape the "mixing of reality and subsidiary"[22]. Mixing reality and subsidiary means two things that are always together, one of which is involved in a third matter, the other of which is in no way involved with the third matter but its presence is based on its company of the first. It would be wrong for us to assume that the second matter is the cause of the third matter. Assuming we have A and B on a plate. A produces C. We might then think B produced C or that B had an effect on producing C. It is of no doubt that religious leaders followed a doctrine and ideology suitable to their time, meaning religion has given freedom to people according to the exigency of the time. Therefore, with a multiplicity of religious leaders or long life of one leader, man can better distinguish the essence of religious teachings from the exigency of his time. He can grasp the spirit of the religion and exclude the issues that are only appropriate to the exigency of time. It is possible that the Prophet (*s*) executed some actions based on the necessity of his time, like the destitute life he used to live. On the other hand, Imam al-Sadiq (*'a*) did not live such a life. Now I shall narrate a story, which may help to clarify this issue.

In a famous saying, mentioned both in *Al-Kafi* and *Tuhaf al-'Uqul*, Sufyan al-Thawri[23] visited Imam al-Sadiq (*'a*) and objected to the Imam wearing fine clothing, since the Prophet (*s*) did not wear such garments. The Imam said, "Are you inferring that since the Prophet used to live in that way, everyone else should do the same until the end? Do you not know that

this is not a part of the Islamic commandment? You must act and think upon wisdom. You must use your intellect and take time and place in to consideration.[24] The Prophet used to live a middle-class lifestyle appropriate to his time. Islam commands equality and compassion. We must observe that this was the lifestyle of the majority at that time. Of course, as the Prophet was the leader, people used to give up their wealth and life for him and it was possible for him to have all sorts of lifestyles.

However, he never took advantage of that, even though it was all available to him. Islamic commandments denote sympathy, compassion and equality. They stand for justice and fairness. It is the soft and delicate methods which stop the frustration in the soul of the poor and prevents a friend or a neighbour, or whoever may be watching your acts, from becoming upset. If the luxurious lifestyle that is available now were possible during the time of the Prophet, then he would not have conducted his life in that way.

People are given personal choices on the aspect of dressing up, and may choose whether to wear old or new clothes, in whichever material and style they prefer. Religion does not pay attention to such matters. What is important in religion are issues such as sympathy, compassion, equality, justice and fairness." The Imam then added, "And as you see me now, I am aware of the responsibilities towards my possessions, thus there is no logical or spiritual difference between my method and the Prophet's (*s*)." It has been mentioned in the ***hadith***s that there was once a famine during the time of Imam al-Sadiq (*'a*). He ordered his finance supervisor to sell their stocked wheat in the market and said they would purchase their daily bread needs from there. The bread from the market was made from a mix of oat and wheat. Islam does not specify whether to have wheat bread or oat bread or mix oat and wheat together, but it does say: your way among people should be accompanied with fairness, justice and kindness.

Examining this difference between the Prophet's approach and Imam al-Sadiq's, we can better understand the spirit of Islam. If Imam al-Sadiq had not explained this issue, we would have considered this aspect of the life of the Prophet (his middle class lifestyle), which was based on the necessities of his time, to be a part of Islamic commandments correlated with *Surat al-Ahzab* (33:21) which commands us to follow the Prophet. This would have led us to presenting complicated arguments and restricting people until the Day of Judgement. Therefore, Imam al-Sadiq's statement and his explanation of the apparent difference between his method and the Prophet's is a valuable lesson for us which relieves us from extremity and aridity and familiarizes us with the meaning and spirit of religion. Fortunately, Imam al-Sadiq has made a statement personally on this issue, but even if he had not made such a statement, our own wisdom, endeavor and independent judgement should help us not to consider such issues contradictory, opposing and conflicting. Such extremity is especially present among Traditionalists [*Akhbaris*][25] who even disallow smoking.

Consequently, one way to solve the contradictions facing the different doctrines is what is known in common expression as the conventional solution [*al-hall al-'urfi*][26] or the conventional reconciliation [*al-jam' al*

'urfi][27], which considers the difference in necessities of the time. This can even be used in cases of contradiction, to which our scholars have not paid attention.

Another example; once they mentioned this ***hadith*** to 'Ali, "Color the white hairs in the beard and do not let yourselves resemble the Jews." 'Ali used to narrate this but never acted upon it, meaning he never dyed his beard. 'Ali responded thus, "This order was specific to the Prophet's time. It was a war tactic employed so that the enemy would not be able to recognize the old from the young in the army. This was a con at times of war, which the Prophet used repeatedly but today it depends on individuals' prerogative."

Now if Imam 'Ali's method was not there and he had not explained this issue, we would have assumed that the Prophet had commanded all people to dye their beards and we would have been occupied by the state of people's beards, instructing them to continue to dye their beards until the Day of Judgement. Thus, this is itself a way of solving the contradictions. Of course, this task needs all the necessary research and studying.

I remember one of the well-informed and broad-minded scholars who talked about 'delegated freedom' [*tafwid*], traditions that echoed frequently, about how Allah gives free-will (e.g. the authority of the justice administration) had said: for example…[28]

We should also know that there are issues related to the essence of religious teachings, i.e. the divine collective commands. They cannot be altered or transformed in anyway and are a consequence of high and public interests. Until there is man, these commandments are there and until the point that man is a man, he must take these commandments in use.

References

1. Ḥusayn ibn ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib(626-680), the third Shi‘ah Imam.
2. Imam al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib(625-669), the second Shi‘ah Imam.
3. The abbreviation, “‘a” stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, ‘alayhi’s-salam, ‘alayhim’us-salam, or ‘alayha’s-salam [may peace be upon him/them/her], which is mentioned after the names of the prophets, angels, Imams from the Prophet’s progeny, and saints (‘a). [Trans.]
4. Imam ‘Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn (658-713), the fourth Shi‘ah Imam.
5. Imam Muhammadibn ‘Ali al-Baqir, the fifth Imam.
6. Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq (702-765), the sixth Shi‘ah Imam.
7. Imam ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib(599-661), the first Shi‘ah Imam.
8. The practice of hiding one’s beliefs when under pressure.
9. Ḥatam al-Ta’i: a heroic figure famous for his generosity in pre-Islamic Arabia.
10. Principles of jurisprudence: a science which discusses the methodologies of deducting Islamic rulings.
11. Sunni Muslims form the largest branch of Islam. They are referred to as Ahl al-Sunnah, those who follow the tradition. The word Sunni comes from the word Sunnah, which means the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad(s).
12. The abbreviation, “s”, stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, sallallahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam [may God’s blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny], which is mentioned after the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s). [Trans.]
13. Ahl al-Bayt is a phrase meaning People of the House, or family. In the Islamic tradition it refers to the Household of the Prophet Muhammad.
14. The six authentic hadith books for the Ahl al-Sunnah.
15. Al-Kafi by Muhammad ibn Ya‘qub ibn Ishaq al-Kulayni al-Razi. This book is a collection of the traditions taught by the Prophet and the Imams and handed down to the Muslim community by the disciples of the Imams. The name al-Kafi means “that which is sufficient”; that is, the book was intended to be a comprehensive collection of traditions created by Shi‘ah Imams.
16. In Sunni Islamic jurisprudence, qiyas is the process of analogical reasoning from a known injunction [naṣs] to a new injunction.
17. Istihsan is an Arabic term for juristic “preference”. Muslim Sunni scholars may use it to express their preference for particular judgements in Islamic law over other possibilities. It is one of the principles of legal thought underlying personal interpretation or ijtihad.
18. Surat al-Ahzab 33:21.
19. Imam al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib(625-669), the second Shi‘ah Imam.
20. Imam ‘Ali ibn Musa al-Rida (766-818), the eighth Shi‘ah Imam.
21. This is a philosophical principle.
22. This one is also a philosophical principle.
23. Sufyan ibn Sa‘id ibn Masruq Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Thawri al-Kufi (d. 783 CE): He was a hadith scholar (the Imam of the “Ahl al-Hadith”) of the eighth century.
24. See Ibn Shu‘bah al-Harrani, Tuhaf al-‘Uqul (Qum/Iran, 1994), p. 24.
25. The Traditionalists are those who consider the traditions [ahadith] as the only source to receive religious information. They do not recognize using the common ijtihad (the Qur’an and intellect) feasible.
26. Methodologies or principles of Islamic jurisprudence [usul al-fiqh].
27. Also based on usul al-fiqh.
28. Unfinished text by the author.

Chapter 1: ‘Ali’s (‘a) Struggles

“Leave me and seek someone else. We are facing a matter that has (several) sides and colors, which neither hearts can bear nor intelligence fathom. Clouds are hovering over the sky and a clear path is not apparent. You should know that if I respond to you, I can lead you as I know how.”[1]

We know that ‘Ali never used to refrain from mentioning that successorship [*khilafah*][2] was his lawful right during the time of caliphate of the caliphs. What’s more, we see that after the bloody revolution against ‘Uthman[3], which resulted in his murder, people poured into ‘Ali’s house, insisting on swearing allegiance to him, if he were to take the reins of power. But he was reluctant to accept the caliphate.

The above statements are mentioned in *Nahj al-Balaghah.*[4] He says, “Leave me and seek someone else.” Later, Imam ‘Ali (*‘a*) himself explains the reason for his refusal so that, God forbid, no one would assume that Imam ‘Ali (*‘a*) did not think himself worthy for caliphate after the Prophet (*s*). He described the situation as extremely chaotic and that an even more chaotic situation was to be expected. This is the clause, “We are facing a matter that has (several) faces and colors (it is an enigmatic matter).” We do not have a clear future ahead of us. In the following sentence the Imam refers to several issues, “Clouds are hovering in the sky (and the horizons are blocked with fog).” Just like when fog in the air blocks man’s vision rendering him unable to see his path. “A clear path is not discernible (the way is unrecognizable to people).” But then he gives what seems to be an ultimatum. He says, “You should know that If I respond to you, I will as I know how (not how you want me to).” Finally he said, “Leave me be. At present, I would rather stay a minister than to become a chief [*amir*].”

These statements reveal that ‘Ali had envisaged many problems during his caliphate; these same problems appeared and later revealed their facets. What were those problems? I cannot describe all those problems in one session for you; therefore, I shall discuss with you ‘Ali’s biggest problem with clarification. I will enlighten you of the rest of ‘Ali’s problems in a brief summary leading up to ‘Ali’s most serious problem and the biggest complication that entrapped him.

‘Uthman’s assassination (the problem of hypocrisy)

The first difficulty that presented itself was the assassination of ‘Uthman, of which ‘Ali used to say: “We have a vague future ahead of us.” ‘Ali had inherited a caliphate, of which the previous caliph had been murdered in a revolution, the rebels of which would not permit his burial and who had many complaints. And now this revolutionary group has joined ‘Ali. What did other people think? Not all people had the same views as that of the revolutionaries’.

Also, ‘Ali’s thoughts did not match those of the revolutionaries or of the rest of the people. On one side was ‘Uthman and his associates, together with all the inequality, injustice and cruelty, all the advantages given out to relatives and bonuses bestowed upon friends, and on the other side were the angered groups who had gathered from different cities (Madinah[5], Hijaz[6], Basrah[7], Kufah[8], Egypt[9]), who were constantly protesting and criticizing.

But ‘Uthman would not surrender himself. ‘Ali is an ambassador between the revolutionaries and ‘Uthman, which in itself is another peculiar story. Although ‘Ali disagrees with ‘Uthman’s tactics, he also opposes ‘opening doors’ to Caliph killing.

He does not want them to kill the Caliph as it would lead to rioting amongst Muslims, which itself has a long story.[10] He is critical towards ‘Uthman and tries to dissuade him from the path he has taken trying to lead him towards the right path, so that this might extinguish the fire within the revolutionaries and to stop the rioting. Neither did ‘Uthman nor did his associates agree to change their way, nor did the revolutionaries stop the upheaval which, consequently, resulted in ‘Uthman’s assassination.

‘Ali knew that ‘Uthman’s murder would become an issue that caused mutiny. This is especially interesting in view of the strange fact that has been discovered by sociologists, historians and researchers who have studied Islamic history that some of ‘Uthman’s associates and followers played a part in his assassination (the *Nahj al-Balaghah* also explains this issue). They wanted ‘Uthman to be killed, for conflicts to be triggered in the Muslim World, so that they may use this to their advantage (these are present in the texts of the *Nahj al-Balaghah*).

Mu‘awiyah, in particular, played an important role in ‘Uthman’s murder. Covertly, he was trying to escalate the rioting, so that it may result in the killing of ‘Uthman, thus enabling him to use this murder to his own advantage. This is another problem which I cannot discuss any further.

‘Ali’s opponents differed from the Prophet’s opponents in that the Prophet’s opponents were mainly groups of non-believers and idol-worshippers who rejected Allah’s existence openly, and who fought the Prophet under the motto, “Long Live Hubal”[11] The Prophet (*s*) also had an explicit motto, “Allah is the greatest of all.” However, ‘Ali was facing an intelligent, non-religious group, who, although pretending to follow Islam, were not true Muslims. Their slogans were Islamic but their aims were against Islam. Mu‘awiyah’s father, Abu Sufyan, had fought the Prophet (*s*) under the slogan of “Long Live Hubal”, therefore making the Prophet’s task of fighting him much easier. His son, however, Mu‘awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, who has the same soul and shares the same goals as his forefathers, fought against ‘Ali using the following verse from the Qur’an as his slogan,

“And whosoever is killed unjustly (wrongfully), we have indeed given his next of kin [his heir] an authority.”[12]

The slogan is a good one. However, is there anyone who can ask Mu‘awiyah who ‘Uthman’s legal guardian is, who can ask for ‘Uthman’s blood? Of what business is it to you to ask for ‘Uthman’s blood when you are a very distant relative? ‘Uthman has a son and other closer relatives and what’s more, what did ‘Uthman’s death do with ‘Ali? Nevertheless, a man as manipulative as Mu‘awiyah does not care about these questions; he only wants to use this to his advantage.

Mu‘awiyah had ordered his spies beforehand to send ‘Uthman’s blood-spattered shirt to him in Syria as soon as ‘Uthman was killed. Therefore, as soon as ‘Uthman was assassinated, without even waiting for the blood to dry, they sent the blood-spattered shirt, together with ‘Uthman’s wife’s[13]

fingers, to Mu‘awiyah. He got very excited then and ordered for ‘Uthman’s wife’s fingers to be hung from his podium. Then, he said “O people!! The world is surrounded by oppression, Islam is lost! These are the fingers of the Caliph’s wife!” Then, he ordered for ‘Uthman’s shirt to be hung on a stick and taken to a mosque or somewhere else. He went there himself and started crying for the innocent Caliph. For a while he read sermons about ‘Uthman and prepared the people to avenge ‘Uthman’s blood; whom do we seek vengeance from? We should seek it from ‘Ali! ‘Ali cooperated with the revolutionaries who had sworn allegiance to him. If they had not cooperated with him, then why are they in his army?” This was a big problem which resulted in the two battles of Jamal[14] and Siffin[15], caused by the spiteful people.

Inflexibility in the enforcement of justice

‘Ali (peace be upon him) faced other problems, on the one hand, were related to his tactics and, on the other, were the changes Muslims had undergone. ‘Ali was an inflexible man. For years after the Prophet’s death the society had become accustomed to allocating special subsidies to influential people, but ‘Ali was rigorously opposed to this action. He would say, “I am not somebody who will divert even slightly from the path of justice.” Even his followers would come to him and say, “Sir! Please show some flexibility”, he would reply, “Are you asking me to gain victory and success in politics at the price of oppression and destroying the rights of powerless people?! I swear upon the All-mighty, as long as there is day and night in this world, I will not do such a thing. As long as a star moves in the sky, such a thing is not practical.”

Bluntness and honesty in politics

The third problem with his caliphate was his bluntness and honesty in politics, which again some of his friends did not favor. They would say, “Politics does not require bluntness and truthfulness, some dishonesty and deception is necessary. Deceit is the zest in politics.”

(Everything I mention here is present in *Nahj al-Balaghah*). Some would even say, “‘Ali has no diplomacy. Look at how tactful Mu‘awiyah is!”

‘Ali would say, “I swear upon Allah, the All-mighty that you are wrong. Mu‘awiyah is not more cunning than I am. He is deceitful. He is lewd. I do not want to be deceitful. I do not want to astray from the path of truth. I do not want to commit debauchery and wickedness. If Allah, the Honorable and Almighty did not consider deception as his enemy, then you would have seen that ‘Ali would have been the most cunning of all people. This kind of deceitfulness is immoral, evil and wicked. It is blasphemous. I know that on the Day of Judgement every deceitful person is resurrected holding a banner (apparently the point is that the ones deceived are under the banner of deceit).”[16] This was another one of ‘Ali’s problems.

Kharijites [khawarij], ‘Ali’s fundamental problem

Kharijites [khawarij][17], ‘Ali’s fundamental problem

All that has been said so far serves as an introduction to the fundamental issue pertaining to ‘Ali’s caliphate on which I intend to touch on here.

During the Prophet's time, the group that was created by the Prophet was not one formed as a result of a revolution which simply gathers the masses under one flag. He trained a group, united them, brought them forward step by step and gradually penetrated Islamic morals and teachings into their souls.

The Prophet (*s*) was in Mecca[18] for thirteen years. He suffered all kinds of torture, agony and pain from the people of Quraysh[19], but continuously called for patience whenever his companions would say, "O Messenger of Allah! Please give us permission to defend ourselves, how long should we suffer? How many should they torture or kill from among us? How many times must they lay us on the heated grounds of Hijaz and place large stones on our chests? How many more times must they lash us?"

However, the Prophet (*s*) would never grant permission for a holy war and defence. Finally he only consented to emigration after which some groups emigrated to Habashah (Ethiopia)[20], which was beneficial. However, what was the Prophet doing during these thirteen years? He trained and taught. In other words, he was creating the core of Islam. The group, who at the time of migration might have been around 1,000 people, were all familiar with the essence of Islam and the majority had Islamic training.

The main prerequisite of a movement is the presence of a teaching and training group which have already become familiar with the principles and goals as well as the tactical ideology of that movement. These groups can, therefore, form the focal point to which others can later join and be trained by in order to learn to adapt themselves to their teachers. This was the secret behind the success of Islam.

Therefore, the difference between 'Ali's situation and that of the Prophet was, firstly, that the people with whom the Prophet (*s*) dealt were predominantly non-believers. This means he was confronting explicit paganism. He was dealing with a blasphemy that spoke for itself. However, 'Ali was dealing with covert paganism, i.e. hypocrisy. He was tackling a nation that was pursuing the objectives of the non-believers, but hid under an Islamic cover of sanctity and piety, bearing a Qur'anic appearance.

The other difference apparent in the era of caliphate, especially during 'Uthman's, was that the Prophet's (*s*) methods of teaching and training were not explored and practised as much as was expected and instead other triumphs and many conquests were pursued. Conquests alone do not achieve much in the long run. Throughout the thirteen years that the Prophet remained in Mecca, he did not even allow Muslims to defend themselves. This was because the people were not yet capable of this sort of defence or *jihad*[21].

If war and conquest is to take place, it must be simultaneous to the spread of Islamic culture and ethos which must be built up. People who become attracted to and those who convert to Islam must also learn and understand its objectives and principles, its 'core and crust'. However, as a result of the negligence that took place during the time of the caliphs, an important social phenomenon took place in the Islamic world: formation of a new group in the Islamic community.

Although this group was fond of Islam and believed in Islam, it was only acquainted with Islam's 'crust', its appearance. It did not know the essence of Islam. This was a group that concentrated on, for example, the act of praying with little knowledge and appreciation of the Islamic objectives behind it. A priggish and dogmatic group formed of people who had formed calluses on their foreheads, palms and knees as a result of their excessive and long prostrations.

These prostrations would sometimes last from an hour or two to five hours even on bare sandy grounds. When 'Ali had sent Ibn 'Abbas[22] to them when they rioted and rebelled against him, Ibn 'Abbas came back saying, "Their foreheads are wounded because of excessive prostrations; they have hands that have calluses like the knee of a camel. They have old, ascetic looking clothes. Most manifest are their resolute and indomitable faces…"[23]

An ignorant and puritanical faction oblivious in worship had come into existence in the Muslim World; a faction with no knowledge whatsoever of Islam yet very keen to be part of it. It was not familiar with the 'core' of Islam but was glued to its 'crust'.

'Ali describes this group of people thus,

"They are a people who are rough, remorseless, tough, hard-hearted, rude, but with inferior, slavish characters and spirits. Their souls are not magnanimous. You cannot find nobility in their souls. They are a hooligan type of people. It is not clear which corner they have appeared from. One is from this corner, another is from the other. A group of lowborn and lowbred people, whose origin and background is unclear; a crowd who should come and sit in the first year of Islam and learn Islamic lessons. They are illiterate and have no knowledge. They do not know what the Qur'an is. They do not understand the meaning of the Qur'an. They do not know the traditions of the Prophet (*s*). They must be taught and trained. They have not gathered Islamic education and training. They are not part of the Emigrants [*muhajirin*] and Helpers [*anṣar*] who were trained by the Prophet (*s*). They are a group of people who have no Islamic demeanour."

'Ali became caliph at a time when this group of people existed among Muslims. They permeated every area, even his army. You have probably heard many times the story of the Battle of Siffin and the con that Mu'awiyah and 'Amr ibn al-'As[24] used. When they finally realized that they were losing, they plotted to use this group of people to their advantage. They ordered for Qur'ans to be raised on spears: "O people! We all believe in the Qur'an. We are all people of the same *Qiblah*. Why are you fighting? If you want to fight then take aim at these Qur'ans."

Immediately, this group stopped fighting, claiming, "We shall not fight the Qur'an." They came to 'Ali and said, "All matters have now been resolved. The Qur'an has been set forth. Now that the Qur'an is brought forward, there is no reason for war." 'Ali said, "Do you not know that from day one I tried to convince them to pass judgment and ruling about who is right based on the Qur'an? They are lying. They have not brought forward the Qur'an itself but its papers and cover so that they can rise up again against this very Qur'an. Do not pay attention. I am your *imam.* I am your 'speaking Qur'an'. Go and progress forward." They said, "What! What

nonsense is this?! Up until now we considered you a good person and were of the belief that you are a decent person. Now it is clear that you have your own ambitions. You mean we should go and fight against the Qur'an? No, we will not fight." To which 'Ali replied thus, "All right. Do not fight."

Malik al-Ashtar[25] was progressing forward. They said, "Send an immediate order to Malik to return. Fighting the Qur'an is no longer tolerable." They placed great pressure on 'Ali, who then sent a message to Malik requesting that he return. Malik did not return, saying, "Sir! Please give me permission. In only two hours they will be defeated." The messenger came back informing them that Malik would not return, to which they replied, "Either Malik returns or we shall cut you into pieces with our swords [they were about 20,000 in number]. You are fighting the Qur'an?!" 'Ali (*'a*) sent another message, "Malik, if you want to see 'Ali alive, come back." Then, the issue of arbitration was put forward. They said, "Well now! Let us choose an arbitrator, now that the Qur'an has been set forth." The other side chose the evil 'Amr ibn al-'As. 'Ali chose the clever and honorable scholar 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas. They said, "No, we should choose somebody who is not related to you." 'Ali then said, "Malik al-Ashtar." They said, "No, we do not approve of him." Some thers also objected to this. They said, "We only approve of Abu Musa al-Ash'ari[26]." Who was Abu Musa al-Ash'ari?! Was he a member of 'Ali's army? No, he was a former governor of Kufah who was ousted by 'Ali. He was in his heart an enemy of 'Ali. They brought Abu Musa.

He was tricked by 'Amr ibn al-'As in a con that was more similar to a game than any serious issue you may have heard of. When they realized they had been deceived, they said, "We made a mistake." Now, from saying they have made a mistake, they mean to confess to another mistake. They did not say, 'We made a mistake when we stopped fighting Mu'awiyah and we should have continued the fight. This was not a battle against the Qur'an.

This was a battle for the Qur'an.' They said, No, that was correct. They also did not say, 'We made a mistake for choosing Abu Musa. We should have accepted Ibn 'Abbas or Malik al-Ashtar.' Instead, they said, "Principally, the fact that we accepted two people to judge the religion was blasphemous. In the Qur'an it states, *"The judgment (command) belongs to none but Allah."*[27] Because in the Qur'an it says judgment (command) exclusively belongs to Allah, then no human has the right to make a judgment. Therefore, choosing arbitrators was fundamentally blasphemous and, in fact, a form of polytheism. We are now repenting, 'I ask Allah's forgiveness and turn towards Him'."

They then went after 'Ali, "'Ali! You have become a non-believer like us. You must also repent. (Now, do you see the problem? Is Mu'awiyah 'Ali's problem or these puritans? Is 'Amr ibn al-'As, 'Ali's problem or these puritans?)" He replied, "You are wrong! Arbitration is no blasphemy. You do not understand the meaning of the verse. It refers to the fact that the law must be set by Allah alone or somebody who is permitted to do so by Him. We did not want somebody to come and set us law. We said, 'Qur'anic law'; let two people come and judge according to the Qur'an." They said, "This is it." 'Ali said, "I shall never confess to a sin I have never committed.

I shall never say that something is against the religious law when it is not. How can I falsify something to Allah, the Honorable and Exalted, and the Prophet (*s*)? You want me to say arbitration and choosing arbitrators in the time of disagreement is against the religious law and is blasphemous? No, it is not blasphemous. You can do whatever you wish."

'Ali's ('a) demeanour towards the Kharijites

They parted ways with 'Ali and formed a faction known as the Kharijites, meaning the rebels against 'Ali. They began causing great suffering to 'Ali, who tolerated them until they started an armed riot. Thus, he endured them to the greatest degree possible; never stopping their share of the government treasury or limiting their freedom. They would disrespect him explicitly and yet 'Ali would be patient. When 'Ali gave sermons upon the podium, they would often heckle his speeches. On one occasion, when 'Ali was upon the podium, somebody asked a question. 'Ali gave an excellent reply without any hesitation, which caused great astonishment among the people causing them to all glorify Allah, the Glorified and Exalted [*takbir*].[28] However, one of the Kharijites, who was present in the congregation, said, "May Allah kill him. How knowledgeable he is."[29] The companions of 'Ali poured onto him wanting to kill him, when 'Ali said, "Leave him be. He cursed me. The most you can do to him is to curse him. Leave him alone."

'Ali was busy praying. He was praying in congregation at a time when he was the ruler of the Muslims. (What kind of forbearance is this by 'Ali?) They never followed him in prayer, instead they claimed, "'Ali is not a Muslim. He is a non-believer and a polytheist." When 'Ali was reciting *al-Fatihah*[30] and the *Surat*[31] of his prayer, someone by the name Ibn al-Kawwab[32] entered and recited this verse,

"And indeed, it has been revealed to you and to those [who have been] before you: 'Surely if you associate (other deities with Allah), your deeds will certainly come to naught.'"[33]

This verse is directed at the Prophet (*s*), "O Prophet! We have sent divine revelations to you just like the prophets before you. If you become polytheist, all your deeds will go to waste, or if those prophets had become polytheists, their deeds would have gone to waste." By reading this verse he was implying: ''Ali! We agree that you are the first Muslim; this is what your records and services to Islam show. But because you have become a polytheist and considered a partner for Allah, the Glorified and Exalted, you have no more rewards left with Allah, the Glorified and Exalted.' How was 'Ali supposed to react? 'Ali acted by considering the verse that says,

"And when the Qur'an is recited, listen to it, and keep silent, that you would possibly be granted mercy."[34]

This indicates that when you hear somebody reciting the Qur'an, pay attention and listen to it, and so 'Ali kept silent and listened. When Ibn al-Kawwab finished, he continued his prayer. As soon as the Imam proceeded, the person repeated the verse. 'Ali again kept silent and when Ibn al-Kawwab had finished, continued with his prayer. For the third or fourth time when he repeated the verse, 'Ali paid no more attention and read this verse,

"So have patience; verily, the promise of Allah is true; and those who have no certitude, never induce you to levity (make you unstable and divert you from your path)."[35]

And he continued to pray.

The principles of the Kharijites sect

Were Kharijites satisfied with this? If they had been, they would not have been a major problem for 'Ali. They slowly gathered and formed a party which later became a religious sect. They formed an Islamic sect (by Islamic I do not mean them being truly a part of the Muslims, we consider them as non-believers) and a new religion within the Muslim World.

They also set their own religious dogmas and laws.[36] They said, "Whoever is with us should firstly believe that 'Uthman, 'Ali and Mu'awiyah, as well as those who agreed to arbitration, are non-believers. We also became non-believers, but we repented. And only those who repented are Muslims." They continued to say, "Enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil [*al-amr bi'l-ma'ruf wa nahy 'an al-munkar*] have no conditions. One should rise up against any unlawful *imam* or any cruel leader even if they are convinced that this rising is of no use." This gave them a strange and violent face.

The other principle they set for their sect, which was also another indication of their greed and ignorance, was that action is fundamentally a part of faith. 'We have no faith separated from action. A Muslim is not a Muslim by just declaring *shahadatayn*.[37] If a Muslim prays, fasts, does not drink, gamble, commit adultery, lie, or commit any other major sin, it is just the beginning of his Islam. If he lies, he is a non-believer; he is impure [*najis*][38] and becomes a non-Muslim. If he backbites once or drinks, he has left Islam.' The perpetrator of a major sin was considered to have left Islam. The result was that these puritans considered only themselves as Muslims. It was as if they were saying, 'There are no Muslims in the world other than ourselves', and produced a series of principles for themselves.

Since the Kharijites considered 'Ali a non-believer and part of their doctrine was that 'enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil' is obligatory [*wajib*][39] and unconditional, one must therefore rise up against an unlawful *imam*. There was no other choice but to rise up against 'Ali, they claimed. They all camped outside the city and began rioting officially.

They followed a set of rigid and rough principles during their riots and claimed, "All others are non-Muslim and because they are not Muslim we cannot marry from them; that their meat slaughtered is forbidden [*haram*][40]; that one must not buy meat from their butchers." Worst of all, they considered the killing of women and children from those other than themselves as permissible. Since they considered the killing of others as permissible, they went out of the city and began robbing and killing. A bizarre situation had come about.

One of the Prophet's companions was passing by their location with his pregnant wife. They stopped him and asked him to disown 'Ali. He refused. They killed him and ripped his wife's stomach with a spear. "You are non-believers," they said.

Once they were passing a palm garden (the garden belonged to somebody whose wealth could not be intruded upon, because he was highly respected by all). One of them picked a date and placed it in his mouth. They shouted at him loudly, “Are you intruding on your Muslim brother’s wealth?”

‘Ali’s attitude towards Kharijites

Their actions caused ‘Ali to camp in front of them. It was no longer possible to let them be free. He sent Ibn ‘Abbas to talk to them. This is when Ibn ‘Abbas returned and said, “I saw calloused foreheads because of excessive prostration. The palms of their hands were like the knees of camels. They wore old and ascetic looking clothes. Most manifest are their resolute and indomitable faces.” Ibn ‘Abbas did not manage to do anything. ‘Ali himself went to talk to them. His words were effective and from the group of 12,000; 8,000 of them rued their actions. ‘Ali raised a protection banner; whoever came under it would be safe. The 8,000 went under it. The remaining 4,000 said it was impossible and abstained. The necks of these calloused foreheaded puritans went under ‘Ali’s sword. Only 10 survived, one of whom was ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Muljam[41].

‘Ali has a saying in the *Nahj al-Balaghah* (‘Ali is a remarkable being, his greatness appears here substantially). He says, “It was I and I alone who removed the eye of this revolt. No one save me could have stopped them with his sword.”[42] ‘Ali declares that only he could have pulled out the eye of this mutiny (i.e. the mutiny of the puritans). Besides ‘Ali, no Muslim dared to draw their sword against the neck of the Kharijites, because this so-called religious group could only be killed by two other groups. One group comprises of people who do not believe in Allah and Islam, for example the companions of Yazid who killed Imam al-Husayn.

The other group comprises those who are themselves Muslims; however, to be Muslim and have the courage to speak against, let alone act against, the Kharijites was not in any man’s capacity. Doing this required great courage. It needed the insight that ‘Ali had to realize the danger for the Muslim World (later on I will tell you how ‘Ali felt according to his own sayings). On one side, there were they praising Allah and reciting the Qur’an, and on the other side there was ‘Ali drawing his sword to eradicate them. The insight required was something that could only be found in ‘Ali. He said, “No one except me advanced towards it.” No other Muslim, not even from amongst the Prophet’s companions had the courage to draw his sword on them. ‘But I did and I am proud that I did, after a time when the waves of darkness had taken their toll in this murky sea[43] “and its madness was intense”.

This sentence is remarkable. Their disease (rabies) was spreading. *Kalab* means rabies. When a dog catches rabies, it is commonly known that the dog becomes wild. When this disease appears in the animal, it can no longer differentiate its owner from a stranger. It will bite whoever approaches it, bites them transferring the virus into the victim’s blood causing him to contract rabies. ‘Ali says, “These puritans had turned into dogs with rabies and just like such dogs, whoever they had contact with would turn into someone like them.

Just like when people give themselves the right to execute a dog with rabies so it could no longer bite and spread its disease, I saw no option but to eradicate them, otherwise it would not have been long before they had passed their disease to the Muslim World and sunk the society into an image of rigidity, petrifaction, idiocy and ignorance. I envisaged their danger to Islam. It was I who pulled out the eye of the mutiny. When the waves of their darkness, dubiousness and scepticism had raised and their rabies had progressed and was penetrating to others, no one save me had the courage for such a task."

Characteristics of the Kharijites

The Kharijites had a number of distinguishing characteristics such as tremendous bravery and devotion. Because they worked on the foundations of their belief, they remained extraordinarily devoted. There are amazing stories about their devotions. However, other characteristic that we can name include their dogmatism and excessive worshipping. Their excessive prayers were the cause of other people's scepticism about them. This was also the reason why ʻAli had said that no one but him would have had the courage to kill them.

The third characteristic which can be mentioned here is their ignorance and lack of knowledge. I seek refuge in Allah from that which has been done to Islam by ignorance and lack of knowledge!

Nahj al-Balaghah is an amazing book. It is amazing from every aspect including its monotheism, advice, prayers and worships, its analysis of the history of its time, etc. When ʻAli analyzes, he analyzes Muʻawiyah, ʻUthman, the Kharijites and the other events astonishingly. For example, referring to the Kharijites, ʻAli says, "You are the worst of people."[44] Why does ʻAli claim that these puritans were the worst of all people? If it were us, we would ask, "O sir! At the end of the day, they are harmless people. They are good people." We call such people good people. In our view they are good people. But then why does ʻAli say, "You are the worst of people?" In his next sentence he continues to say, "You are the worst of people because you are spears in the hands of the devil (Satan). Satan places you in his bow instead of his arrows and crushes his targets with you. You are definite tools in the hands of Satan."

You must also pay attention to the fact that during ʻAli's time a group of hypocrites had appeared consisting of the likes of Muʻawiyah and ʻAmr ibn al-ʻAs. They were very wise and well informed of the facts, and by God they knew ʻAli better than others. History bears witness to the high regard Muʻawiyah had for ʻAli; nevertheless he would go to war against him (lets not forget the power of materialism and greed or other complexities of that matter). The reason for this is that after ʻAli's martyrdom when any of ʻAli's close companions went to Muʻawiyah, he would ask them, "Describe ʻAli to me!" When they began describing, his tears would pour down; he would sigh and say, "Alas! Time can never again bring a person like ʻAli."

Therefore, there were people like Muʻawiyah and ʻAmr ibn al-ʻAs who acknowledged ʻAli and his regime and were aware of his objectives, but greed did not give a chance to the belief in their hearts. These hypocritical groups always used puritanical factions to reach their goals. This big

problem of ‘Ali will always carry on in the world. There will always be hypocrites. Even today, we can find the likes of Mu‘awiyah and ‘Amr ibn al-‘As in various guises. There will always be puritans like Ibn Muljam and other instruments in the hands of Satan, who are always ready to be deceived and accuse the likes of ‘Ali of being a non-believer and a polytheist.

Someone once claimed that Ibn Sina (Avicenna)[45] had become a non believer.[46] Ibn Sina then dedicated the following quatrain in response to this claim,

Being a non-believer is not easy for someone like me,
No belief in religion is firmer than my own.
One of my kind in the world and a non-believer?
If so, there is not a Muslim to be found anywhere in the world![47]

These puritans have claimed that almost every great scholar that Islam has had till now was either non-Muslim or a non-believer. I will recount an event to illustrate this point. Muslims! Be alert. Do not be like the Nahrawan[48] Kharijites. Do not become arrows in the hands of Satan.

Once, a friend called me, “Sir! I am shocked. I have heard something strange. This Iqbal[49] of Pakistan you have held a celebration for has insulted and cursed Imam al-Sadiq in his book!” I said, “What is this nonsense?” He asked me to take a look at a certain page in a certain book to see for myself. I said, “Have you looked at it yourself?” He said that he had not but a much esteemed gentleman had told him. I was staggered. I was shocked to hear how friends, like Mr Sa‘idi, who have read the books of Iqbal from the beginning to the end failed to spot such a thing! I said, “Firstly, there was nothing said about a remembrance or a tribute. It was about objective placement. The one we did not pay tribute to was Iqbal. We placed Iqbal as an objective for a sequence of Islamic objectives. If you were not present you can see it in the book once it is published.”

I immediately phoned Mr. Sayyid Ghulam Rida Sa‘idi to ask him about this. He was also astonished on hearing this. He said, “No Sir! I have read the book. No such thing is possible.” I said, “But such a big lie cannot be possible.”

An hour or two later when he remembered he came to me and said, “I know what this is about. This is the story: there were two people in India by the names of Ja‘far and Sadiq[50]. When the English took over India, the Muslims rose up against them. These two people, however, made peace with the English, stabbing the Islamic movement in the back and destroying it. Iqbal has reproached them in his book. I assume this is where the mistake was made.” I said, “We shall see.” When I got the book, this was what was in the pages those gentlemen were referring to, “Whenever there is destruction in the world, either a Sadiq or Ja‘fari is present there.” In the two previous pages, it says,

Ja‘far[51] from Bengal[52], Sadiq[53] from Deccan.[54]

Disgrace to religion, disgrace to the world, and disgrace to the homeland.

He is referring to Ja‘far Bengali and Sadiq from Deccan. But was Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq from Bengal or from Deccan? We then conducted a historical research. After the English took over India, two Shi‘ah Muslim

commanders by the names of Siraj al-Din[55] and Tipu Sultan[56] (Siraj al-Din was apparently from Southern India and Tipu Sultan from Northern India) bravely rose (And Iqbal greatly praises these two Shi‘ah heroes).

The English found Ja‘far in Siraj al-Din’s state and allied with him. He (Ja‘far) was partner with the thieves and a friend of the caravan. In Tipu Sultan’s system, they allied with Sadiq. He (Sadiq) also became the partner of the thieves and the friend of the caravan. They both betrayed their people and the outcome was three hundred years of British colonization by the English.

This led the Shi‘ah to have high regard for Siraj al-Din and Tipu Sultan, as they were both heroes and Shi‘ahs. They are also respected by the *Ahl al-Sunnah* because they were Islamic heroes. Hindus also respect them, as they were also native heroes. But the other two (Sadiq and Ja‘far) are considered as traitors among the Shi‘ah, Sunni and Hindus of India and Pakistan. They are also known for being indecent, hateful and symbols of treachery.

Now that three months have passed since that event, I have rarely been confronted with the question, “Sir! Why has the person, whose poems in praise of Imam al-Husaynyou read, cursed Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq?” And the other issue that has become the laughing stock of most non-Islamic circles and is tormenting me is the reflection of this story: the Pakistani Iqbal has implicated the Bengali Ja‘far and the Deccani Sadiq but wherever Muslims go they say Iqbal has cursed Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq! Take a look at the mind of these Muslims! We feel embarrassed (in these non-Islamic meetings) about the low level of thought among our people!

When ‘Ali’s messenger was in Damascus, Mu‘awiyah ordered that the announcement for Friday Prayer is made, even though it was only Wednesday. They announced “Friday Prayer” and he led “Friday Prayer” on a Wednesday. No single person objected to this. He summoned ‘Ali’s (*‘a*) representative in private and said, “Tell ‘Ali that I will come after him with one hundred thousand men who cannot tell a Wednesday from a Friday.

Tell ‘Ali to gauge the situation and act accordingly.” And now the Husayniyyah-ye Irshad has become guilty because one day they discussed Palestinians and said: “People! Help the Palestinians. A group of Jews (with the Israelis spies abundant in this country and unfortunately most of them are our own Muslims) are holding a grudge against the Irshad Trust and there is not a day that goes by when a rumour is not spread about them.”[57]

I do not want anything from you but to open your eyes! Investigate! Be aware. Jewish agents are plentiful in all Islamic states. Their hands, spies and money are continuously active. Do not be one of the Nahrawan Kharijites. How long will we continue to draw swords against Islam in the name of Islam? If we do not want to learn from these experiences, where do we want to take advice from? Why do we gather every year and hold ceremonies in the name of ‘Ali? It is because ‘Ali’s life is instructive, informative and educational.

Some educational aspects of ‘Ali’s life include his struggles with the Kharijites, his battle against puritanism, disunity and ignorance. ‘Ali does not want ignorant Shi‘ahs. ‘Ali despises Shi‘ahs who transmit false information like electricity, or for example when imposters and Jews spread

the rumour that ‘a Pakistani Iqbal has cursed your Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq’, he spreads the rumour that a Pakistani Iqbal was, God forbid, sacrilegious (about a man who was devoted to the household of the Prophet (peace be upon him) without a shred of thought. He would not even open Iqbal’s book or at least ask about the history behind it from the Pakistani embassy or other resources.

Open your eyes! Open your ears! Do not believe whatever you hear immediately. Do not be hasty to declare that, ‘they say such and such’. The end of ‘they say such and such’ is said to be rooted in something dangerous. Investigate! Investigate (between yourselves and Allah), then say whatever you want, but do not say anything before you have done your research.

‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Muljam killed ‘Ali. You should observe how they (the Kharijites) praised him. A Kharijites has a quatrain, the first verse of which reads,

Hail the strike of this pious man who

Did not consider anything but satisfaction of Allah[58]

Later he says, “If the deeds of all people were placed in the divine balance as well as the strike of Ibn Muljam, you will see that no one has done anything greater than what Ibn Muljam has done.”

This is what ignorance does to Islam and Muslims.

‘Ali’s (‘a) martydom

Ibn Muljam is one of the nine ascetic puritans who went to Mecca and made the famous vow saying all the riots in the Muslim World were caused by three people: ‘Ali, Mu‘awiyah and ‘Amr ibn al-‘As.” Ibn Muljam was chosen to kill ‘Ali. What date was set for this? The date set was the night before the 19th of Ramadan. Why did they choose this night? Ibn Abi al-Hadid says, “Do you see the ignorance! They arranged for the night before the 19th of Ramadan because they were convinced that this is an act of great worship so they agreed to commit it on the night of *Qadr* so that they would get more rewards for it.”

Ibn Muljam came to Kufah and waited for the promised day. During this time he met and fell in love with a girl am who was also a Kharijites and a fellow believer. He may*t*called Qut have, up to an extent, tried to fight thoughts of her. When he approached and discussed this matter with her, she responded thus, “I am willing, but my dowry [*mihr*] is very heavy.” He was so captivated by her that he agreed without preconditions. She required three thousand *dirham*s from him. He told her that it was not a problem. She asked for a slave boy. He agreed. “And a slave girl,” “Not a problem”, he replied. She ended her requests with, “And fourth, the killing of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib.” He was shocked because his thoughts of killing ‘Ali had headed in a different direction at that point. He replied, “We want to get married and live happily, killing ‘Ali will not leave a chance for our marriage and life together.” She replied, “This is it. If you seek union with me, you must kill ‘Ali. If you live, you will gain what you seek, and if you die, then nothing.” He struggled with his thoughts for a while. He has a poem, two verses of which are as follows,

She required these things from me as her dowry.[59]

The world has never seen a dowry so high.

Later he goes on to say,

Any dowry in the world, no matter how high, is not on the same level as ‘Ali. My wife’s dowry is the blood of ‘Ali.

There has not been an assassination and there will never be another one until the Day of Judgment unless it’s smaller than the one committed by Ibn Muljam.[60]

And he was right. Let’s take a look at what ‘Ali’s (*‘a*) will. On his deathbed, ‘Ali (*‘a*) is witnessing and leaving behind two occurences in the *ummah*. One is the presence of Mu‘awiyah and his followers (the hypocrites, the deviators, [*in*qasit*]). The other is the issue of the puritans. These two are in contradiction to one another. How will ‘Ali’s companions handle these issues after him? ‘Ali says, “After me, do not kill them anymore.” Even though they killed me, do not kill them after me as this will be a favour to Mu‘awiyah and not to truth and justice. The danger of ‘Mu‘awiyah’ is different. He said, “After me, do not kill the Kharijites anymore, because whoever seeks truth and commits a mistake is not the same as the one who seeks falsehood from the beginning and has reached it.”

‘Ali does not hold grudges against anyone. He always speaks logically. As soon as they captured Ibn Muljam, they brought him to ‘Ali. In a frail voice (as a result of the sword strike) the Imam spoke to him and asked him, “Why did you do such a thing? Was I a bad Imam for you?” (I am not sure how many times this was asked but whatever I have said has been taken from writings). Apparently, at one time he was influenced by ‘Ali’s spirituality and said,

“Can you then rescue him who is in the Fire?”[61]

“Can you then rescue an atrocious person who has been damned to hell? I was abject for committing such an act!” They have also written that when ‘Ali spoke to him, he replied in an angry voice and said, “‘Ali! When I bought that sword I made a vow to Allah to kill the worst of his creatures with this sword and I have always prayed and asked to kill the worst of his creatures with this sword.” ‘Ali (*‘a*) responded, “It just so happens that this prayer of yours has been granted because you are going to be killed with this very sword.”

‘Ali passed away. He was in the big city of Kufah. Apart from the Nahrawan Kharijites, the rest of the people wished they could participate in his funeral, to cry and weep for him. It was the night of the 21st of Ramadan. People were still not aware of what was happening to ‘Ali. ‘Ali left the world at midnight. As soon as he passed away, his children, Imam al-Hassan and Imam al-Husayn, Muhammadibn Hanifah, Abu al-Fadl al-‘Abbas, and an exclusive group of the Shi‘ahs (who did not exceed six or seven) washed ‘Ali’s body in private, put the grave shroud on him and buried him in the darkness of the night, in a spot that had apparently been previously decided by ‘Ali himself (nobody knew where his holy burial took place and according to various traditions, some of the dignified prophets are buried in the same land).

His followers kept the location of his burial a secret. The next day, people found out that ‘Ali had been buried on the previous night. Where

was ‘Ali’s burial place? There was no need for anybody to know. It has even been reported that that Imam al-Hassan (*‘a*) sent a semblance of the Imam’s body to Madinah, so people would think that ‘Ali had been taken to Madinah to be buried. Why? Because of the Kharijites; if they knew Imam ‘Ali’s burial place, they would have disrespected it. They would have disinterred the grave and exhumed ‘Ali’s body out of his grave. Indeed, ‘Ali’s place of burial remained a secret to everyone other than ‘Ali’s children and the children of their children (the Infallible Imams), for as long as the Kharijites were in power.

One hundred years later, when the Kharijites no longer existed and the Umayyad dynasty were overthrown by the ‘Abbasids (who were not a great threat to this issue), Imam al-Sadiq, for the first time, revealed ‘Ali’s burial place. The famous Safwan who has been named in *Ziyarat-e ‘Ashura*, says, “I was visiting Imam al-Sadiq in Kufah, he took us to ‘Ali’s grave and said, ‘This is the grave of ‘Ali’, and ordered us (apparently for the first time) to set up a shade for the grave. Since then ‘Ali’s grave was made public’.”

Therefore, ‘Ali’s big problem was not exclusive to his time. His grave was kept a secret for one hundred years after his death, only out of fear of this group. “Allah’s blessings be upon you, O father of al-Hassan! May Allah’s blessings be up you, O the Commander of the Faithful!” How oppressed were you and your children! I cannot say whether Amir al-Mu’minin (*‘a*) was more oppressed or his noble son Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Husayn.

In the same manner that ‘Ali’s (*‘a*) body was not in peace from his evil enemies, the body of his beloved child was also not in peace from his enemies. Maybe this is the reason why he said, “There is no day like the day of my son, al-Husayn.”

Imam al-Hassan (*‘a*) hid Imam ‘Ali’s body. Why? So that ‘Ali’s body would not be disrespected. But the situation in Karbala was different. Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin could not gather the strength to immediately hide Imam al-Husayn’sbody. The outcome was that which I do not want to recall.

That person said,

What need is there for ragged clothing after attacks,

Which left not even a flesh on his battered body?[62] ?

References

1. Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon 91.

2. Al-Khilafah or caliphate means viceregency, successorship, representing the original position of a real president or head, the adjective form of it is khalifah which means viceregent, successor, deputy and representative. In English the word is caliph. Khalifah means the common leadership of all Muslims in the world.

3. ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan (574-656), the Third Caliph.

4. The Nahj al-Balaghah (Peak of Eloquence) is the most famous collection of speeches (sermons) and letters attributed to Imam‘Ali (‘a).

5. Holy City of al-Madinah al-Munawwarah is a city in the region of Saudi Arabia.

6. Hijaz or Hidjaz is a region in the northwest of present Saudi Arabia.

7. Al-Baṣrah is the second largest city of Iraq.

8. Al-Kufah is a city in modern Iraq about 170 km south of Baghdad.

9. Egypt or Misr is an Arab country in North Africa.

10. ‘Ali (‘a) has discussed the issue of ‘Uthman’s killing in 14 parts of the Nahj al-Balaghah.

11. The famous Idol of Bani Quraysh (the dominant tribe of Mecca. It was also the tribe to which the Prophet belonged).

12. Surat al-Isra’ 17:33.

13. When the revolutionaries poured into ‘Uthman’s house looking for him, ‘Uthman’s wife threw herself over ‘Uthman’s body so as to protect him from the sword that was directed at him. The sword which was directed at ‘Uthman slashed his wife’s hand cutting off her fingers.

14. The Battle of Jamal (or the Battle of the Camel) was a battle that took place at Basrah, Iraq, in 656 between forces allied to Imam ‘Ali ibn Abi Taliband the superior forces of rebel Arabs allied to ‘A’ishah (a wife of the Prophet) who opposed ‘Ali’s status as caliph.

15. The Battle of Siffin (657 CE) occurred during the Second Muslim Civil War. It was fought between Imam ‘Ali ibn Abi Taliband Mu‘awiyah I, on the banks of the Euphrates River, in what is now Syria.

16. Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon 199.

17. The rebels.

18. Holy City of Mecca or Makkah al-Mukarramah is the holiest site of Islam, and pilgrimage to it is required of all Muslims who are able and can afford to go, at least once in their lifetime.

19. Banu Quraysh, the dominant tribe of Mecca, was the tribe to which the Prophet (s) belonged.

20. Ethiopia is a country situated in Africa. It is the second most populous nation in Africa.

21. Jihad is a war operated on the command of an infallible [ma‘sum] leader or his representative, which usually takes place to defend Islam and Muslims. The Qur’an calls those Muslims who die in this way (jihad), martyrs [shahids].

22. ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbas was one of the cousins of the Prophet (s).

23. Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi al-Andalusi (d. 940), Al-‘Iqd al-Farid, (Beirut, 1983), vol. 2, p. 389.

24. ‘Amr ibn al-‘As (c. 583-664 CE): at the time of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar, he was military commander. He was famous for being crafty and cunning. In the Battle of Siffin, he helped Mu‘awiyah in exchange for the governance of Egypt. He killed Muhammadibn Abu Bakr, the governor of Egypt, and finally became the governor of Egypt.

25. Malik ibn al-Harith al-Ashtar was one of the companians of Imam ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib. He became Governor of Egypt in 658 (38 AH) when assigned by Imam ‘Ali, after the Battle of Siffin had ended.

26. Abu Musa ‘Abd Allah ibn Qays al-Ash‘ari (d. ca. 662 or 672) was made the governor of Basrah and Kufah during the caliphates of ‘Umar and ‘Uthman. In the event of Battle of Jamal, he urged people not to join any side of the battlefield. After the Battle of Siffin was put on hold, Imam ‘Ali ibn Abi Talibwas forced to choose him as his arbitrator by the Kharijites.

27. Surat al-An‘am 6:57.

28. The takbir is an Arabic name for the phrase Allah-u Akbar, a common Arabic expression, which can be translated as “God is Greater” or “God is the greatest”.

29. Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar (Beirut, 1983), vol. 73, p. 436.

30. Al-Fatiḥah or al-Ḥamd is an Arabic name for the first chapter [surat] of the Holy Qur’an and means: “the Chapter of the Opening”.

31. Surat is an Arabic term. It means a “chapter of the Qur’an”.

32. One of the Kharijites.

33. Surat al-Zumar 39:65.

34. Surat al-A‘raf 7:204.

35. Surat al-Rum 30:60.

36. Islamic jurisprudence [fiqh] is made up of the rulings of Islamic jurists to direct the lives of Muslims. A component of Islamic studies, fiqh, expounds the methodology by which the Islamic law is derived from primary and secondary sources.

37. Shahadatayn in Arabic means the declaration of belief in the oneness of Allah, the Glorified and Exalted, and in Prophet Muhammadas his last messenger. The shahadah means “to testify” or “to bear witness”.

38. In the Islamic law, najis are things or persons regarded as ritually unclean. There are two kinds of najis. The essential najis which can not be cleaned and unessential najis which becomes najis in contact with another najis and one of them are wet.

39. Wajib (also fard or faridah means obligation or duty) is an Islamic Arabic term which denotes a religious duty.

40. Haram is an Arabic word used in Islam to refer to anything that is prohibited by the faith. Its antonym is halal.

41. ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Muljam was the Khawarij assassin of Imam ‘Ali (‘a).

42. Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon 92.

43. That is to say, this was essentially after the situation had become skeptical and ambivalent. Even when Ibn ‘Abbas went to see them, he too became hesitant. The atmosphere was foggy. He said, “The horizons are covered in fog.” The situation was not one that would make a Muslim soldier certain to fight and work for the benefit of Islam. When he faced a group more religious and ascetic than himself, a group who commited less sins, prayed more and the effect of worship was more apparent in their faces than him, he would become baffled. When he raised his sword, his hands would shiver, his heart would tremble, “How can I raise my sword on them?” If it was not for ‘Ali and his followers and the trust his followers had in him, it would have been impossible to raise his sword on them. The situation was extremely doubtful and rightfully so. If you and I were there too, we would also not have been able to raise a hand on them to the other side.

44. Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon 126.

45. Abu ‘Ali al-Husayn ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn Sina or Avicenna (980-1037 CE) was a Persian physician, philosopher, and scientist, born in Afshanah near Bukhara in Persia. He wrote 450 books on a wide range of subjects including philosophy and medicine. Some of his Books were the standard medical text in European universities for 7 centuries.

46. When an ignorant person confronts a wise and knowlegable person they are awed by the respect society has for them, consequently, they become confused. If they say that the knowledgeable know nothing, the signs of the scholar’s knowledge would become apparent. If they say that the knowledgeable have no skills, their skills would be observed. If they say that the knowledgeable are unwise, their wisdom is evident. What else can they say? At the end, they claim that the knowledgeable have no religion, and that they are non-believers.

47. کفر چو منی گزاف و آسان نبود محکمتر از ایمان من ایمان نبود

در دهر یکی چون من و آن هم کافر؟ پس در همه دهر یک مسلمان نبود

See M. Baqir Khwansari, Rawdat al-Jannat (Beirut), vol. 3, p. 179.

48. Battle of Nahrawan was a battle between Imam ‘Ali and the Kharijites. Nahrawan is a place twelve miles from Baghdad.

49. MuhammadIqbal (1877-1938), known as Iqbal Lahuri (Iqbal of Lahore) in Iran and Afghanistan. He was an Indian Muslim poet, philosopher and politician, who has poetry in Farsi and Urdu. He is credited with first proposing the idea of an independent state for Indian Muslims, which would inspire the creation of Pakistan.

50. Mir Ja‘far from Bengal and Mir Sadiq from the Deccan were instrumental in the defeat and the murder of Nawwab Siraj al-Dawlah of Bengal and Tipu Sultan of Mysore, respectively, by betraying them for the benefit of the British. Thus, they delivered their country to the shackles of slavery.

51. Mir Ja‘far ‘Ali Khan (1691-1765) was a monarchical ruler (nawwab) of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. He succeeded Siraj al-Dawlah. His rule is widely (though somewhat inaccurately) considered the start of British rule in India.

52. Bengal, known as Bangladesh is a region in the northeast of South Asia. Today it is mainly divided between the independent nation of Bangladesh (East Bengal), and the Indian federal republics constitutive state of West Bengal.

53. He was the Muslim prime minister of Tipu Sultan. Tipu Sultan was defeated by the betrayal of Mir Sadiq and was killed by one of Tipu Sultan’s soldiers, whose name was Ahmad Khan, a short period before Tipu Sultan’s fall.

54. The Deccan Plateau is an elevated area making up the whole of the southern India and extenting over eight states.

55. Apparently his correct name is Mirza MuhammadSiraj al-Dawlah, more popularly known as Siraj al-Dawlah (1733-1757) was the last independent Nawwab of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

56. Tippu Sultan, also known as the Tiger of Mysore (1750-1799), ruled the Kingdom of Mysore from the time of his father’s death in 1782 until his own demise in 1799. He was a Muslim Shi‘ah commander.

57. Apparently, this lecture was read before the resignation of the Professor from the management team of this institution.

58. يَا ضَرِبَةً مِن تَقِيٍّ مَا أَرَادَ بِهَا إلا لِيَبلُغَ مِن ذِي العَرشِ رِضوَاناً.

59. ثَلاثَةُ آلافٍ وَعَبدٌ وَقَينَةٌ وَقَتلُ عَلِيٍّ بالحُسَامِ المسَمَّمِ

See M. Baqir Khwansari, Rawdat al-Jannat (Beirut), vol. 3, p. 179.

60. وَلا مَهرَ أعلَى مِن عَلِيٍّ وَإِن عَلا وَلَا فَتكَ إلّا دُونَ فَتكِ ابنِ مُلجَمِ

61. Surat al-Zumar 39:19.

62. Sayyid ibn Tusi, among others, has narrated that on the day of ‘Ashura, Imam al-Husayn orders his aids to bring him clothes that were worthless and no man wanted, so that he could wear them under his own clothes. Therefore, when he was killed, the Imam continued, no one would want to take them off of his dead body. It has been reported that after his martyrdom even those worthless pieces of clothing were taken off of the Imam’s precious body.

Chapter 2: Imam al-Hassan's (‘a) Pacifism (Session 1)

The issue of Imam al-Hassan's pacifism was questioned in the past and continues to be so.[1] This issue remains under question especially during our time. Why did Imam al-Hassan make peace with Mu‘awiyah? This topic of Imam al-Hassan's peace with Mu‘awiyah is particularly highlighted when it is compared to Imam al-Husayn'sbattle against and his refusal to surrender to Yazid and Ibn Ziyad. These two approaches seem contradictory to those who do not pay attention to the depth of the issue; therefore, some claim that Imam al-Hassan and Imam al-Husaynwere two fundamentally different characters: Imam al-Hassan was more of a peace-seeker by nature, whereas Imam al-Husaynwas a rebellious and warrior-like.

Our point is this: would it have been possible for war not to take place if Imam al-Hassan had been instead of Imam al-Husayn? Would the issue have been resolved differently? Or are these outcomes related to the circumstances of the time? Did Imam al-Hassan's time require a different approach from Imam al-Husayn'stime and circumstance? In order to discuss these different situations, we need to raise a certain subject, which is usually raised by those who have discussed the differences between Imam al-Hassan and Imam al-Husayn'ssituation. Imam al-Husayn'sprudence was truly a necessity for his time as Imam al-Hassan's prudence was. Of course, we accept this issue and will later discuss it, but before that we need a basic discussion on Islamic commandments in relation to jihad (holy war), as they both, in fact, revert to jihad. Imam al-Hassan ceased and made peace but Imam al-Husayndid not cease and fought. We shall thus convey the essentials of Islam in the subject of jihad. We have not seen among those who have discussed Imam al-Hassan's reconciliation to have included such aspects. Therefore, we shall touch on this question: what were Imam al-Hassan's reconciliation and Imam al-Husayn'sbattle based on?

The Holy Prophet (s) and peace

We shall see later that the issue of pacifism was not exclusive to Imam al-Hassan. The Prophet (peace be upon him) had also adopted conciliatory methods during the first few years of the prophetic mission [bi‘thah] until the end of his time in Mecca, and even during the second year after entering Medina. No matter how much the Muslims were tortured by the non-believers [mushrikin], even when countless Muslims were killed under torture, other Muslims asked to go to war against those causing this and said: there is nothing worse. What could be worse than what we are going through? The Prophet still did not grant them permission. At most, he let them migrate from Hijaz to Habashah. However, when the Prophet migrated from Mecca to Medina the following ayah was revealed,

“Permission (to fight) is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed, and most surely Allah is well able to assist them.”[2]

Finally, permission was granted to those who were oppressed and tortured to go to battle. Is Islam a religion of peace or a religion of hostility? If it is a peaceful religion, then they must have abided by the claim that

fighting was, in essence, not a religious act. Religion only invites. Wherever it goes and wherever it does not. If, on the other hand, Islam is a hostile religion, then why was it, that during those thirteen years in Mecca, the Muslims were not given permission to protect themselves? We must conclude that Islam is both a religion of peace and a religion of war.[3]

In some circumstances, fighting is not necessary and in other cases it is. Again, as an example, we can consider the actions of the Prophet who during his time in Medina would sometimes fight the mushrikin or the Jews or the Christians, yet at other times decided to sign a peace treaty with them. The same thing happened in Hudaybiyyah where against the will of nearly all his companions, he signs a peace treaty with the non-believers in Mecca who were among his worst enemies. Again, we see in Medina that the Prophet signs a no-violation treaty with the Jews. What can this mean?

‘Ali and peace

We also see ‘Ali waging war at one stage and refraining from it at another. After the Prophet’s death, when the issue of successorship [khilafah] was raised and ultimately seized by others, ‘Ali refrains from fighting. He did not touch his sword and says that he has been ordered not to fight and must not fight. He exhibited great moderation no matter how aggressive they were towards him. His moderation at one point nearly triggered even al-Zahra’s objection,

Oh son of Abu Talib! Why have you withdrawn your hands and legs and constantly sit in a corner like a foetus in its mother’s womb? Like a person who is guilty and embarrassed to go out of his house, preferring to sit at home?[4] You are the same man from whom in the battlefield even the bravest would run away. Now these cowards have taken over you? Why?

It was then that he explained: that was my duty then. My duty now is this.

During the next twenty five years, ‘Ali continued to remain, what could be called a peace-seeking and conciliatory man. When people began to riot against ‘Uthman (the same riot which led to ‘Uthman’s assassination), ‘Ali was not among the rebels. He acted as a mediator between the rebels and ‘Uthman. He endeavored to reach a settlement according to which, from one side the rebels’ request (which was a fair request regarding a complaint about one of ‘Uthman’s governors who was being oppressive towards them) would be taken care of, and from the other side ‘Uthman would not be killed. This is reviewed in the Nahj al-Balaghah and has surly been mentioned in history. ‘Ali (‘a) says to ‘Uthman, “I fear that you will become the murdered leader of these people. If you are killed, murder will continue to be an option for these people. A rebellion will emerge among Muslims that shall never be suppressed.” Therefore, even during the final stages of ‘Uthman’s caliphate, which were, in fact, the most turbulent and chaotic years of his successorship, ‘Ali becomes the intermediary between ‘Uthman and the rebels. At the start of ‘Uthman’s succession to the caliphate, as a result of the deceit commited by ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Awf[5] only two people, from the initial six, remained as candidates: ‘Ali and ‘Uthman. The story behind this was that ‘Umar[6] formed a council consisting of 6 people responsible for choosing his successor. three people stepped aside, one in

favor of ‘Ali who was Zubayr[7], one in favor of ‘Uthman who was Talhah[8] and one in favor of ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Awf who was Sa‘d ibn Abi Waqqas[9]. Three people were left. ‘Abd al-Rahman said, “I am not volunteering.” This left only two people and the voting was left to ‘Abd al-Rahman. Whoever ‘Abd al-Rahman votes for will have four votes (because he himself had two votes and each of the two volunteers had one vote) and according to that council, he will be chosen as the Caliph. ‘Abd al-Rahman came to ‘Ali first and said, “I am willing to give you my oath of allegiance on the condition that you follow the Book of Allah and the conduct of the Prophet (s) and the methods of the two previous caliphs.” He replied, “I give oath of allegiance on the condition of following Allah’s Book and the conduct of the Prophet and whatever I perceive.” ‘Abd al-Rahman then went to ‘Uthman, “I will give you my oath of allegiance on the condition that you follow the Book of Allah, the conduct of the Prophet and the way of the previous two caliphs.” ‘Uthman accepted. However, ‘Uthman diverted from the methods of the previous caliphs. Then, they came and objected to ‘Ali (‘a), “Why did this happen? What will you do now that they have done such a thing?” He replied,

“As long as this oppression is aimed towards me but the affairs of Muslims rotate on their axis and orbit and the person, who is in my place, albeit unjustly, runs the affairs provisionally, I submit and have no objection.”

After ‘Uthman and during Mu‘awiyah’s time, people would swear allegiance to ‘Ali. Then, ‘Ali decided to wage war against the outlaws, who were known as the Violators [nakithin], the Deviators [∗qasitin] and those who misunderstood the truth of religion [mariqin], as well as the people of Jamal, Siffin and the people of Nahrawan.

After the Battle of Siffin a division was caused in ‘Ali’s army due to the riots of the Kharijites and the deceit by ‘Amr ibn al-‘As and Mu‘awiyah, who raised the Qur’an on spear heads saying: lets allow the Qur’an judge between us, with which some agreed, and so there was no place left for ‘Ali. Reluctant, ‘Ali accepted their offer to resort to arbitration.

This in itself is an example of ‘peace’. He agreed for arbitrators to decide based on the Qur’an and Islamic commandments. However, ‘Amr ibn al-‘As twisted the story in such a way that its outcome was useless, even for Mu‘awiyah himself. He ended it by way of deceit. He deceived Abu Musa al-Ash‘ari but his deceit did not remove ‘Ali from the picture or give way to Mu‘awiyah. Everyone realized that the two arbitrators had not reached an agreement and that one had deceived the other. One would say that he would overthrow both, whereas the other claimed that he was lying. They started to fight and disgraced one another, accusing each other of deceit. And so the story turned out fruitless.

In any case, the arbitration story falls into the same category. Why did ‘Ali agree to arbitration and did not continue the battle, even though he was forced by the Kharijites to do so? Ultimately, he would have been killed just like his son Imam al-Husayn. Likewise, we ask: why didn’t the Prophet wage war from the beginning? Ultimately, he would have been killed just like Imam al-Husayn. Why did he make peace in Hudaybiyyah? Ultimately,

he would have been killed just like Imam al-Husayn. Let us consider this situation: why did not Amir al-Mu'minin wage war from the beginning?

Again, he would have ultimately been killed like Imam al-Husayn. Also, why did he surrender to arbitration? He would have ultimately been killed like Imam al-Husayn. Are these statements true or not? We then reach Imam al-Hassan's time and the issue of his pacifism. The subsequent Imams lived in situations similar to that of Imam al-Hassan. Therefore, the issue is not only about Imam al-Hassan's peace or Imam al-Husayn'swar. It is a much broader issue and must be discussed accordingly. I will read you some excerpts from the book of Jihad so we can get a general picture of the topic and enter the details later.

The cases for jihad in the Shi'ah jurisprudence

We know that jihad is a part of the religion of Islam. There are a few cases for jihad:

The first is the antecedent jihad, which means the permission given by Islam to Muslims to attack those who are non-Muslims, especially when confronting polytheists to destroy polytheism, even though there may not have been any tracked record of hostility and aversion between them. The condition for this jihad is that it can be fought by adult, wise and free male soldiers. This jihad is compulsory, exclusively, for men and not women. For this jihad, the permission of an imam or his representative is required. From the point of view of the Shi'ah jurisprudence, this type of jihad is only feasible during the presence of an imam or one who has personally been appointed by an imam, that is to say in the Shi'ah jurisprudence, even a spiritual (religious) leader is not permitted to start an antecedent war.

The second case for jihad is when an Islamic territory is under attack by an external enemy. This would mean that there is a defence aspect involved, whether in the sense that the enemy is either planning to take over the Islamic land and occupy all or parts of it, or it may even be the case that they are not planning to occupy it. They may be planning to dominate the people and so are attacking in order to capture a group of Muslims, or they may want to rob the Muslims' assets either in the form of a raid or the form that are usual these days. Or perhaps their intentions are to violate territories and sanctuaries of Muslims and assault their women and children.

Finally, if the lives, property or any such aspects, which are venerated by Muslims, are violated by the enemy, it becomes compulsory upon the Muslim population, whether man or woman, free or not free to participate in this jihad.[10] The permission of the imam or his representative is not required for this type of jihad. This is the exact opinion of Islamic jurist consults (legal theorists) such as Muhaqqiq and Shahid Thani. I am reciting for you the translation of these opinions.

Muhaqqiq has a book called "Sharayi'", which is one of the incontrovertible scripts taken from sources of the Islamic jurisprudence. Shahid Thani has expounded this book by the name "Masalik al-Afham", which is an excellent description. Shahid Thani is one of the most important and unsurpassed Shi'ah legal theorists.

In this case, they say that an imam's permission is not a requirement. This case is very nealy similar to the present situation that Israel has created

by occupying the Muslim country. In this case, it is compulsory for all Muslims, whether man or woman, free or not free, near or far to participate in this jihad, which is a war for defence and, therefore, does not require the permission of an imam. When we say "whether near or far", it is meant that this jihad is not exclusive to those Muslims who have been attacked.

An uprising will become compulsory on anyone who becomes informed of the situation, unless he is certain that they (the people under attack) are adequate in number and have the power to defend themselves.[11] This means that the enemy is weaker and does not have enough power; while, on the other hand, the Muslims are more powerful and thus are not in need of help. Otherwise, should he find out that his presence is needed; jihad would become compulsory upon him. The closer they are situated (geographically), the stronger the obligation. In other words, in such a case, their obligation becomes definite.

The third case is similar to jihad, but it is not the general jihad. It is a particular jihad. Its rules are different to those of the general jihad. General jihad has specific rulings, one of which is that if anyone is killed during this jihad, he is considered to be a martyr [shahid]. Consequently, his dead body does not need to be washed [ghusl] before it is put into the grave (i.e. his body has already been purified) and is buried with the same clothing he died in.

The blood of a martyr is superior to water,
This sin is superior to one hundred rewards. [12]

The third type is also colloquially known as jihad, but it is one jihad that does not have all the rules of the general jihad. Its reward is the same as the reward for the normal jihad. Its figure is considered as a shahid. It can be explained as follows: if an individual is not in an Islamic land, but rather in a territory that belongs to non-believers, who are attacked by another group of non-believers, and there is a danger of mortality for him who is living among them (e.g. a Muslim is living in France when a war breaks out between Germany and France). What is the responsibility of a Muslim in such a situation: someone who is not one of them? His responsibility would be to save his life by any means even if he deems it necessary to take part in the war in order to save his life, then he must do so. It is not his responsibility to take part in the war to express his sympathy with what is taking place in his surrounding. In such a case, if he is killed, his reward will be the same as a martyr.

We have other such cases in Islam, whose participants also merit the title of shahid although the same rulings of burial, as in the case of general jihad are not applied to them. For example, other shahids may be buried with the clothes they died in and do not need to be washed before burial. These rules, as well as some others, do not apply to such cases. Another example of such a case is someone who is attacked by an enemy, as a result of which his life, family and property are put at stake, even if the enemy happens to be Muslim.

For example, someone is sleeping in his house. A thief (even a thief who is a Muslim, who is possibly one of those thieves, who, as Haji Kalbasi used to say, does his night prayers[13] but is a thief) comes and attacks this house

and wants to take the property of the owner. Can one defend his wealth in such a case? Yes, there are chances of being killed, you say? Even if there is a ten percent chance of dying, efforts to save one's life, even by a ten percent chance, are compulsory.

Although, since in this case the situation involves saving one's property, the person can continue to resist until there is a fifty percent chance of survival. However, if there are dangers other than the loss of property, such as a threat to one's life or the life of his relatives, even if there is a one hundred percent chance of getting killed, it is obligatory for him to rise up to defend himself and fight. He must not say that he has intended to kill me, what can I do? No, if he has intended to kill you, it becomes obligatory upon you to kill him first. You must show resistance and not say: he wants to kill me! Why should I do anything at all? Why should I get involved?

Fighting rebels

We have already mentioned three cases of jihad. We have two other cases that must be considered, one of which is colloquially known as "Fighting Rebels". The basis for such a jihad can be explained as follows: if a civil war occurs among Muslims and one tribe wants to dominate over another, the main responsibility of the other Muslims is to endeavor to make peace between them, in an effort to settle reconciliation between them. Should they see that one side is resisting and is not, under any circumstances, willing to make peace, it would become compulsory upon them to fight against the rebellious group, in favor of the oppressed. The context of the Qur'anic verse is as follows,

"If two groups of the faithful quarrel, make peace between them. But if one of them acts wrongfully towards the other, fight the one which acts wrongfully until it returns to Allah's ordinance. Then, if it returns, make peace between them with justice and act equitably. Surely, Allah loves those who act equitably."[14]

Inevitably, one of the applications of this type of jihad is when a group of people revolt against the just imam of their time. Because he (the imam) is just and truthful but they (the mutineers) have risen against him, it is presumed that the imam is right and not the mutineer. Thus, in this case, one must enter battle in favor of the imam and fight against the mutineer.

Another case (which has caused some difference of opinion among scholars) is the issue of bloody uprisals for the sake of 'enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil [al-amr bi'l-ma'ruf wa nahy 'an al-munkar]. That is in itself another stage with its own levels.

Peace in the Shi'ah jurisprudence

Another issue which is also mentioned in the book of jihad is the issue of peace, which is referred to by the scholar as "armistice" or "truce". Truce means reconciliation and armistice means peace. What does peace mean? It is the 'no offence' agreement, 'no fighting' treaty and what is today known as the so-called "peaceful coexistence" agreement. I will quote for you a passage from Muhaqqiq's book 'Shara'i' al-Islam':

It is an agreement to ceasefire and to abstain from fighting for a certain period of time. It is permissible only when it includes (insures) advantages

for Muslims, either due to the smallness of their number, where they would be unable to resist the enemy or to obtain help from others to become stronger [istidhar], which may be gained from this peace, or that this ceasefire may cause the non-Muslims to embrace the religion of Islam. But when this truce does not grant any advantages for Muslims and the Muslims have enough strength and power to overcome the enemy, truce is not permissible.[15]

Here he states that a truce or peace comprises of an agreement not to fight, but to live in peace together. However, this truce can only be established on the condition that a specific time frame has been set for the agreement. This issue is raised in jurisprudence if an opposing party can be fought off instinctively. That is to say, if the opposing party consist of polytheists, it is permissible to sign a treaty with them. However, this agreement must not be signed for an indefinite period of time. It should not be "for the time being". No, "for the time being" is not correct. The period must be definite and specified. For example, for a period of six months, one year, ten years or more, just as the Prophet (s) signed the treaty in Hudaybiyyah for a period of ten years.

He says, "It is permissible only when it includes (insures) advantages for Muslims."[16] Therefore, peace is allowed if it is in the best interests of the Muslims.[17] If a Muslim deems it advisable to make peace for the time being, then it is permitted and not forbidden. But as we said before, in the case of an obligatory war, for example, in the case when if a Muslim country is under enemy attack, it is obligatory to defend and free the country under any circumstances. Now, if it is in the best interest of the Muslims to sign a peace-treaty with the same invading enemy, must they sign the treaty or not? Muhaqqiq states that if it is in their interests, then it is permissible to continue. However, peace should not be contracted for an indefinite period of time, rather a definite time span should be stipulated in the agreement, since invasion and occupation of a country by the enemy for an unknown period of time cannot be in the interests of the Muslims. If this agreement should be made, then it would mean the end of hostility for a set period of time. So now, when would a peace treaty be in the interest of Muslims?

Muhaqqiq says, "Either due to smallness of their number, in which case they are unable to resist the enemy.[18] (Or because) the fact that they are less in number means that they have less power."[19]

So when they do not have the strength needed and their battle follows a particular objective, then it is advisable to wait for the time being until they have gathered the required power.

Or to the istidhar (obtaining help from others to be stronger) which may be obtained from it.[20]

Therefore, it is advised to cease hostilities in order to gather the required power during this time. This plan ensures reinforcements. Or, to look forward to non-Muslims embrace Islam by discontinuing war and waiting.[21]

Also, a peace treaty is permitted, if as a result of it there are hopes that the opposing party will convert to Islam. This assumption is only valid when the opposing party are non-believers. So, in other words, peace is being made with the conviction that during this set period, the enemy shall be

defeated from a spiritual point of view. This was certainly the case with the Hudaybiyyah peace treaty, which we shall soon discuss.

But when there are no advantages for Muslims (in truce) and the Muslims have enough strength, power and ability to overcome the enemy, a truce will not be permissible.[22]

However, if these stated aspects are absent from the situation, then it is not permissible to continue with a peace treaty. This was a discussion about the issue of peace or so-called "truce". We, therefore, understand that from the Islamic jurisprudencial point of view, peace is not permitted under certain circumstances whether peace refers to signing a treaty or ceasing hostility. Even for this, there are two types of peace which must be considered. Firstly, when the peace we are referring to involves the signing of a peace agreement. This is done when there are two opposing factions and they resolve to sign a treaty, just as was done by the Prophet (s) or even by Imam al-Hassan.

Secondly, when the term 'peace' is used, it has the implication of peacefulness and freedom from strife. Of this, scholars have said that it is permissible if the Muslims are unable to show resistance or, in short, there is no avail in fighting. This was the case in the early days of Islam, when Muslims were few in number and scarce. Had they fought, then they would have been eradicated and no remnants of them would have been left.

And so scholars state that it is better for Muslims to gather reinforcements and supporters during this time (of peace). However, it would be more advantageous for them to attract the enemy spiritually.

Here I must describe the Prophet's treaty of Hudaybiyyah, which may be considered as the origin and basis for the peace treaty which was later initiated by Imam al-Hassan.

Hudaybiyyah Peace

The Prophet (s) signed a peace treaty during his lifetime, which caused astonishment and perhaps even irritation among his companions. However, after a year or two, they acknowledged that this act had been the right decision.

In the sixth year after Hijrah, after the Battle of Badr had taken place, severe resentment was triggered towards the Prophet (s) from among the Quraysh clan. After that, the Battle of Uhud took place, as a result of which the Quraysh clan, having taken revenge from the Prophet, also earned the resentment of the Muslims. Thus, from the point of view of the Quraysh clan, their worst enemy was the Prophet and from the point of view of the Muslims, the Quraysh clan was their worst. It was the month of Dhu al-Qa'dah[23], which is considered as a sacred month.

In a sacred month, the tradition during the period of ignorance was to put aside their weapons and to abstain from any fights. Even if the bitterest enemies were in a state of war, they would desist from all action as a sign of respect for this month, although they would have butchered each other, had it have been any other month. The Prophet wished to use this tradition of the Ignorance Age ['asr-e Jahiliyyah] in order to go to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage and return. He had no intentions other than this.

Having announced this, he left for Mecca with seven hundred of his companions (a thousand and four hundred according to other reports). Their pilgrimage was a “common pilgrimage” a sacrificial animal [sawq al-hady] would walk ahead of them, which meant that it was intended for sacrifice. A sign would be put on the shoulder of the animal, for example they would place a shoe on the animal’s shoulder (which was a custom from ancient times) so that whoever saw the animal would realize that this animal was for sacrifice.

The Prophet ordered his companions, who were approximately seven hundred in number, to lead seventy camels ahead of the caravan, so that if anyone saw them from afar, they realized that these were pilgrims and not warriors; therefore, not causing for concern. Their clothes and general appearance gave the impression of those on pilgrimage. Therefore, because of the overt nature of this pilgrimage, the news quickly reached the Quraysh clan.

Near Mecca, the Prophet was informed that the Quraysh, including women and men, young and old, had come out of Mecca and proclaimed, “By God, we will never let Muhammadenter Mecca.” They threatened to fight against the Muslims, even though month was considered to be sacred. These actions opposed even the customs of the Age of Ignorance. The Prophet went near the camps of the Quraysh and ordered the Muslims to dismount there. Messengers and couriers were exchanged between the two parties constantly. At first, several messengers arrived, one after the other, demanding to know why the Muslims had come.

The Prophet only replied, “I am a pilgrim and have come here for pilgrimage. I have no other business here. I will perform my pilgrimage and return.” Every messenger who was sent, witnessing the state of the Muslims, would return and inform the Quraysh that the Prophet had no intention of fighting.

However, they did not accept this and so the Muslims, including the Prophet himself, decided to enter Mecca, knowing that it might lead to conflict. The Muslims asserted that they did not wish to fight, but if they were attacked, then they would fight back. Bay‘at al-Ridwan took place there and then. They again gave an oath of allegiance for this purpose, until a representative from the Quraysh came and said that they were willing to sign a peace treaty with the Muslims. The Prophet replied that he was prepared for this. Messages sent by the Prophet were those of peace. To a couple of the messenger, he would say,

“Woe to the state of the Quraysh! War has finished them. What do they want from me? Leave me be with the rest of the people. I will either be destroyed, in which case what they want will be fulfiled by others, or I will prevail, which is again to their advantage, since I am one of the Quraysh. This would be an honor for them.”

However, this was not beneficial. They insisted on contracting a peace agreement, and thus sent a man named Suhayl ibn ‘Amr to conclude an agreement, according to which the Prophet would return back to Medina for the year, yet he would have the right to come back during the following year and stay for three days in Mecca, perform his ‘umrah and return.

The other clauses which had been included in the peace treaty were not advantageous for the Muslims. According to one clause of the peace treaty, should one member of the Quraysh clan join the Muslims, they (the Quraysh) will maintain the right to retrieve him. However, should one of the Muslims flee to join the Quraysh, they (the Muslims) would hold no such right and so forth (this clause contained other ponderous conditions). In return Muslims would obtain freedom in Mecca and would no longer be under pressure.

All the efforts of the Prophet were concentrated upon those final words, for that reason he accepted every ponderous condition in the treaty in order to reach this objective alone. The treaty was signed. Many of the Muslims, however, became irritated and said, "O Messenger of Allah! This is a disgrace for us. We have come all the way to Mecca, yet now we must return? Is this correct? No we must definitely go (to Mecca)." The Prophet (s), however, replied, "No, this is the treaty and we have signed it." The Prophet then ordered for the sacrifices to be made right there and then. He then said, "Come and shave my head," as a symbol of exiting ihram. At first, the Muslims were reluctant to go through with this, but later they accepted, albeit with some exasperation.

The one who expressed his irritation more than others was 'Umar ibn ab. He came to Abu Bakr and said, "Is he not a prophet?" He*t*al-Khat responded, "Yes." Then He asked, "Are we not Muslims? Are they not non-believers?" Abu Bakr replied, "Yes." He asked again, "Then what is this situation? The Prophet had seen in his dream that he had entered Mecca with the Muslims and had conquered it. He had narrated this dream for the Muslims.

Thus, they went to the Prophet and said, "Had you not seen in your dream that we will enter Mecca?" He said, "Yes." They then said, "What happened then? Why did your dream not come true?" The Prophet (s) replied, "I did not see in my dream and never told you that we would enter Mecca this year. I have dreamt and my dream is true. We will enter Mecca." They said, "What kind of treaty is this that if one of their members should come to us they would have the right to take him back, yet should one of our members join them, we are not permitted to go and retrieve him?" He replied, "If one of us wishes to join them, then he will be a Muslim who has become an apostate and thus is of no use to us.

If a Muslim who has become an apostate leaves, we will never go after him and if one of them becomes a Muslim and wants to join us, we shall tell him to go back, at the moment you Muslims are in the state of being oppressed, Allah shall open a way for you." The Prophet gave into some extremely bizarre conditions. Suhayl ibn 'Amr had a son, who had become a Muslim and was among the Muslim army.

When this agreement was signed, another one of his sons ran away from the Quraysh to join the Muslims. As soon as he arrived, Suhayl said, "Now that the treaty has been signed, he must be returned to me." Thus, the Prophet said to him (Suhayl's son) whose name was Abu Jundal, "Go! Allah will open a way for you oppressed people as well." The poor fellow, being very distressed, cried out, "Muslims! Do not let them take me among the

non-believers and turn me away from my religion." The Muslims became very troubled and said, "Oh Messenger of God! Please give us permission not to let them take this one." The Prophet replied, "No, he must be returned as well." Interestingly, when the peace treaty was concluded, Muslims found freedom and were able to preach Islam freely, in a period of less than one year; the number that had converted to Islam from among the Quraysh was by many times greater than those who had not converted to Islam in the past twenty years.

Therefore, the situation changed to the benefit of the Muslims. Afterwards, the terms of the agreement were destroyed by the Quraysh unprompted and an enthusiasm for practicality and spirituality appeared in Mecca.

A pleasant story has been narrated from one of the Muslims, about a man by the name Abu Basir who lived in Mecca. He was a very brave and strong man. He fled from Mecca to Medina. In accordance with the agreement, the Quraysh sent two people to take him back. When they arrived and demanded for him the Prophet agreed to give him back.

No matter how much this man begged the Prophet to prevent them from taking him, insisting that they will turn him away from his religion if he goes back, the Prophet still said, "No, we have made an agreement. It is not part of our religion to go against the agreement. Allah will open a path for you as well." He was escorted back unarmed, by guards, who carried weapons themselves. They reached Dhu al-Hulayfah near Masjid al-Haram where they became engaged in the sacred pilgrimage [muhrim]. This place is situated seven kilometres from Medina.

Here, they stopped to rest under a shade. One of them was holding his sword in his hand, when a man (named Abu-Basir) commented that the guard's sword seemed to be of very good quality and asked if he may be allowed to inspect it. The guard offered him the sword. As soon as Abu Basir took hold of the sword, he killed the guard.

While the first guard was dying, the other fled like the wind back to Medina. When the other guard reached Medina, the Prophet said, "There seems to be some fresh news!" He said, "Yes, your friend killed my friend." Shortly after, Abu Basir returned, "O Messenger of Allah! You have kept your side of the agreement. Your agreement stated that if one of their people escaped, you will return him and so you did. Now you have fulfilled your terms, please leave me be." He then went to the Red Sea and found a spot which he located as a centre.

As soon as the Muslims, who were suffering under torture in Mecca, found out the Prophet does not provide shelter to those who escape and Abu Basir had escaped to the Red Sea and established a centre there, they left to join him one by one. Gradually, the people of this community grew up to seventy people and were able to form their own defence force. The Quraysh could no longer regulate them in anyway.

Therefore, they were obliged to write to the Prophet saying, "We no longer wish for them to be returned to us. We request you to inform them that we have not desire for them to come back. Please write to them and tell

them to come to Medina and not cause us any more trouble. We will disregard this term from our agreement." And so, they abdicated.

In any case, this peace agreement was for the purpose of preparing the mentality of the people for what was to come. Subsequently, this is what followed. As was mentioned before, the Muslims started receiving more freedom in Mecca and gradually the people started to accept Islam in groups, until finally, the prohibitions were removed entirely.

Now let's study the circumstances at the time of Imam al-Hassan and Imam al-Husaynto determine whether or not their situations truly differed to such an extent that had Imam al-Hassan been in Imam al-Husayn'sposition, he would have acted in the same manner and likewise, had Imam al-Husaynbeen in Imam al-Hassan's position, he too would have agreed to go through with the peace Imam al-Hassan agreed to. Undoubtedly, this would have been the case.

I would just like to point out our response to the question, should someone ask whether Islam is a religion of peace or a religion of war, we shall refer to the Qur'an for this purpose. In the Qur'an, we have instructions on both war and peace. Numerous verses [ayah] are related to the issue of war with the non-believers,

"Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight you, but do not transgress. Indeed Allah does not like transgressors."[24]

And likewise, about the subject of peace, the Qur'an states,

"And if they incline toward peace, then you (too) incline toward it and trust in Allah. Indeed He is the Hearing, the All-knowing."[25]

One verse of the Qur'an reads,

"And reconciliation is better."[26]

Therefore, which is the religion of Islam? Islam does not accept peace as a stagnant principle, claiming that peace must prevail in all situations and that hostility is not an option. It also does not accept war in every situation. Peace and war, in any case, depend upon the circumstances, which mean that they depend upon the causes that they take effect from.

Muslims, whether during the time of the Prophet (s) Imam 'Ali, Imam al-Hassan and Imam al-Husayn, or during the time of the other Imams or during our time, must maintain Islam and the rights of Muslims as their main objective. They must determine whether the overall circumstances call for fighting or abandonment of hostilities. Therefore, the issue of labelling Islam as a religion of peace or war is not correct. Each is relative in its own circumstance.

Question and answer

Question: Referring to the Shi'ah jurisprudence to ascertain whether Imam al-Hassan's method of conciliation was permitted or not is not right. This is because the foundation of Shi'ah jurisprudence is essentially based on the conduct of the infallible Imams ('a). In any subject, certain things are always set as principles and then propositions are established based on those principles. Is jurisprudence, according to Muhaqqiq and other Shi'ah scholars, essentially based on the conducts of the infallible Imams ('a)?

Answer: This was a useful and suitable reminder. It is correct. But we were not intending to say that Imam al-Hassan ('a) abided by the Shi'ah

jurisprudence here. What we meant, however, was merely to enquire whether jurisprudence, as a whole, is in harmony with logic or not? For this issue that I brought up, firstly, regardless of any other controversies, we shall put forward the Shi‘ah jurisprudence as a whole and then try to see whether or not it is essentially in harmony with logic (because when one reviews an issue in its entirety, he finds it easier to solve a specific case). Otherwise, we did not want to refer to slavish issues.

In our opinion, everything we see in the Shi‘ah jurisprudence is logical, including the issues which are entirely based on the methods of the infallible Imams (‘a) or other resources. This helps to see whether there is any criticism as to why jihad is permitted in the cases where jihad is considered permitted. Also, is the case where jihad is legitimate, logical or not? Both in the cases where they considered jihad to be legitimate or where they considered peace to be legitimate, their decisions are considered legitimate by us.

When we accepted this from a logical point of view, then we go to see whether Imam al-Hassan was supposed to fight when he made peace? Or if Imam al-Husaynwas expected to make peace and he fought (this is because both pillars exist in Islam: jihad and peace)? Imam al-Hassan made peace when he was supposed to make peace and Imam al-Husaynchose jihad when he deemed it necessary? This is the same for Imam ‘Ali and the Prophet where their cases are definite. The case of the Prophet specially requires no more discussion because the Prophet made peace in one place and fought in another.

Question: Are there disagreements between the jurisprudence of our Sunni brothers and the Shi‘ah jurisprudence in the case of jihad? If so, what are these disagreements? The other question is on the topic of conditions for jihad. You mentioned that jihad was necessary when dominance over self or property was being sought. What about the case of dominance over intellect? Can there be such a cause for jihad? If so, what form of jihad will that be?

Answer: I have to study this issue in the Sunni jurisprudence. I shall have a look and let you know. I know this much in brief that their conditions are not much different to ours and if there are any differences, it is on our part. This is because we have certain limitations that they do not. This is in the case when the presence of an infallible imam or his specified representative is necessary for certain cases. They do not have such a condition.

The second issue you raised in your question was not mentioned in ancient jurisprudence, because it essentially is a new phenomenon. We must pause on this to see what the general principles of command for this phenomena are and thus from a regulatory point of view, this matter must be endeavored other than this, such an issue was never raised in ?the olden times.

References

1. Some made objections during Imam al-Hasan's time and this issue was also under question by the subsequent Imams.

2. Surat al-Hajj 22:39.

3. Peace in its general meaning; abandoning war.

4. Al-Ihtijaj, al-Tabarsi, vol. 1, p. 107.

5. 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf was born with the name 'Abd 'Amr ibn 'Awf into the tribe of Banu Zuhrah. He married 'Uthman ibn 'Affan's half-sister. Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas was his first cousin. The Sunnis regard him as one of the Ten Promised Paradise.

6. ab was from the Banu Adi clan of the Quraysht 'Umar ibn al-Khat tribe. He became the second Caliph (634-644) following the death of Abu Bakr, the first Caliph.

7. Zubayr ibn al-'Awwam from Banu Asad, the son of Saffiyah bint 'Abd alib, his wife was Asma bint Abu Bakr, sister al-Mutfot 'A'ishah. Their son was 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr. He went to war with 'A'ishah and Talhah against Imam 'Ali ('a) in the Battle of Jamal in 656 CE and got killed in this battle. The Sunnis regard him as one of the Ten Promised Paradise.

8. Talhah ibn 'Ubayd Allah was a cousin of Abu Bakr. He was from the Banu Taym clan. He was also extremely rich. He went to war with 'A'ishah and Zubayr against Imam 'Ali ('a) in the Battle of Jamal in 656 CE. During the battle, he got injured and died later of his wound.

9. Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas was from the Banu Zuhrah clan of the Quraysh tribe. He had a son named 'Umar ibn Sa'd, the leader of the forces that killed Imam al-Husayn ('a) at the Battle of Karbala. 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf was his first cousin.

10. It may even be permissible on the minor to participate in this jihad, too.

11. Masalik al-Afham, vol. 1, p. 116.

12. خون شهیدان را زآب اولاتر است این گنه از صد ثواب اولاتر است

13. This is referring to the story in which they told Haji Kalbasi: that a certain house had been robbed in the middle of the night and he said: when did that thief read his night prayers then?

14. Surat al-Hujurat 49:9.

15. Shara'i' al-Islam, al-Muhaqqiq al-Hilli, translated by Hasan M. Najafi (Qum/Iran, 2002), p. 288.

16. Ibid.

17. It is not as if war is always obligatory and peace is always forbidden. No, peace is also permissible, rather the "Shahid" tries to say: when they say 'permissible' this does not mean that if you did not do it, then it is permitted and not forbidden which becomes obligatory in some cases.

18. Ibid.

19. In the olden days, power was counted on the basis of quantity. But today power is not counted on the basis of quantity but it is based on other things.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Dhu al-Qa'dah is the eleventh month in the Islamic calendar. It can also be known as the al-Qa'dah.

24. Surat al-Baqarah 2:190.

25. Surat al-Anfal 8:61.

26. Surat al-Nisa' 4:128.

Chapter 2: Imam al-Hassan's Pacifism (Session 2)

Our discussion was about Imam al-Hassan's (‘a) peace. In the previous session we made a sketch of the issues regarding war and peace in Islam on the basis of the Islamic jurisprudence. We specifically said that, in general (as evident from Islamic history) and in certain situations, it is permitted (or possibly compulsory) for an imam or the leader of Muslims to sign a peace agreement in the same manner that the Prophet (s) officially agreed to do so in different situations.

In certain situations, he signed peace agreements with the ‘People of the Book’ [ahl al-kitab] and at times even with the pagans. Of course, in other specific cases he would fight them.

Then, we gave a summary of the Islamic jurisprudence and we said that, on the basis of the so-called intellectual juristic preferences, it is not wise to assert that if a religion or a system (or call it whatever you wish) permits the law of war then it means that this religion or that system considers it necessary in all situations and in no case whatsoever does it allow for peace or coexistence by means of abandoning hostility.

The opposite point to this is just as wrong, which is when someone claims that they are essentially ‘anti-war’ and wholly ‘pro-peace’. It is likely that many wars created the basis for a more comprehensive peace while much reconciliation prepared the basis for victorious battles.

This was the summary of what we said in the previous session. We then decided to speak about the kind of situation Imam al-Hassan (‘a) was in and what the conditions were, upon which Imam al-Hassan agreed to make peace, or more precisely, forced to do so. Also, what the differences were between the circumstances of Imam al-Hassan and the circumstances of Imam al-Husayn(‘a) that Imam al-Husayndecided not to make peace? There are many differences, the aspects of which I will tell you about and you can judge for yourselves later.

Contrasting the circumstances of Imam al-Hassan (‘a) and Imam al-Husayn(‘a)

The first difference is that Imam al-Hassan (‘a) was in the caliphate position and Mu‘awiyah had the label of a governor. It seems that at the time he had not yet started to call himself the caliph of the nation or the Commander of the Faithful. However, he rebelled as a mutineer and a protestor during Imam ‘Ali’s (‘a) time as caliph, under the slogan of not accepting ‘Ali’s regency, he claimed that ‘Ali had given shelter to ‘Uthman’s killers and that ‘Ali himself was involved in the assassination of the true caliph of the Muslims; therefore, he could not be the rightful caliph.

As such, Mu‘awiyah rebelled as a protestor in a group of protestors under the same slogana combat against a government that was not lawfully established and whose leader has blood on his hands.

Up to then, he never claimed vice regency and people had not started referring to him as the Commander of the Faithful. He would just claim that they were a group of people who did not wish to obey the government.

Imam al-Hassan takes the position of vice-regent after Imam ‘Ali. Mu‘awiyah became more powerful day by day. Due to specific historical

reasons the circumstances of Imam ‘Ali’s government, that Imam al-Hassan later inherited, was being weakened from within.

It has been written, that 18 days after ‘Ali’s martyrdom, Mu‘awiyah leaves to conquer Iraq (these eighteen days include the time it took for the news to spread as far as Damascus and Mu‘awiyah’s announcement for public preparation and mobilization of an army). Here, Imam al-Hassan is in a particular situation: he is the caliph of Muslims and a rebellion has risen against him.

Imam al-Hassan’s murder in this situation would mean the murder of the caliph of the Muslims and defeat of the core of the caliphate. Imam al-Hassan’s resistance to the point of getting killed was similar to that of ‘Uthman during his time. However, it was not similar to Imam al-Husayn’s resistance.

Imam al-Husayn’s situation was a situation of protest against the ruling government.[1] If he would get killed (which he did), his death would be an honorable one, which in fact became so. He objected to the situation, the government of the time and the spread of corruption. He believed that they did not qualify for the task and during the passed twenty years they proved what kind of people they really were. He remained persistent upon his word until the very end. For this reason, specifically, his uprising was and continues to be considered honorable and courageous.

Form this point of view, the circumstances of Imam al-Hassan are exactly contrary to those of Imam al-Husayn: he was someone who was placed in the position of governor who faced objections from an opposition. As mentioned before, if he were to be killed, his death would mean the death of a rightful leader. This in itself was an issue which even Imam al-Husayn refrained from: that no one in the position of prophet or a vice regent must be killed. We see that Imam al-Husaynis not willing to get killed in Mecca, Why? He said: it would be the respect for Mecca that would be destroyed. They will kill me anyway. Why should they kill me in such a place of sanctity, which would only cause disparagement to the House of Allah?

We see that during the rebellion against ‘Uthman,[2] ‘Ali is trying extremely hard to respond to their demands in order to stop ‘Uthman from being killed (this has also been mentioned in the Nahj al-Balaghah). He defended ‘Uthman to such an extent that once he said, “I have defended ‘Uthman so much that I have fears of being sinful for it.”[3]

But why did he defend ‘Uthman? Was he a supporter of ‘Uthman as a person? No. The extent of his defence was explained when he said: I fear that you will be ‘the assassinated caliph’. It would be a disgrace for the Muslim World to have a caliph of the Muslims killed during his time at rule. It will be considered as disrespect to the caliphate as a whole. This is why ‘Ali said that they have lawful demands. He advised ‘Uthman to fulfil their demands so that they go back to where they came from. On the other hand, ‘Ali did not want to give the rebels the expression that they should go about their business, forget about the truth and not complain about a situation that was getting worse by the day, even though it would inevitably mean more power for a ruler who was being obdurate. Of course, he would never say

these words and he should not have. But at the same time, he did not want ‘Uthman to get killed while he was still in power. At the end, in spite of ‘Ali’s desire this took place.

If Imam al-Hassan had resisted then, from what is apparent from history, the final result would have been getting killed, which means the death of the Imam and the Caliph in power. Imam al-Husayn’sgetting killed was the death of a protester. This is one difference between Imam al-Hassan’s circumstances and Imam al-Husayn’s. The second difference was in connection with the weakening of Iraqi forces, i.e. the forces in Kufah, which is true.

However, this did not mean that they were destroyed completely and if Mu‘awiyah had attacked, he would have conquered Kufah in one swoop, which is incomparable to the ease and simplicity the Prophet conquered Mecca with. Numerous companions of Imam al-Hassan had betrayed him and the number of hypocrites in Kufah had risen and so Kufah was in a chaotic situation, which was the cause of many historical incidences.

One of the biggest disasters that took place in Kufah was the appearance of the Kharijites. ‘Ali considered the reason for their appearance to be the unrestricted conquers that took place one after the other, without the corresponding training and discipline that were required after such conquers. People who had not been disciplined or had not become acquainted with the depth of Islamic teachings had come among the Muslims, yet claimed to be better Muslims than Muslims themselves.

Nevertheless, disunity had appeared in Kufah. We can all confess to the fact that the hands of the one who is not bound to principles of humanity, religion, faith or morals are more open to different options or methods than the hands of the one who does abides by such principles

Mu‘awiyah had founded the establishment of an enormous base in Kufah. He would constantly send spies to Kufah who would either distribute a lot of money in order to buy people’s consciences or spread false rumours in order to ruin their spirits.

All of this put aside, if Imam al-Hassan had resisted and at the same time prepared a massive army to confront Mu‘awiyahan army of about thirty to forty thousand, or may be as some historians claim even one hundred thousand so he could match Mu‘awiyah’s huge army of one hundred and fifty thousandwhat would have been the outcome? In Siffin, when the Iraqi forces were better and more powerful, Imam ‘Ali fought Mu‘awiyah for eighteen months. After those eighteen months, when he was about to be defeated, Mu‘awiyah and his army carried out that treacherous act of raising the Qur’an on spears. If Imam al-Hassan was to fight, a war would have taken place which would have lasted for many years between these two enormous groups of Muslims of Iraq and Damascus. Furthermore, thousands of people would have been killed without achieving a final goal.

As history shows, there was no chance for them to defeat Mu‘awiyah and in all probability Imam al-Hassan would have been defeated in the end. What kind of honor is there in fighting for years, causing thousands of people to get killed from both sides and a final outcome of either weariness

for both sides and going back where they came from or Imam al-Hassan's defeat and later being killed in the position of vice-regent.

Imam al-Husayn, however, had a troop which did not exceed seventy two men. He even dismisses them saying, "Leave if you want to, I will stay on my own." But they resisted until they got killed. They were killed with one hundred percent glory. Therefore, these two differences have been named for the time being:

1. Imam al-Hassan was in the seat of caliphate and if he was to be killed, the caliph would have been killed.

3. Imam al-Hassan's army did not equalize Mu'awiyah's and the outcome of initiating this war would have been a continuation of this war for a long time, large numbers of Muslims getting killed, without achieving the right final purpose.

The elements contributing to Imam al-Husayn'suprisal and their contrasts with Imam al-Hassan's circumstances

Imam al-Hassan and Imam al-Husayn('a) differed from each other in many other situations. There were three fundamental elements involved in Imam al-Husayn'suprisal. When we observe any of these three elements, we see that they had different forms during Imam al-Hassan's time.

The first element that caused Imam al-Husayn'suprisal was the demand of the tyrant government of the time for Imam al-Husaynto pledge an oath of allegiance to them, "Get al-Husaynto pledge allegiance! Grab him hard. Have no mercy upon him. He must pledge his allegiance."

They requested for Imam al-Husaynto pledge his oath of allegiance. Taking this into consideration, Imam al-Husayn'sresponse was only, "No, I will not swear allegiance. And he did not. His response was negative."

What about Imam al-Hassan? Did Mu'awiyah ask Imam al-Hassan to swear allegiance to him, when he had decided to make peace with Mu'awiyah? (Swearing allegiance means acceptance of government.) No. On the contrary, one of the conditions of the peace treaty was that there should be no requests for oaths of allegiance. Apparently, historians have also claimed that neither Imam al-Hassan nor anyone from his people, including Imam al-Husayn, his other brothers, companions or other followers of Imam al-Hassan gave their oaths of allegiance to Mu'awiyah. The issue of giving oath of allegiance was never put forward. Therefore, the element of swearing in allegiance which was one of the issues that forced Imam al-Husayn'sresistance did not exist in Imam al-Hassan's case.

The second element causing the uprising of Imam al-Husaynwas the Kufah invitation as a prepared city. After twenty years of toleration under Mu'awiyah's rule, torture and oppression, the people of Kufah had truly become desperate. You can even see some people who believed[4] that Kufah had become a one-hundred-percent prepared city and a sudden course of events transformed the situation.

The people of Kufah wrote eighteen thousand letters to Imam al-Husaynannouncing their preparation. However, when Imam al-Husaynfinally came, they did not help him. Everyone, of course, says, "Then, the grounds were not ready completely." However, from a historical

point of view, if Imam al-Husaynhad not taken those letters into consideration, then history would have found him guilty. Historians would have said that he lost a perfectly prepared opportunity, whereas in Kufah during the time of Imam al-Hassan, the situation was the opposite. Kufah was tired and irritated. Kufah was depressed and disturbed. Thousands of disagreements could be found there. As we see, Kufah was the city about which Imam ‘Ali, toward the end of his government, constantly complained about. He complained about its people and their lack of preparation. He always prayed, “Oh Allah! Please take me away from these people and give them the government that they deserve so that they may later realize the value of my government. When I say a ‘prepared Kufah’, I mean that an ultimatum had been issued to Imam al-Husayn.”

Unlike others I do not want to say that Kufah was truly prepared or that Imam al-Husayn(‘a) was truly counting on Kufah. No. The ultimatum issued to Imam al-Husayn(‘a) took place in a situation that even if the grounds were not fully prepared, he could not disregard this ultimatum. What about the case of Imam al-Hassan? In Imam al-Hassan’s case the opposite of issuing an ultimatum had taken place. The people of Kufah had already shown that they were not ready.

The situation inside Kufah was so bad that even Imam al-Hassan avoided most of Kufah’s people. He would wear his armour under his cloth whenever he came out, even for prayers. This was because the Kharijites and Mu‘awiyah’s protégés were plentiful and there was a danger of him getting killed. Once when he was praying, he was shot but because he was wearing his armour the shooting did not take affect. Other than this, he would have been murdered.

Thus, an ultimatum was issued to Imam al-Husaynby the invitations from the people of Kufah and because it was issued Imam al-Husaynhad to considered it. But Imam al-Hassan’s circumstances differed in that the people of Kufah had almost announced their lack of preparation.

The third element involved in Imam al-Husayn’suprising was the aspect of ‘enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil’ [al-amr bi’l-ma‘ruf wa nahy ‘an al-munkar]. That is to say, despite the fact that they were demanding for allegiance from Imam al-Husain, his reluctance to do so, regardless of the fact that the ultimatum had been issued by the invitations from the people of Kufah, and his announcement in response of his willingness, this was another element which caused Imam al-Husayn to rise up.

This means that if they had not invited him or had asked him to swear in allegiance with them, he would have still revolted for the sake of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil. Since Mu‘awiyah acquired the caliphate, whatever he carried out was against Islam. His government was tyrannical and oppressive. His oppression and hostility was known by all and can still be seen up to this day. He changed Islamic rules. He was embezzling and misusing the public treasury. He had shed the blood of respectable people and so forth. The worse sin he committed was choosing his alcoholic, gambler son as his ‘crown prince’ and forcefully gave him his position. It is an exigency on us to object to them. As the Prophet says, “If

anyone sees an oppressive ruler with these indications and does not object to the ruler's sayings or actions, he has committed a sin that deserves the same punishment Allah assigns for the oppressive ruler."[5]

There is no discussion, however, in the fact that this was virtually the case during the time of Mu'awiyah. Imam al-Hassan had no doubt about Mu'awiyah's identity. During Imam 'Ali's time, Mu'awiyah objected and said that he only wanted to take vengeance for the blood of 'Uthman, but now he says, "I am willing to follow the Book of Allah one hundred percent, the customs of the Prophet (s) and the path of the previous caliphs. I will not designate a successor for myself. After me, the caliphate is for Hassan ibn 'Ali and even after him for Husaynibn 'Ali." This means that he confessed to their rights upon the caliphate. "They just have to submit the affairs" (the word in the clause of contract was 'submit the affairs'), which meant bequeath affairs to me. "This is all I am saying. Imam al-Hassan will step aside for the time being and hand over the job to me and I shall undertake it following these conditions." He sends a signed blank piece of paper and says, "Any condition Hassan ibn 'Ali desires can be put down here and I will accept it. If I do not follow the rules of Islam completely, then I would no longer want to have this position. Up to then, people had not had any experience the like of Mu'awiyah."

Now let us assume that the opposite had been presented to us by history. In a similar way Mu'awiyah sends a signed paper to Imam al-Hassan and accepted such pledges saying, "You agree to step aside. What would you want the caliphate for? I will administrate your desires. The only issue remaining is whether the one who is going to execute the Book of Allah and the divine customs will be you or me? Do you want to start a bloody battle because you want to be the one who is going to do this? If Imam al-Hassan had not submitted under such conditions and continued to go through with the war, one hundred thousand of people would have been killed.

There would have been much destruction and in the end Imam al-Hassan himself would have been killed. Today's history would have blamed Imam al-Hassan and said that such a situation demanded for peace (and he should have made peace). The Prophet also made peace in many instances. After all, one must make peace in some circumstances. Yes, if we were present, then, we would have said that this was nothing other than Mu'awiyah wanting himself to be the ruler. All right, he can rule. He is not asking you to accept him as a caliph.

He does not want you to call him the Commander of the Faithful[6] nor does he want you to swear allegiance with him. Even if you would have said that the life of all Shi'ahs was in danger, he would sign that all the followers (Shi'ahs) of your father are under protection and I shall cross out all the resentment I have from them since Siffin. From a financial point of view, I am willing to cancel the taxes of parts of this country and allocate it to you so you can manage yourself and your followers as well as your relatives, so that you would not be in need of us financially.

If Imam al-Hassan had not accepted peace under these conditions he would have been condemned by history. He agreed and when he did, history condemned the other side. Because of his jittery Mu'awiyah accepted all

these conditions. The outcome was his victory from political aspect, showing that he was one hundred percent a man of politics and that there was nothing but diplomacy in his nature.

Therefore, as soon as he acquired the seat of power and the position of vice-regent, he abandoned all the conditions in the contract he agreed to by not abiding by a single one of them. By doing so he proved his devious personality. Even when he came to Kufah, he bluntly said, “Oh people of Kufah! I never fought with you to make you pray, fast, go to Hajj or pay Islamic taxes. I fought you so that I could be your chief and leader.” He later realized that this statement was not to his advantage and therefore continued, “I know that you will fulfil these duties yourselves and that there is no need for me to insist on them.”

One of the conditions on the contract was that after him the vice regency belonged to Hassan ibn ‘Ali and after him to al-Husaynibn ‘Ali. But after seven or eight years passed from the start of his government he started raising the issue of Yazid’s succession to throne after him.

According to the contract he agreed to leave the followers of ‘Ali in peace. However, he inconvenienced them greatly before causeing problems between them.

What, in fact, was difference between Mu‘awiyah and ‘Uthman? There is no difference other than that ‘Uthman, more or less, saved his position among Muslims (non-Shi‘ahs) as a great caliph who, of course, made some mistakes. As for Mu‘awiyah, he only became famous as a scheming politician. The jurists’ view about Mu‘awiyah and the ones who came after him among the row caliphs who came after the Prophet (s) to execute Islam is that they deviated completely from the Islamic route and got labelled as kings, monarchs and princes.

Therefore, when we compare the situation of Imam al-Hassan to that of Imam al-Husayn, we will see that they are incomparable in every way.

The last issue that I want to talk about is the fluent logic and the sharp blade that Imam al-Husayn(‘a) possessed. What was that?

If anyone sees an oppressive ruler who is doing such and such (i.e. being domineering) and keeps silent about it, he is considered sinful by Allah. This was, however, not applicable to Imam al-Hassan. What was actually offered to Imam al-Hassan was that if he were to follow up such an issue, they would react by doing such and such. Thus, by saying that “they will do such and such” is different to something already being carried out by them and which now only serves as evidence against them.

This is why it has been said that Imam al-Hassan’s peace prepared the grounds for Imam al-Husayn’suprising. It was necessary for Imam al-Hassan to step aside for a while so the hidden and concealed identity of the Umayyad Dynasty became evident for the people. Therefore, the consequent uprising is more justified in history.

After this peace contract, when it became obvious that Mu‘awiyah was not bound to any of the conditions of the contract, some Shi‘ahs came to Imam al-Hassan and said, “This peace contract is annulled.” They were right. Because Mu‘awiyah had breached it; therefore, come and revolt. He said, “No uprising will come after Mu‘awiyah.” This means he gave more

time so that their staus was made more obvious, then the time for uprising would have come. This sentence means if Imam al-Hassan was alive after Mu‘awiyah and present in the time of Imam al-Husayn, he too would have risen against him most definitely.

Therefore, according to the three above-mentioned elements, the uprising of Imam al-Husaynwas serious, lawful and correct. Imam al-Hassan’s situation, however, was completely different and contradictory. Allegiance had been demanded from Imam al-Husaynbut never demanded from Imam al-Hassan (allegiance itself was an issue for Imam al-Husayn). An ultimatum was issued by the people of Kufah. People claimed that Kufah had awakened after twenty years.

They claimed that after twenty years under Mu‘awiyah’s rule, Kufah was not the same as it was before. They had now become grateful to ‘Ali, grateful to Imam al-Hassan and to Imam al-Husayn. When the name of Imam al-Husaynwas mentioned among the people of Kufah, they shed tears. Their tree is now bearing its fruit and the grounds have become green. Come! The grounds are completely prepared. These invitations were an ultimatum to Imam al-Husayn. This was the opposite for Imam al-Hassan. Anyone who saw the status of Kufah, he/she would say Kufah is not at all prepared.

The third issue were the corrupt acts of the government (I do not mean the corruptness of the ruler, no, that is another issue and the corrupt acts of the government is another). Mu‘awiyah still has to show his real self and prepare the grounds for enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil (i.e. for uprising) or produce the so-called obligation. This, however, was completely the case in the time of Imam al-Husayn.

The conditions in the contract

Now I will read you some of the conditions that were included in the contract so you can see what status they had. This is how conditions of the contract had been written:

1) Ruling will be bequeathed to Mu‘awiyah[7] under the condition that he follows the Book of Allah, the conducts of the Prophet (s) and the way of the eminent caliphs (it is necessary for me to have a say here: ‘Ali has a principle according to which he says: I will not rise for vice-regency which is my right or I become the caliph or anyone else. This is the people’s duty. I will rise when I see the one who has taken the reins of power has digressed from the affairs).

The following has been mentioned in the Nahj al-Balaghah,

“As long as oppression is only toward me and they have taken away my rights and other affairs are in their line, I submit. I will rise when they have crossed the line concerning the affairs of Muslims.”[8]

This is actually a clause from the contract. Imam al-Hassan concludes a contract this way. As long as oppression is towards me and they have deprived me of my right but the usurper is willing to undertake upon himself Muslims’ affairs in its correct manner, I am willing to step aside under this condition.

2) After Mu‘awiyah, the government belongs to Imam al-Hassan and if anything happens to him, it will go to Imam al-Husayn. This sentence meant

that the peace agreement was intended for a temporary period of time. Imam al-Hassan had not agreed to leave power to Mu‘awiyah so that he may do whatever he wished for as long as he wished. They had agreed that the peace treaty would be in force “until Mu‘awiyah was still in power”. This peace is for that given period and did not include the time after Mu‘awiyah. Therefore, Mu‘awiyah did not have the right to plan for anything ahead of his time or to choose himself a successor.

3) Mu‘awiyah had made cursing and profanity towards Imam ‘Ali (‘a) a custom in Syria. It was mentioned in the text of the contract that he should put a stop to this, “Mu‘awiyah has to stop cursing ‘Ali in his prayers and can only evoke him in goodness.” This was signed with commitment by Mu‘awiyah. They propagandized against ‘Ali and said, “We curse ‘Ali because he (God-forbid) digressed from the religion of Islam.” The individual who signed this contract has agreed to this much at least: if you call ‘Ali somebody worthy of cursing, then why did you pledge to evoke him by anything but goodness? And if he is worthy of cursing and what you declare is right, why do you act in this way? Afterwards, he even breached this clause and this carried on for ninety years.

4) The Muslims’ treasury which had a balance of five million dirhams was an exception and was not included in the submission of government. Mu‘awiyah had agreed to send Imam al-Hassan two million dirhams every year. This was proposed so that the Shi‘ahs were financially capable to fulfil their own needs and that if they did have any demands, they could be implemented by Imam al-Hassan and Imam al-Husayn.

“To give privileges of gifts and donations to the Bani Hashim and divide one million dirhams among relatives of the martyrs who were killed alongside Imam ‘Ali in the Battle of Siffin and Jamal, these must be reimbursed from the expenses of “Dar Abjard”. Dar Abjard is a region near Shiraz from where taxes and expenses were made exclusive to Bani Hashim.

5) “People in every corner of Allah’s land, Syria, Iraq, Yemen or Hijaz should be safe and sound. Black and red should both benefit from security and must disregard their blunders.” This clause was intended for the spitefulness that existed in the past because these people had in fact fought Mu‘awiyah in Siffin. “And none should be reprimanded for his previous mistakes.

Also, grudges must not be held against the people of Iraq; ‘Ali’s companions must be safe and sound wherever they are and from among them none should be vexed or be fearful for their life, property, family and children. No one should stalk them or injure them. Everyone should be given his/her rights. Whatever is in the hands of ‘Ali’s companions should not be taken away from them. No one should attempt to murder Hassan ibn ‘Ali, his brother or anyone from the Prophet’s (s) Household, overtly or covertly.”

These conditions, especially conditions three and five which were about blasphemy against ‘Ali, were mentioned because when Mu‘awiyah promised to follow the Book of Allah and the conducts of the Prophet and the path of the previous caliphs has this naturally hidden in it. Nevertheless, they knew that Mu‘awiyah paid special attention to these issues and that he

would act contrary to them in private. So, they added another point to the conditions of the contract, “And in no Islamic land shall a threat or intimidation be towards them.” Therefore, he would not be able to use any justification for the acts that he committed. They also wanted to show that: we (the Ahl al-Bayt) are cynical towards your way from the very beginning. This was a collection of the conditions and clauses of this contract.

Mu‘awiyah had a representative by the name of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amir who he sent to Imam al-Hassan with the blank letter he had signed and said, “I shall agree with any conditions you set. Imam al-Hassan put down all these conditions in the peace treaty. Later, Mu‘awiyah read these conditions while saying in many parts I take Allah and His Messenger as my witnesses: if I do not do such and such, then so and so, and they signed the contract.

Therefore, it does not seem that there were any problems with Imam al-Hassan’s peace during the circumstances of his time. Comparing Imam al-Hassan’s peace in the position of leader and Imam al-Husayn’suprising as a protestor is not correct. Therefore, it seems that if Imam al-Hassan had not been there during that time and Imam al-Husayn had become the caliph after ‘Ali’s martyrdom, he too would have signed the peace treaty. Likewise, if Imam al-Hassan was alive after Mu‘awiyah, he would have rebelled against him like Imam al-Husayn. These all resulted from the differences in their circumstances.

Question and answer

Question: Would ‘Ali have made peace if he was in Imam al-Hassan’s position? Imam ‘Ali had said that he was not willing to tolerate Mu‘awiyah’s rule even for one day. How did Imam al-Hassan assent to Mu‘awiyah’s governance?

Answer: As to the first question, regarding whether Imam ‘Ali would have made peace, had he been in Imam al-Hassan’s position cannot be answered so simply. Yes, if Imam ‘Ali had been in such a situation as Imam al-Hassan’s, he too would have made peace. The same also goes if there was a possibility of death in the seat of leadership. But we are aware that Imam ‘Ali’s circumstances differed greatly with the situation of Imam al-Hassan. Social turmoil had broken out toward the end of Imam ‘Ali’s time; the war of Siffin was progressing and had the Kharijites not divided the society from within, ‘Ali would have definitely become victorious.

There is discussion on that issue. However, when you asked, ‘Why did Imam al-Hassan put up with Mu‘awiyah’s governance when Imam ‘Ali had refused to accept his rule even for a day’, then you are mixing the two issues. Imam ‘Ali was not willing to accept Mu‘awiyah as his deputy or as someone chosen by him even for one day.

However, not only does Imam al-Hassan Imam ‘Ali was not willing to accept Mu‘awiyah as his deputy not want to place Mu‘awiyah as his deputy, but he wants to step aside completely. Imam al-Hassan made peace by stepping aside and not being committed. No clause in the contract mentioned anything about ruling. There was no mention of ‘Ali’s name or a successor for the Prophet (s). They agreed for Imam al-Hassan to step down and that Mu‘awiyah could take over under the condition that this person, who under no circumstances qualifies for this task, did the job properly.

Thus, there are many differences between the two. ‘Ali said that he was not willing that a person like Mu‘awiyah represents him somewhere or be his deputy. Imam al-Hassan was also reluctant for this to happen and the conditions in the peace treaty did not conclude anything other than this.

Question: Had ‘Ali made mention in his will of Imam al-Hassan about anything regarding how to deal with Mu‘awiyah?

Answer: I do not remember coming across anything as such. But the situation seemed clear. Even if there is nothing in the historical texts, the state of affairs was clear. ‘Ali himself supported fighting Mu‘awiyah until the end. Even though towards the end ‘Ali’s situation had become chaotic, what disturbed ‘Ali the most was Mu‘awiyah’s state, therefore he believed that Mu‘awiyah must be dealt with and destroyed.

‘Ali’s martyrdom became a new obstacle for fighting Mu‘awiyah. In one of ‘Ali’s famous sermons in the Nahj al-Balaghah, when ‘Ali invites people to jihad and remembers his loyal companions, he says, “Where are the brothers of mine who traversed the path of truth and left the world while joining the Truth. Where is ‘Ammar? Where is the son of Tayhan? And, where is the man called Dhu al-Shahadatayn?”[9]

And then he cried. He read this sermon during Friday Prayers and invited people to move. It is written that it was not before the next Friday that he was struck down by a sword and martyred.

Initially, Imam al-Hassan decided to fight Mu‘awiyah but he later changed his mind and made peace. This was when he realized the apparent lack of preparation in his companions and the internal conflicts. Imam al-Hassan realized that this would be a disgraceful battle. Going to war with such army would be disgraceful and would cause shame. It was in “Sabath” that one of his own companions hit his foot with a spear.

One of the advantages of Imam al-Husayn’smovement was that he created a strong religious core of men who had been trained to resist the hardships that they faced. There is no record in history shows any of joining the enemy’s army. However, it has been mentioned in history that a large group from the enemy’s army joined them in the event of ‘Ashura. This means there was no one in Imam al-Husayn’sarmy who showed weakness other than one or maybe two. His name was al-Dhahhak ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Mashriqi. When he first came to Imam al-Husayn’sarmy, he told Imam al-Husaynthat he would joint them under the condition that he stays until his presence brought use for Imam al-Husaynand his army. “However, the instant I realize that my presence ceases to bring you an ounce of good, I shall leave,” he continued. He set this condition and Imam al-Husaynaccepted. He was there until the last moments of the day of ‘Ashura, but then he went up to Imam al-Husaynand said, “According to the condition I set, I can now be dismissed, because I feel that my presence is of no use to you.” The Imam said, “If you want to go, you may go.” He owned an excellent running horse.

He mounted on the horseback and whipped the horse to get the horse prepared. Imam al-Husayn’sarmy was completely surrounded, therefore, in order to leave he focused on a point and attacked it. As soon as the army

broke apart he ran away on his horse. A group of Mu‘awiyah’s men tried to follow and he was almost about to get caught.

However, one of the people in that group, who happened to be acquainted with him, told the others to let him go. He told them that he only wanted to flee and not fight. Other than this, no one showed weakness, unlike Imam al-Hassan’s men who showed weakness from the very start. Therefore, if the Imam had not made peace, death would have been associated with stigmatization from his companion’s. These therefore are different.

What I want to say is that both Imam ‘Ali and Imam al-Hassan initially intended to fight; however, the circumstances which later appeared in Kufah caused the Imam to rethink his decision of going through with war. The Imam even marched the little number of people that had joined his army out of the city. He told them to go to Nukhaylah in Kufah.

He read a sermon and invited the people. When his sermon was finished no one showed a positive response until when ‘Uday ibn Hatam got up, reproached the people and then told them that he was leaving. He had one thousand people with him. Then, other people started to leave. Imam al-Hassan also went to Nukhaylah in Kufah. He stayed there for ten days. This time a large crowd joined him but again showed weakness there. Mu‘awiyah and his people gave money to a group of their chiefs to make them leave Nukhaylah; another group in another way and so forth. The Imam then realized that the grounds for an honourable fight were not prepared anymore.

Question: When you say, “If Imam al-Hassan had not made peace, then history would have blamed him, claiming that even though he could fit any condition in the peace treaty, he did not do so,” does not sound right. I say this because people considered the arrival of that signed blank piece of paper nothing but a fraud. It meant that Imam al-Hassan could write whatever he wanted. Mu‘awiyah would still not keep his word. People had come to know Mu‘awiyah during the time of Imam ‘Ali (‘a).

Answer: It just so happens that Mu‘awiyah could have used a different con with that signed paper which was to see whether the conditions set by Imam al-Hassan abided by Islam or not. Because Mu‘awiyah wanted to be sure of what Imam al-Hassan wanted both for the sake of his own position and for the sake of veracity (both Imam al-Hassan and Mu‘awiyah wanted this to happen).

To whose benefit were these conditions, to his benefit or to the benefit of the Muslims? We see that all the conditions were to the advantage of the Muslims and that Imam al-Hassan could not do anything other than this. You say that people perceived this as a fraud. People at the time actually thought to themselves: what a good human he is! And would say to Imam al-Hassan give him your conditions, let us see what you want then! Is remaining as caliph your only condition or do you have something else to say? If you do not have anything else to say he is truly willing to bring prosperity to the Muslims.

You then said people had become knowledgeable about Mu‘awiyah in the time of ‘Ali. It just so happens that they considered him as a bad person

but a good ruler. This is one of the reasons why the people of Kufah became weak. They would say that it is true, Mu‘awiyah is a bad person but he treats the peasant very well. Look at how he treats the Syrians! How happy the Syrians are with him.

This is how those who had become knowledgeable about Mu‘awiyah saw him: he is a bad person but a good ruler. If he becomes the ruler, he would not discriminate between the people of Kufah and others. Mu‘awiyah had become especially famous for his patience and forbearance. He had a political forbearance which historians have criticised him for. He could not use his political forbearance in Kufah. Even if he had, he would have become victorious in spirituality as well as politics.

People would go and swear at him but he would only laugh in their faces because he knew that he would later buy them with money. They would say: you cannot find a better person to govern. Now that he is a bad person, let him be a bad person. On this basis, Imam al-Hassan decided on peace as if he was telling people: fine, we brought the person to do the job. Now let’s see if this bad person is going to execute the job as well as you expect him to or not?

Mu‘awiyah was never known for being a tyrannical ruler. He was only known as an ambitious man and nothing more. During the period when Imam al-Hassan agreed on peace, Mu‘awiyah’s true colors were introduced, with regards to what kind of ruler he truly was.

Question: Did Imam al-Husaynsign the peace letter or not? And was he at all objective to Imam al-Hassan’s peace agreement?

Answer: I have not come across anything concerning Imam al-Husaynsigning the peace treaty, simply because there was no need for Imam al-Husayn’ssignature under the peace treaty. At that time Imam al-Husaynwas a follower and submissive to Imam al-Hassan. He agreed and committed to whatever Imam al-Hassan did. Even when the group who was against Imam al-Hassan’s peace treaty came to Imam al-Husaynand said: “We do not agree to this peace treaty. May we come and swear allegiance with you?” He said: “No, I will follow whatever my brother Imam al-Hassan does.” It has been proven by history that Imam al-Husayncomplied with Imam al-Hassan’s peace treaty. This means that he did not express even the smallest amount of opposition toward his brother over the issue of the peace treaty. When he sees Imam al-Hassan’s determination to peace, he submits. No, no objection has ?been observed from him.

References

1. Now I do not care whether Imam al-Husayn was a rightful protestor and that Imam al-Hasan was a rightful imam or that his objector was illegitimate. I am analyzing the situation from a social point of view.

2. Whose riot was rightful meaning their protests were all proper (now even the Sunnis accept that the protest of the rioters was proper and in place) and thus ‘Ali respected them during the time of his ruling. Malik al-Ashtar and Muhammadibn Abu Bakr were among the protestors and the assassins of ‘Uthman. And later they became one of the special and particular people of ‘Ali, just as they were before.

3. Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon 245.

4. Such as the author of “Shahid-e Javid” [the Eternal Martyr].

5. Tarikh al-Tabari, vol. 7, p. 300.

6. They inserted as a condition that Mu‘awiyah should never expect Imam al-Hasan (‘a) to call him “the Commander of the Faithful”.

7. The interpretation here is “government”, but the Arabic phrase is “submitting affairs”, which means the job will be handed over to him.

8. Nahj-al-Balaghah, sermon 74.

9. Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon 181.

Chapter 3: A Discourse on Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin (‘a)

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin (‘a) (also known as ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn) is described and viewed as the “champion of spirituality” (spirituality in its correct sense). The philosophy behind this character in ‘Ali ibn al-Husaynis understood when one looks at the Household of the Prophet (every single one of them) of whom ‘Ali ibn al-Husaynis one.

In it, one would see Islamic spirituality, or more specifically, the reality of Islam and how belief in Islam has deeply penetrated the Household of the Prophet (s) which in itself is an issue worthy of consideration. When one sees a man like ‘Ali ibn Abu Talib, who was raised by the Prophet, and on whose lap the Prophet rested his head before he breathed his last breath when he submitted his life to the Giver of Life. This is the man who had resided in the house of the Prophet (s) from early childhood.

No man was as close to the Prophet as he was. Yes, when one looks at the life of ‘Ali, one sees complete faith in the Prophet and is able to see the Prophet through the being of ‘Ali. What caused this absolute faith towards the Prophet in a man like ‘Ali?

The Imam’s acts of worship

All members of the Prophet’s Household are alike in this respect. It is truly amazing. When one observes ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn, and the extent of his fear of Allah, or his manner of worship, which can be viewed as true worship, and in the words of Alexis Carl is the journey of the soul to Allah (his manner of worship and prayers were not just the body standing in front of the Ka‘bah and the soul wondering elsewhere, it was always as if his soul left his body). Yes, when one observes ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn, he is filled with awe by his level of spirituality and the Islam he practiced. What was his type of Islam? What kind of soul was this?

اینهمه آوازها از شه بود گرچه ازحلقوم عبدالله بود

These voices belonged to the king even if they were from the throat of his servant.

When one sees ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn, it is as if he has seen the Prophet in the mihrab of worship, in the final third of the night in Mount Hira’.

One night when the Imam was occupied with his usual routine of worship, one of his children suffered a fall and broke a bone. This needed a bone setter. The family, however, did not interrupt the Imam’s worship. They went and brought the bone setter and wrapped the child’s hand, while he was screaming out of pain. The child’s pain subsided and the episode ended. The next morning, the Imam noticed the child’s bandaged hand and enquired as to what had happened. He was informed of the incident that had taken place the night before while the Imam was consumed in worship. It then became clear that the Imam was in such a state of devotion that his soul had flown towards Allah such that the sound surrounding him in the house had not reached him.

The herald of affection

Zayn al-‘Abidin was known as the herald of affection. This is also amazing: whenever he would see an isolated person, a stranger in the city, a

pauper, or one who went unnoticed by others, the Imam would be affectionate towards him. He would show them kindness and invite them to his home. One day he saw a group of lepers (people are usually repelled by people who have leprosy due to a misplaced fear of becoming infected, but in the end, they too are servants of Allah). He invited them to his home and tended to them there. Zain al-'Abidin's home was the house of the poor, the orphans and the helpless.

The service in the Hajj caravan

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin was the child of the Prophet. On his pilgrimage to Hajj, he was reluctant to travel with the caravan who knew him. Instead, he wished to travel with the caravan coming from a remote area who did not recognize him. This was so that he may travel amongst them as a stranger. He joined such a caravan and asked whether he can be of service to them. They accepted. In those days, it was customary for people to travel on camel and horseback taking on average ten to twelve days to reach Mecca.

During this period, the Imam became the servant of the caravan.A certain man who knew the Imam happened to encounter this caravan. As soon as he recognized the Imam, he went to the travellers and asked, "Who is this man whom you have brought to serve you?" They replied, "We do not know.

He is a young man from the city. But he is a very good man." The man replied, "Clearly, you are unaware, because if you knew, you would not place him at your service." They enquired about the Imam's identity to which the man replied, "He is 'Ali ibn al-Husaynibn 'Ali, the grandchild of the Prophet." They ran towards the Imam and dropped themselves at the Imam's feet, "Sir! What was this you have done? We could have been punished by Allah for what we have done! How could we have been so impudent towards you? You must now be our master! Rest here while we serve you! To which the Imam replied, "No, my experience in travelling within a caravan who knows me, tells me that they will not permit me to serve the people of the caravan. That is why I choose to travel with a caravan whose travellers do not know me so that I may obtain the privilege of being of service to Muslims and friends.

The Imam's prayers and tear shedding

For Imam Zayn al-'Abidin such an opportunity which had been bestowed upon his great father, Imam al-Husayn, was never bestowed upon him. Neither an opportunity the likes of the opportunity Imam al-Sadiq had. However, for someone who wants to be of service to Islam, there are always other opportunities but in different forms. One just has to consider the honor Imam Zayn al-'Abidin has created for the Shi'ah World in the form of prayer! The Imam was able to fulfil his mission in this respect.

Some have assumed that because Imam Zayn al-'Abidin never rose up with the sword during his lifetime and after his father's martyrdom, he allowed his father's legacy to be forgotten. However, this is by no means correct. He would make use of any opportunity to keep his father's legacy alive. Why did he continuously lament and commemorate the tragedy? Was it akin to the condition of a man who feels pitiful and cries indiscriminately? Or rather, did he want to keep the memory of this tragedy alive, in order to

remind people not to forget the reasons why Imam al-Husaynrebelled and whom he was murdered by? This was the reason why the Imam constantly shed tears.

One day, one of his servants asked, “Sir! Is it not time you stopped crying?” (He had realized that the Imam was crying for his loved ones.) The Imam replied, “What are you saying? Ya‘qub [Jacob] had only one Yusuf [Joseph] and this is how the Qur’an describes his affections,

“And he turned away from them and said: O my sorrow for Yusuf [Joseph]! And his eyes became on account of the grief that he was supressing.”[1]

?I saw eighteen Josephs fall onto the ground before my eyes, one after the other.”

Reference

1. Surat Yusuf 12:84.

Chapter 4: Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) and the Issue of Vicegerency (Session 1)

Our discussion of vicegerency and leadership has reached Imam al-Hassan (‘a) and after that the issue of Imam al-Rida[1] (‘a) as the crown prince. There were questions about both of these topics which we have discussed. In order to complete and end these topics, I must say that other circumstances have occurred for our pure Imams on these grounds which are similar in some aspects.

There is a string of questions and even criticisms regarding Imam al-Sadiq. The issue of vice-regency was not put forward to all the Imams only to the following four Imams: Imam ‘Ali, Imam al-Hassan, Imam al-Ridaand Imam al-Sadiq. In Imam al-Sadiq’s case, there is the issue of briefly offering the vice-regency. One question is that, a great political opportunity was created in his time (which was the end of the Bani Umayyad era and the beginning of the ‘Abbasid era). What happened that made Imam al-Sadiq decline this opportunity?

This opportunity was created by the gradual increase of opposition towards Bani Umayyad among Arabs and the Persians, for either religious or materialistic reasons. The religious reasons were the countless debaucheries and despotic crimes that they committed. The religious people had realized that they (Bani Umayyad) were debauched, unworthy people and they also witnessed the extent of their crimes towards eminent and pious Muslim men (the influence of such matters was gradual).

This hatred towards the Bani Umayyad had spread among people especially after the time of Imam al-Husayn’s martyrdom when some uprisings such as that of Zayd ibn ‘Ali ibn al-Husaynand that of Yahya ibn Zayd ibn ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn took place. Their religious reputation was completely destroyed. I am sure you have heard of the extent of their debauchery. The explicit alcohol drinking and licentiousness rendered their reputation worthless and thus people had developed hatred towards their conduct.

Their reign, in wordly terms, was also oppressive. Some of them were committing overwhelming cruelty; for example Hajjaj ibn Yusuf and a couple of others in Khorasan. Iranians, in particular, and among them people from Khorasan (Khorasan with its old vast understanding) had especially formed a commotion against the Bani Umayyad rulers. A division was created between the religion of Islam and the political affairs of the ruling system.

The rising of some ‘Alawis especially had an exceptional effect on Khorasan. Even though the insurgents themselves were destroyed, their hype had remarkable influence. Zayd, the son of Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, rose in the periphery of Kufah. Again, the people of Kufah entered into agreement with him, swearing allegiance, but the majority of them failed to remain faithful to it. This man was killed in an atrocious way near Kufah and was treated in a criminal manner.

Despite the fact that a friend of his buried him secretly, even stopping the flow in a river to dig his grave in the river bed, before letting the river flow again, a grave-robber managed to report this. A few days later, they arrived,

and dragging the body from its resting place, they hung it. They left the body hanging for a long time, until it dried. It is said that the body remained hanging for four years.

Zayd had a young son by the name of Yahya who rose and was defeated. He went to Khorasan and had an extraordinary influence on the people of Khorasan. Even though he was killed in the fight with the Umayyads, he still managed to achieve great popularity. The revelation of such uprisings by the children of the Prophet for the people of Khorasan had apparently taken place for the first time. News did not travel with such speed as we are used to today.

It was actually Yahya who propagandized the story of Imam al-Husaynand his father Zayd, and other affairs in such a way that historians have written, when the people of Khorasan rose up against the Umayyad Dynasty, they mourned for Yahya ibn Zayd for seventy days (this made clear the fact that the revolutions not yielding the desired results would later have their effect). Nevertheless, the grounds for a revolution had been prepared in Khorasan, but not a fully organized revolution. The presence of extreme discontentment seemed to suffice.

The ‘Abbasid’s utilization of the people’s discontentment

The ‘Abbasids used this to their best advantage. They were three brothers by the names of: Ibrahim Imam, Abu al-‘Abbas al-Saffah[2] and Abu Ja‘far al-Mansur. They were from the bloodline of ‘Abbas ibn alib, Prophet Muhammad’s uncle. They were the sons of ‘Abd*t*‘Abd al-Mut Allah and ‘Abd Allah was the son of ‘Ali and ‘Ali was know as ‘Ali ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbas or to another interpretation who was one of ‘Ali’s companions had a son called ‘Ali and he had a son called ‘Abd Allah and ‘Abd Allah had three sons by the name Ibrahim, Abu al-‘Abbas al-Saffah and Abu Ja‘far al-Mansur, who were all indeed geniuses.

They used the occurring incidences taking place at the end of the Umayyad period and secretly trained preachers and clerics. They formed a secret system and hid in Iraq, Hijaz and Syria while leading these systems. Their representatives invited people to riot and revolt in the suburbs and outskirt regions. This was mostly in Khorasan. They, however, did not suggest or mention any names, just to be on the safe side.

Their invitations were under the “al-Radi” or “al-Rida” which meant one from the Household of the Prophet who is the object of choice. From here it is clear that the people’s stance was essentially based on Islam and the Household of the Prophet. I must say to those who today want to make the uprising of those such as Abu Muslim, look Iranian and out of national and Iranian zealous, there are hundreds of reasons and evidences that there was no such thing. At the moment, I do not wish to discuss how this is, but many reasons and evidences are available on this claim.

People were, of course, discontented with them, but the rescue plan they acquired was to seek protection from the Umayyad Dynasty by Islam and nothing else. Their slogans were all Islamic. No power or force that existed in enormous Khorasan could force the people who had risen against the government to choose slogans that were Islamic and non Iranian.

During those days, it was easy for the people of Khorasan to avoid the issue of successoral and Islam, they however did not do so. They fought the ruling system in the name of Islam and for Islam. Thus, they chose on the first day to expose their uprising on r∗'Id al-Fit in the year 129, in one of the villages near Marw called "Sefidanj", and there after the 'Id Prayer, they announced that they were uprising. The slogan they wrote on their flags was the first Qur'anic verse regarding jihad,

"Sanction is given unto those who fight because they have been wronged; and Allah is indeed able to give them victory."[3]

And what a good verse! When the Muslims were in Mecca and under oppression by the Quraysh, they did not have the permission for jihad. It was not until they migrated to Medina that they were finally granted this permission, as oppressed people who were given permission to defend their rights. Jihad in Islam essentially began with this verse which can be found in the Surat al-Hajj. The other ayah they set as their slogan was:

"O mankind! Indeed we have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Indeed, the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Indeed, Allah is the All-knowing, the All-aware."[4]

This was an allegorical remark directed at the Umayyads, who were endorsing Arabism contrary to the Islamic commandments, preferring Arabs over non-Arab which was definitely against the main principles of Islam. They were, in fact, only inviting Arabs to Islam.

There is a saying by the Prophet, I have quoted in the book, "the Mutual Service of Iran and Islam", which was narrated in a meeting where one of the Prophet's companions came and said, "I had a dream where white sheep went into black sheep and produced offsprings." This is how the Prophet (s) interpreted the dream, "Non-Arabs will participate in Islam with you.

Their women will get married to your men and their men will get married to your women (my intention is this sentence) I see the day a non-Arab will fight you for Islam just as I see the day you will fight non-Arabs for the sake of Arab. One day you are fighting non-Arabs to convert them to Islam and another day non-Arabs will fight you to turn you back to Islam. This narration can be defined by an uprising."

The 'Abbasids were organizing their movement with extreme accuracy in a secret excellently ordered system. They had also sent Abu Muslim to Khorasan and it was not he (Abu Muslim) who formed this uprising. They, the 'Abbasids, had sent missionaries to Khorasan who were engaged in inviting people.

It is not at all clear where Abu Muslim was from. History has not yet been able to prove whether he was originally Arab or Iranian. If he was Iranian, then he should be from either Khorasan or Isfahan. He was a young slave of twenty-odd when Ibrahim, the Imam, met him and realized how talented he was. Abu Muslim was sent to Khorasan where the others were informed that he would be good for this task.

Because of his capabilities he managed to overshadow others and take on the leadership of this movement. In political terms Abu Muslim was by all means a capable commander. However, he was an extremely immoral man,

having no compassion for humanity. Abu Muslim was similar to Hajjaj ibn Yusuf. If Arabs are proud of Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, then we may be proud of Abu Muslim. Hajjaj was a very clever, talented man and a very capable commander.

He was of much use to ‘Abd al-Malik. However, he was also an inhumane person who had no mercy for humankind. They say he killed one hundred and twenty thousand people during his ruling period. They also say that Abu Muslim killed six hundred thousand people. He even killed his best friend for an unimportant reason. He was indifferent towards Arabs and Iranians; therefore, it is difficult to say that his nationalistic view caused these murders.

Imam al-Sadiq does not interfere in these invitations. The ‘Abbasids, however, interfered constantly and they had really overlooked their lives when they said, “We either get killed and destroyed or take the caliphate away from them.”

Another issue that will be added here is that the ‘Abbasids had two missionaries who were leading this movement. One was in Kufah, Iraq, and the other was in Khorasan. The one in Kufah was someone famously known as “Abu Salmah Khallal” and the one in Khorasan was Abu Muslim, who as we mentioned was sent to Khorasan and progressed there. Abu Salmah was on a level more superior to Abu Muslim. Abu Salmah was given the title “the Minister of Muhammad’s Family” by the ‘Abbasids and Abu Muslim “the Prince of Muhammad’s Family”. Abu Salmah was an extremely tactful politician.

He was also a well-informed person with excellent oratory skills. One of Abu Muslim’s vices was his jealousy and competing with Abu Salmah. He was provoked to remove Abu Salmah from the moment he took post in Khorasan. He wrote a couple of letters to ‘Abd al-‘Abbas al-Saffah accusing Abu Salmah of being a dangerous man and requesting for him to be removed. He also wrote to ‘Abd al-‘Abbas al-Saffah’s uncles, as well as his other relatives.

He kept provoking and plotting. No matter how much Saffah heard these words, he was still reluctant to go through with it. He said, “Why should I kill someone who is so devoted to me and has served me so much?” They said, “There is something else deep in his heart. He desires to return the caliphate from the ‘Abbasid Family to Abu Talib’s Family.” He replied, “Such a thing has not been proven to be true for me. And even if it was true, it is just an illusion that has appeared to him and a human is not devoid of such dreams and desires.” Abu Muslim failed, no matter how hard he tried to convince Saffah to kill Abu Salmah. He decided to take out Abu Salmah by himself and he did. Most nights, Abu Salmah would go to Saffah and converse with him till midnight and return at the end of the night. Abu Muslim hired a group who went and killed Abu Salmah during night time. Because Saffah’s servants were also among the killers, Abu Salmah’s blood was actually defiled. This event took place in the early years of Saffah’s ruling. Now, the story quoted and often questioned is as follows:

Abu Salmah's letter to Imam al-Sadiq and 'Abd Allah al-Mahd

As Mas'udi wrote in "Murawwij al-Dhahab", Abu Salmah started thinking about returning the caliphate from the 'Abbasid Dynasty to Abu Talib's Dynasty near the end of his life time. He was working for the 'Abbasids during the whole time they were inviting people until the year 132, in which the 'Abbasid Dynasty officially appeared in Iraq and became victorious.

Ibrahim, the Imam, was active in the Syrian region and was undercover. He was the eldest brother so they wanted to make him the caliph. However, he fell under the custody of the last Umayyad Caliph, Marwan ibn Muhammad.

He had realized that someone had informed them of his hiding place and that he would soon be trapped. He wrote a will and sent it to "Humaymah" (which was a center near Kufah where his brothers would congregate) through one of his relatives. In that will he specified the future political line of action and chose his successor, "My brother Saffah shall be my successor" (he chose him even though Saffah was younger than Mansur). He ordered them to leave Humaymah for Kufah and hide there. "The time of appearance is close by", he wrote. He was murdered. His letter reached his brothers and they secretly left for Kufah. They stayed hidden there for a long time. Abu Salmah was also hiding in Kufah and at the same time leading the movement. It was not more than two months when they reappeared and fought officially and became victorious.

It has been said that after Ibrahim, the Imam's murder, when the movement was in the hands of Saffah and the others, Abu Salmah became regretful and thought of returning the caliphate from the 'Abbasid Dynasty to Abu Talib's Dynasty. He wrote a letter with two copies and confidentially sent them to Medina. One was for Imam al-Sadiq and one was for 'Abd Allah ibn Hassan ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.[5] He told the courier, "Give these two letters to these two people in private but do not inform either of them that I have written the same letter for the other one."[6]

In the letters he wrote, "The caliphate is finally in my hands. I have authority here. I am the one who had turned the events in favor of the 'Abbasid Dynasty. If you agree I will change the situation to your favor."

The reaction of Imam al-Sadiq ('a) and 'Abd Allah al-Mahd

The courier gave the letter to Imam al-Sadiq first. It was during night time. He gave the letter to 'Abd Allah al-Mahdafterwards. The reactions from these two people were completely opposite. When he gave the letter to Imam al-Sadiq he said, "I have brought this letter from you follower Abu Salmah." The Imam replied, "Abu Salmah is not my follower." Then he said, "In any case, this is the letter to which he asked for your response." The Imam said, "Bring fire!" He did not read the letter, placed it into the fire and burnt it, right in front of the courier's eyes. The Imam then said, "Tell your friend, this is your response, and read the following poem:

O you who start fires for others,
And O you who gather logs in the desert,

Do you think you have put them on your own rope?

You do not know however that the logs you have gathered, you have placed on someone else's rope.

He will then come and pick your log yield."[7]

What did the Imam mean by this poem? By this poem, the Imam certainly wanted to illustrate a situation where someone is working hard and another person tries to reap their efforts to his own advantage. Now maybe this was his point, "O miserable Abu Salmah, you put all this effort, do not you know that someone else will use the outcome and you will be left with nothing." The Imam may have been addressing those like himself, because if he accepted Abu Salmah's request, that meant he would be invited to a deed into which he put a lot of effort but someone else would come and reap the benefits.

There is, of course, nothing else in the text, except that the Imam burnt the letter and read this poem and did not give any other responses.

Abu Salmah's courier got up and went to 'Abd Allah al-Mahdand gave the letter to him. 'Abd Allah al-Mahdbecame extremely delighted and was thrilled. Mas'udi writes, "He mounted his donkey early in the morning and came to Imam al-Sadiq's house. The Imam respected him vey much (he was one of the Imam's cousins). The Imam was aware of the story and said, 'It seems there is some fresh news.' He replied, 'Yes, as fresh as not fitting any description.'

This is the letter I have received from Abu Salmah. He has written that all of our followers in Khorasan are prepared to return the caliphate to us and has asked me to accept this from him."

Mas'udi[8] writes, Imam al-Sadiq told him,

"Since when are the people of Khorasan your followers that you say our followers have written? Did you send Abu Muslim to Khorasan? Did you tell the people of Khorasan to wear black clothes and make black clothes their slogan?[9] Did you bring those who have come from Khorasan here?[10] Do you even know any of them?"

'Abd Allah became upset by these words (when one really wants something and they give him the glad tidings for it, he will no longer be able to think about other details surrounding a story) and started an argument with Imam al-Sadiq. He said to the Imam, "What are you saying? They want to choose my son, al-Mahdi, for caliph and he is the al-Mahdi of this nation (there is a story to this which I will tell you later on)." The Imam replied, "By Allah he is not the al-Mahdi of the nation and if your son rises, he will definitely get killed."

'Abd Allah became more irritated and out of impudence said, "You say all this out of jealousy." The Imam responded, "I swear by God that I have nothing in mind except that which is in your interest. This is not to your best interest and it will have no outcome." The Imam then said to him, "By Allah Abu Salmah has written the exact same letter he wrote to you to me. But I burnt the letter before reading it." 'Abd Allah left the Imam's house in extreme irritation.

Now these events are coincidence with the changes that are taking place in Iraq. What were these changes? It is time for the 'Abbasid Dynasty to

appear. Abu Muslim also is trying hard to remove Abu Salmah. The Uncles of Saffah have approved this and are supporting him so that he definitely removes Abu Salmah and this happened. Abu Salmah's courier had not yet reached Kufah from Medina when Abu Salmah was murdered. ‘Abd Allah al-Mahd's response to the letter, therefore, never reached Abu Salmah.

Investigation

In my view, from the descriptions given by Mas‘udi (and others have not given a different description),[11] the story of Abu Salmah is very clear. (According to the interpretation by the Imam), Abu Salmah was a man of politics and not a follower or a supporter of Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq. His policy of working in favor of the ‘Abbasid Dynasty suddenly changed for reasons not hidden to us.

It was not possible to introduce just anyone for caliphate, because people would not have accepted it. It should not have been someone outside the Household of the Prophet. It should be someone who was accepted by the people. He did not want the successor to be from the ‘Abbasid Dynasty, either. And so there was no one left but the Abu Talib Family. He found two prominent characters in the Abu Talib Family: ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Mahdand Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq.

He wrote a diplomatic letter to both, so that he had more chances and could use whichever target his arrow hit. No issues of sincerity or religion were posed in his action. He wanted to place someone as his tool. In addition, this task had no outcome and because he was murdered before a response from the letters had reached him and the story finished.

I am surprised that some, who claim to be historians, say why did Imam al-Sadiq not accept the letter Abu Salmah Khallal sent him? No conditions were prepared: neither spiritual conditions, where people with pure intentions made suggestions in sincerity, nor any visible conditions, for resources to be made available.

Since we have already named ‘Abd Allah al-Mahdabove and mentioned that Imam al-Sadiq chose not to cooperate with the ‘Abbasids and to no rebel, it is necessary to quote another event which shows Imam al-Sadiq's stance towards the anti-Umayyad movement. For this we shall use the book of Abu al-Faraj Isfahani here, simply because I have not found a book which better describes in such detail the above-mentioned topic in all the research I have done. Abu al-Faraj is a Sunni and an Umawi. He is called Isfahani by historians not because he is from Isfahan, but because he was only a resident there. He is actually Umawi, however, he is a neutral Sunni historian.

Shaykh Mufid quotes from the very same Abu al-Faraj in his book and not from the Shi‘ah narrations

The secret gathering of the heads of Bani Hashim

The story goes as follows: at the beginning when the anti-Umawi movement had just begun, the heads of Bani Hashim organized a secret gathering in “Abwa’”[12] which is a house between Medina and Mecca. In that secret gathering, Imam al-Hassan's children: ‘Abd Allah al-Mahdand his sons Muhammadand Ibrahim, and the sons of ‘Abbas: Ibrahim, Abu al-‘Abbas al-Saffah and Abu Ja‘far Mansur and a group of their uncles were

present. ‘Abd Allah al-Mahdturned to the crowd and said, “O sons of Hashim! You are a group who has all the eyes directed upon you and all the heads will raise toward you. Now that Allah has prepared the means for you to gather here, let us swear allegiance with this young man (the son of ‘Abd Allah al-Mahd) and choose him as a leader to fight with the Umayyads.”

This is long before the story of Abu Salmah. It is nearly twelve years before the uprising in Khorasanis. It was the first time this happened and this is how it took place:

Allegiance with “MuhammadNafs Zakiyyah”

The sons of ‘Abbas did not see the ground prepared for themselves. They thought only for the time being they will propound someone from ‘Ali’s dynasty who was most popular among the people and will later take him out.

They chose Muhammad Nafs Zakiyyah for this task. Muhammad was the son of ‘Abd Allah al-Mahd, who, as I have mentioned before, was the son of al-Husaynibn ‘Ali from his mother’s side. ‘Abd Allah was a pious, religious and handsome man. He had inherited this beauty from both his mother’s and his father’s side (his mother was also famous for her beauty).

In addition, his name was Muhammad, the name of the Prophet. His Father’s name was also ‘Abd Allah. And by chance he even had a beauty mark on his shoulder. We have in Islamic narrations; when oppression intensifies, one of the children of the Prophet through al-Zahra will appear who has the same name as the Prophet and has a beauty mark on his back. They believed that the al-Mahdi of the Nation who is destined to appear and rescue the nation from this oppression was him and the age was this age. The illusion that he was the al-Mahdi of the Nation was at least found among the children of Imam al-Hassan. Now, the ‘Abbasids had either truly believed this or they advanced with deceit from the beginning.

Anyway, just as Abu al-Faraj quotes, “The same ‘Abd Allah al-Mahdgot up and started giving a speech. He invited people and said, ‘Let us swear allegiance with one from among ourselves, give oath and beg Allah to make us victorious over the Umayyad Dynasty.’ He then said, ‘O people! You all know: the al-Mahdi of the Nation is my son. Come and swear allegiance with him’.”

It was then that Mansur said, “Not as the al-Mahdi of the Nation. I also think the one who best qualifies for this, is this young man, he is right, come and swear allegiance with him.”

Everyone then agreed with him and went to swear allegiance with Muhammad. When they all swore allegiance to him, they sent for Imam al-Sadiq.[13] When Imam al-Sadiq entered, ‘Abd Allah al-Mahdwho was managing the meeting got up and sat Imam al-Sadiq next to himself.

Then, he repeated the words he had said before, which were you all know my son is the al-Mahdi of the Nation, others swore in allegiance with him, you, too, come and swear allegiance with the al-Mahdi of the Nation. Imam al-Sadiq said, “No, do not do this. Now is not the time for the issue of the al-Mahdi of the Nation that the Prophet had informed about. ‘Abd Allah! You, too, are wrong, if you think your son is the al-Mahdi of the Nation.

This son of yours is not the al-Mahdi of the Nation and now is not the time for this matter."

The Imam made his stance very clear. He said, "If you want to swear allegiance with him in the name of 'the al-Mahdi of the Nation', then I will not. This is a lie. He is not the al-Mahdi of the Nation and now is not the time for his appearance. But if you want to rise for enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil and your fight is a fight against oppression, then I will swear allegiance."

Imam al-Sadiq's position here, therefore, is one hundred percent clear. Imam al-Sadiq was prepared to participate in the fight with them, but only under the title of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil. He was not willing to cooperate under the title of 'the al-Mahdi of the Nation'. They said, "No, He is the al-Mahdi of the Nation and this is a very clear matter."

The Imam said, "No, I will not swear allegiance. 'Abd Allah became upset." When the Imam saw his sadness he said, "'Abd Allah! I am telling you, not only is your son not the al-Mahdi of the Nation, but with us, the Household of the Prophet, lie secrets. We know who will and who will not become the caliph. Your son will not become the caliph, instead he will be killed." 'Abd Allah got irritated and said, "No, you are talking against your belief, you know well this son of mine is the al-Mahdi of the Nation and because of your jealousy towards my son, you are saying such things."

Imam al-Sadiq patted Abu al-'Abbas al-Saffah on the back and said,

(They say, "ayhun" in friendly greeting and conversation). The Imam knew he was engulfed with the greed for the caliphate and nothing else. This is the meaning of what he said, "This caliphate will not fall on you or on your children. Do not cause your child's death. They will not let the caliphate reach you and your two sons will be killed." The Imam then left. While he was leaving, he whispered in 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn 'Imram Zuhri's[14] ear, "Did you see the one wearing a yellow cloak?" (He meant Abu Ja'far Mansur.) He replied, "Yes." The Imam then said, "By Allah I swear, we will see in the future that the very same man will kill these children." 'Abd al-'Aziz was surprised. He whispered to himself, "But they are giving oaths of allegiance today!" He, then, said to the Imam, "Will he kill them?!" The Imam replied, "Yes."

'Abd al-'Aziz says, "In my heart, I said maybe he is saying all these out of jealousy." Further on, he says, "By God, I did not leave this world before seeing this very Abu Ja'far Mansur murdering Muhammadand the other son of 'Abd Allah." The Imam at the same time was very fond of Muhammadand liked him a lot. Abu al-Faraj has thus written,

"Whenever the Imam Saw Muhammad, his eyes would fill with tears and he would say, 'May my life be sacrificed for him!' (This is how much the Imam loved him). People say things which are not true (regarding the issue of Mahdism). This means the poor thing had come to believe this as well. He will get killed and will not reach the caliphate. His name is not mentioned among the names of the nation's leader in the book that was passed to us by 'Ali.

This shows that they started this movement under the name of Mahdism from the beginning and Imam al-Sadiq strongly opposed this. He said, 'I am

willing to swear allegiance under the title of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil but will not accept it under the title of Mahdism.' The 'Abbasids, however, had different interests on politics and territory."

Characteristics of Imam al-Sadiq's time

It is necessary to mention the fact that, the time of Imam al-Sadiq was a unique one from an Islamic point of view. It was more a time of intellectual movements and revolutions than political ones. His father passed away in the year 114 AH. It was then that he became the Imam of the time and lived until the year 148 AHnearly half a century. Nearly one century and a half after the appearance of Islam and half a century after the Islamic conquers, two or maybe three generations of newly-converted Muslims had joined Islam from different nations.

From the era of the Umayyad Dynasty, they had started to translate books. Nations with various cultures had entered the Muslim World. Political movements were very few in the Muslim World. There were numerous cultural movements, most of which threatened Islamic movements. Atheists appeared during these times, who also have their own story. They denied Allah, religion and the Prophet. However, for some reasons, the 'Abbasids had given them freedom.

The issue of mysticism had appeared in a different format. Certain jurists had also emerged who developed jurisprudence on a different basis (analogical deductions, personal views, etc.). A certain intellectual difference had also emerged which never existed before and ceased to exist later in the Muslim World.

The time of Imam al-Sadiq was completely different from the time of Imam al-Husayn. Imam al-Husayn'stime was a time of complete suppression. For this reason, sayings quoted from the time of Imam al-Husayndo not exceed five or six sentences. On the other hand, during the time of Imam al-Sadiq, the political conflicts and cultural movements prepared the grounds for recording the names of four thousand students as Imam al-Sadiq's students.

Thus, if we assume (which would be a wrong assumption to make) that the political situation during Imam al-Sadiq's time to be the same as that of Imam al-Husayn'stime, there will still be a big difference regarding another aspect of each of their situations. What would have happened, if Imam al-Husaynhad not martyred (which would have of course carried remorseful consequences)? He would have become idle, staying at home with the doors closed on him.

However, let us assume that Imam al-Sadiq was martyred instead and that his martyrdom carried the same consequences as the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn. But by not getting martyred, he led a scientific and intellectual movement which had a huge impact not only on the Shi'ah branch but also on the Muslim World as a whole. I will tell you more ?about this in the future session God-willing.

References

1. Time wise, this discussion was delivered after the discussion about “the issue of choosing Imam al-Rida as crown prince”.

2. Abu al-‘Abbas ‘Abd Allah al-Saffah ibn Muhammadibn ‘Ali ibn ‘Abd Allah alib ibn Hashim (721-754) was the first ‘Abbasidt ibn ‘Abbas ibn Mut caliph. His dynasty ruled from 750 until 1258. He ruled until his death in 754. In Arabic, al-Saffah, literally, means the slaughterer.

3. Surat al-Hajj 22:39.

4. Surat al-Hujurat 49:13.

5. Imam al-Hasan has a son whose name was also al-Hasan. They called him “Hasan al-Muthanna” which means the second Hasan. Hasan Muthana was serving Imam al-Husayn in Karbala. He was wounded at battle but was not killed. When they later came after the wounded, someone who was related to him through his mother took him with himself to ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad and he requested that they would not be offensive towards him. He then took care of Hasan Muthanna himself until he was cured. Later, imah bint al-Husayn, the daughter of Imam Hasan Muthanna married Fat al-Husayn who was also in Karbala at the time. She was still not imah is married, and, according to history, was a beautiful girl. (Fat the same girl who, during Yazid’s gathering, some one asked, “Yazid: grant me this girl.” And Yazid was silent in his response. He asked Yazid for a second time when Hadrat Zaynab protested against him and scolded him. Yazid got offended, offended her and said, “Why did you say such words?!” They had two children, one of whom was ‘Abd Allah. From his mother’s side, ‘Abd Allah was the grand child of Imam al-Husayn and from his father’s side he was the grand child of Imam al-Hasan and he was proud of this. He used to say, “I am the child of the Prophet from imah in two ways.” They thus used to both sides; I am the child of Fat call him: ‘Abd Allah al-Mahd which means purely from the children of the Prophet. ‘Abd Allah was in charge of Imam al-Hasan’s children during the time of Imam al-Sadiq just as Imam al-Sadiq was in charge of Imam al-Husayn’s children.

6. In the next session, the Martyred Professor says, “Abu Salmah sends these two letters through two people.” They are probably quoted from different sources.

7. You know that those who gather firewood put down their rope two folded and then they go and gather firewood and lay them on this rope. When it reaches one load, they make a knot on the load and prepare the load. Now, if somebody makes a mistake and instead of placing the firewood he has gathered onto his own rope, places it on someone else’s, the other person will pick his yield. The Imam recites this poem:

ايا موقدا نارا لغيرك ضوءها ويا حاطبا في غير حبلك تحطب

Oh you who has set alight fire but the other is using its light, and had gathered fire woods and placed it on someone else’s rope and the other has picked and taken it.

8. Mas‘udi is a historian and that if he is a Sunni or Shi‘ah by the definition today we call Shi‘ah, he is definetly a Sunni because our criterion, for sure, with regards to the issue of caliphate is that Abu Bakr and the rest are usurpers, whereas he pays extreme respect to the caliphs but at the same time he also grants high respect to the Holy Imams. A book is ascribed to him by the name “Ithbat al- Wasiyyah”. He is seemingly a Sunni but in any case he is one of the best Islamic historians.

9. As written, the issue of black cloth had become the custom for the mourning of Yahya ibn Zayd.

10. During that time, a large group of people from Khorasan had come to Iraq to help the ‘Abbasids to rebel with a group of Arabs.

11. It is not as if I want to trust Mas‘udi’s quotation or that of others. Others have not written anything other than this. Mas‘udi has written this story in more detail, others have just touched up on Abu Salmah’s letter to Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq and that the Imam burnt it and did not give a response to it. Mas‘udi, however, has written this story in more detail.

12. We see the name of this place constantly in Islamic history. Abwa’ is the same place where Aminah, the mother of the Prophet passed away. She had taken the Prophet along with her when he was a child of about five years, because her relatives where in Medina and the Prophet had a kind of kinship with the people of Medina through his mother. On the way back, she became very ill and passed away in the very house in Abwa’. The Prophet

was left with his mother's slave, a woman called "Umm Ayman" (of course they were with a caravan) with whom he returned to Mecca. He was faced with his mother's death in lonliness and in a house on the way. They have therefore written: "When the Prophet came to Medina (we know he came to Medina when he was fifty three and the last ten years of his life were passed in Medina), he passed Abwa' in one of his journeys. When he reached there, the companions saw the Prophet walking towards a point on his own, when he reached that spot, he stopped there, sat down and read supplications there. Then, they saw the Prophet in tears. They were all wondering what the story was? They asked him and he replied, 'This is my mother's grave.' He had come here about fifty years ago when he was a child of five and had not passed that place since then. When he reached his mother's grave after fifty years, he went there prayed and cried."

13. Abu al-Faraj Says, "This is how some of the narrators have quoted: here 'Abd Allah said, 'No, do not send after Ja'far, if he comes he will not agree to this and will disrupt this situation', but others said, 'No, send after him', and they finallay did; some have said 'Abd Allah said no such thing."

14. I do not know whether this Zuhri is the same famous jurist Zuhri or he is someone else.

Chapter 4: Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) and the Issue of Vicegerency (Session 2)

As was mentioned in the previous session, the Imam who encountered the issue of ruling and caliphate was Imam al-Sadiq, so to say. By this we mean the circumstances which developed during that time causing the one who claimed power to be taken away by the flurry, except Imam al-Sadiq who essentially stepped aside.

The main characteristic of his time were the reasons which caused the transfer of government from the Umayyad Dynasty to the ‘Abbasids. In addition, we see that a personality like Abu Salmah Khallal who had priority over Abu Muslim (he was called the Minister of Muhammad’s Family and Abu Muslim was called the Prince of Muhammad‘s Family) was trying for this transfer of government to the ‘Abbasids from the Umayyad Dynasty.

Of course, after the downfall of the Umayyad Dynasty and the establishment of the ‘Abbasid government, he changes his mind and thinks of transferring the caliphate to ‘Ali’s Family. He sends two letters to Medina; one for Imam al-Sadiq and one for ‘Abd Allah al-Mahd, who was the Imam’s cousin and one of Imam al-Hassan’s children. ‘Abd Allah got thrilled and welcomed the letter. The Imam, however, paid no attention whatsoever, only placing the letter in the fire without even opening it and said, “This is the response to this letter.”

We previously spoke about this and said that the issue of Imam al-Sadiq’s retreat from accepting government and the caliphate was very clear. There were no signs of tendency for taking over the leadership. What was the reason for this and where was this heading to? There is no doubt that if we assume the grounds had been prepared for the Imam to take over the caliphate, he should have taken the steps.

But our aim is to say if the grounds were not fully prepared, for example, if they were fifty percent prepared, what was stopping the Imam from taking actions even if he was to get killed? Again, this is where the comparison between the situation and methodology of Imam al-Husaynis put forward.

Here, we would like to talk a bit about the characteristics and specifications of the time of Imam al-Sadiq and the Islamic activities during his time and had Imam al-Husaynbeen there, he would have definitely made the same decisions. We also want to compare the differences between this time and the time of Imam al-Husayn? As I mentioned before, the issue was not why the Imam refused to take action when the conditions had been prepared for him to do so. The question is why the Imam did not go as far as getting killed?

The comparison between the time of Imam al-Sadiq and the time of Imam al-Husayn

The distance between the two periods is nearly a century. Imam al-Husayn’smartyrdom was in 61 AH whereas Imam al-Sadiq passed away in 148 AH. There is a difference of about seventy to eighty years between the years of their deaths. During this period, the situation in the Muslim World changed dramatically. During the time of Imam al-Husaynonly one issue existed, which was the issue of rule and caliphate. The caliphate meant

everything and everything meant the caliphate. This means the simple Muslim World that was created still carried its simplicity.

The argument was about who should be the one to take charge of the affairs. For this reason, the caliphate as a system had complete influence over all aspects of the government. Mu‘awiyah had an impressive and intense dictatorship system. The time and situation during the time had truly prepared the conditions for him to deprive everyone of their rights.

If people wanted to quote something for each other that might have been against the government, it would not be possible for people to quote anything that was against the government’s politics for each other. The historians have written that if somebody wanted to narrate a tradition that spoke about the virtues of Imam ‘Ali, he would not say it before he was fully certain and confident that the listener would not disclose the issue. They would go to their storage rooms for retelling such sayings.

It was a bizarre situation. They were cursing Imam ‘Ali in every Friday Prayer, during speeches on every podium in the mosques in the presence of Imam al-Hassan and Imam al-Husayn. Therefore, we see that the history of Imam al-Husayn’stime during the rule of Mu‘awiyahi.e. the period starting from the martyrdom of Imam ‘Ali until the martyrdom of Imam al-Hassan himselfwas very vague. No one is reminded of Imam al-Husayn, no quotes, reports, traditions, conversations, sermons, not even a speech or a meeting with him has been mentioned during the time.

They were isolated in such a way that no one was able to even contact them. In such a situation if Imam al-Husaynwas to live for another fifty years, there would not be any change, not even three sentences would be quoted from him. The possibility for any kind of activity was taken away from him.

During the end of the Umayyad period which led to their downfall and during the ‘Abbasid period (especially the beginning) the situation changed. This change, firstly, created intellectual freedom among people. (I do not want to put this on the magnanimity of the ‘Abbasids. It is the result of essential qualities of the Islamic society).

There is no question that freedom of thought and freedom of opinion existed at the time. The question, however, is where this intellectual freedom originated from? Was this really the result of the politics of the ‘Abbasids?

Secondly, enthusiasm and excitement are created among people on scientific issues. Such enthusiasm and excitement of a nation towards science is very rare in history. The sciences included Islamic sciences (i.e. the sciences directly related to Islam such as the science of reading (the Qur’an), the exegesis, science of traditions, jurisprudence, issues related to theology and different parts of literature, as well as sciences not related to Islam, which are so-called human sciences, for example, medicine, philosophy, astrology and mathematics.

It has been mentioned in history books that a sudden exceptional movement and progression toward sciences took place and that the means had been prepared for people to present their capabilities in the sphere of science. The same means which did not at all exist previously, at the end of

Imam al-Baqir's time and the beginning of the time of Imam al-Sadiq, were suddenly produced for those who wanted to be a part of the scientific and intellectual arena, to come and present their ideas.

There were, of course, other factors involved in affecting this movement, which the 'Abbasids could not stop even if they wanted to. This was because other people of different racesother than the Arab racehad entered the Muslim World, the most vibrant of which was the Iranian race. Another one of such races was the Egyptian race. The strongest and most powerful and most erudite of all were the Syrians and the Mesopotamians, the regions which were centers of civilization in that era. The difference in races and nations had automatically prepared the means for intellectual exchange.

When they became Muslims, they wanted to know more about the identity of Islam. The Arabs were not accustomed to contemplation and research of the Qur'an. Other nations, however, constantly contemplated on the Qur'an and other issues surrounding it limitlessly. They would think and take into account every single word of the Qur'an.

The war of beliefs

It is during this time that we see the market of 'wars over beliefs' suddenly becomes heated and how heated it becomes! Firstly, discussions begin regarding the exegesis and recitation of the Holy Qur'an. A group by the name of "qurra'" emerge whose name meant those who recite and teach the words of the Holy Qur'an in a correct way (the Qur'an was not printed the way it is today in those days). One would say: 'I will recite and narrate my recitation from person X, who narrated it from person Y and he from person Z, who narrated it from companion so and so of the Prophet (most of which reached 'Ali).' The next person would say: 'I shall narrate my own recitation from…' and so on and so forth. They would sit in mosques and teach the recitation to others.

Mostly non-Arabs used to participate in these circles as they were non-Arabs and did not know the Arabic language properly but had a keen interest to learn the Qur'an. A recitation teacher would sit in the mosque and numerous groups would gather around him to learn the recitation of the Holy Qur'an from him. Occasionally, differences in recitation would be observed.

On top of this, was the exegesis, i.e. stating the meaning of the Qur'an (whether it meant this or that). The debates were heated. One would say, this is the meaning of the verse and the other would disagree.

It was the same on the topic of traditions and sayings that had come from the Prophet. Whoever memorized these traditions would be very honored by it. He would say, 'I am narrating this hadith from this person who narrated it from that person who narrated it from the Prophet. Is this saying correct? Or is it with these wordings?'

Higher than all of these were the jurisprudent sects. People would come and ask them questions just as they do these days. Groups were formed in various centers by the name of "jurists" who had to answer people's question: 'This is permitted, that is forbidden; this is pure, that is impure; this contract is correct, that contract is void.' Medina was one such center. Kufah was also one of these centers, where Abu Hanifah was. Basrah was

another. Later, during the time of Imam al-Sadiq, when Spain [Andalusia] was conquered, such centres were gradually created there. Every Islamic city was a center itself. They would say that certain jurist has this view; the other jurist had that view. They were the students of this ideology and those were the students of that ideology. A war of beliefs based on jurisprudencial views had also appeared.

Most heated of all (but not the most important) were the theological discussions. From this very century, a genus by the title "the theologians" first appeared (we see such expressions used in Imam al-Sadiq's words. He says to some of his students: tell these theologians to come).

The theologians used to discuss principle issues of belief: issues concerning Allah, His Attributes, the verses of the Qur'an regarding Allah; whether a certain attribute of Allah was His essential [dhati] entity or if it was something other than this; whether He was an incident or if He had always existed.

They would discuss prophecy and the reality of divine revelations, an] and divine unity as well as dualism. They would∗about Satan [Shayt also discuss questions concerning action as principle of faith and if no action was taken would that suggest that there is no faith as well? Or does taking action not interfere with faith? They would also discuss the issue of destiny and providence as well as compulsion and volition. The theologians had attracted extreme interest.

The most dangerous of all (I would not say hotter or more important) was the emerging of a genus called the "atheists" [zanadiqah]. The atheists denied Allah and religion fundamentally. For some reason, this genus had freedom. They would even sit in the two holy places (i.e. Mecca and Medina) and even in Masjid al-Haram and Masjid al-Nabi and speak of their opinions and this was, of course, under the title that "this is an ideology after all, we are having doubts and we must discuss them."[1]

The atheists were the civilized and educated group of that period. They were a genus who was familiar with the world's living languages one of which was the Seryani language, the scientific language of that period. Most of them knew Greek and a majority were Iranians and knew Farsi. Some were also familiar with the Hindi language and had brought atheism from India. Where did the root of atheism fundamentally appear from? This is itself another discussion. The majority believed that the root of atheism comes from Manichaeism.

The other stream, related to this time, is the Puritanical Sufism (all are extremist and negligent streams). The Sufis emerged at the time of Imam al-Sadiq and created a genus which found many supporters and, therefore, spoke its opinions in freedom. They were the other side to the pharisees. They did not speak as a sect against Islam, but would essentially suggest that the reality of Islam was what they said it was. They suggested their strange puritanical ideas and said that Islam says so. This was intolerable pharisaism.

The Kharijites and the deferrers also each had a sect of their own.

The attitude of Imam al-Sadiq with the various intellectual streams

We see that Imam al-Sadiq faced all of this and encountered with all of them. Speaking of recitation and exegesis, the Imam had his own group of students. The Imam discussed issues of recitation and exegesis of the Holy Qur'anic verses with others. He shouted and complained, "Why do they say wrong things? Do not they know this is how they must interpret the Qur'an?" He said in relation to the traditions (which were very clear), "Their words have no basis. The correct traditions are what we narrate from our fathers, who narrated them from the Prophet."

Regarding the jurisprudential sect, the school of Imam al-Sadiq was the strongest and most powerful jurisprudencial school of its time. Even Sunnis believed this. All the Sunnis, either directly or indirectly, were the students of Imam al-Sadiq or served as his apprentice. The chief Sunni leader was Abu Hanifah. Historians have written that he served as an apprentice of Imam al-Sadiq for two years. We read this sentence in their (Sunni) books, where he said,

If it was not for those two years, Nu'man would have definitely been destroyed (Nu'man is Abu Hanifah's name. His full name is Nu'man ibn Zawti ibn Marzban; his ancestors were apparently Iranians).

The other leader of the Sunnis, Malik ibn Anas, was also at the same period as Imam al-Sadiq. He also came to Imam al-Sadiq and was proud of being his apprentice.

Shafi'i was in the next generation but he served as a student of Abu Hanifah and Malik ibn Anas.

Ahmad ibn Hanbal's training also goes back to Imam al-Sadiq in a straight line as well as others. The field of Imam al-Sadiq's lectures on jurisprudence was more successful than other jurists. I will now mention the testimonies of some Sunni scholars in this regard.

The words of Malik ibn Anas about Imam al-Sadiq

Malik ibn Anas was in Medina. He had a relatively good personality. He says, "I used to go to Ja'far ibn Muhammad, and he smiled a lot (which meant that he was friendly, so to say and not grumpy). One of his attributes was that the color of his face would change when the name of the Prophet was mentioned in front of him (which meant that the name of the Prophet exhilarated him in such a way that caused a change in the color of his face) I used to socialise with him."

He then talks about Imam al-Sadiq's acts of worship, how he used to worship and how pious he was. There is a famous story quoted of Malik ibn Anas. He says,

"We went on a journey to Mecca with the Imam. When we reached al-Shajarah Mosque and put on our ihrams, we wanted to say labbayk and officially become muhrim, while we mounted on the horses. We all said labbayk. I looked at the Imam and saw that he wants to say labbayk but the color of his face has dramatically changed and he is shivering in such a way that he is about to fall off his horse, all out of awe for Allah. I went to his side and said, 'O son of the Messenger of Allah! You have to say

eventually, there is no choice. It must be said.' He replied, 'What should I say? Whom do I say labbayk to? What if it is said in my response, "La labbayk"? What am I to do then?'"

This saying has been narrated by many people including Shaykh 'Abbas Qummi and other scholars in their books. The narrator of this saying is as we mentioned Malik ibn Anas. Malik says, "No eyes have seen, no ears have heard and it has not come across anyone's hearts, a man more virtuous than Ja'far ibn Muhammad."

MuhammadShahrestani, the author of the book "Al-Milal wa al-Nihal", is one of the very skilled philosophers and theologians of the fifth century. He was also a very learned man. In this book, he has analyzed all the religious and doctrinal fields, one of which is the philosophical field. He mentions the name of Imam al-Sadiq in one place and says,

"He has effervescent knowledge. He was completely trained in sagacity. He was an extremely devout and virtuous person and abstained from voluptuary. He resided in Medina and imparted the secrets of knowledge to his friends. He came to Iraq as well for some time."

He then points to Imam al-Sadiq's isolation from politics and says, "He never disputed over the caliphate with anyone."

He interprets this isolation in the following way, he says, "The Imam was so deeply sunken into the sea of knowledge and wisdom that he paid no attention to such issues." I do not want to consider his explanation as correct but my point is that he confesses that the Imam had sunk into the sea of wisdom. He says, "Whoever has been sunken into the sea of wisdom, will never drop himself into the river." (He wants to say such things [politics] are rivers).

Whoever climbs up to the top of the mountain of truth does not have fear of falling down from it.

Shahrestani, who said these words about Imam al-Sadiq, is bitter toward the Shi'ism. He has severely criticized the Shi'ahs in his book ("Al-Milal wa al-Nihal"). He, however, pays this much respect towards Imam al-Sadiq and this is important.

There are many scholars in today's world who even though have extreme enmity and oppose the the Shi'ah branch of Islam, they pay respect to Imam al-Sadiq, to whom this sect is related to. Maybe they think to themselves that the views which they oppose are far from Imam al-Sadiq's views. In any case, they pay a lot of respect to Imam al-Sadiq.

The view of Ahmad Amin

One of the scholars of our time was Ahmad Amin. He had written several books entitled, "Fajr al-Islam", "Duha al-Islam", "Zuhr al-Islam" and "Yawm al-Islam" which are all among the very important books on sociology of this century. He is afflicted by the 'anti-Shi'ah disease' and it seems that he has no information about the Shi'ism whatsoever. He is very hostile towards the Shi'ism but at the same time he shows great respect for Imam al-Sadiq. I have read all his books and have not seen him showing such respect to the Sunni Imams. The words he has used regarding the Imam's wisdom and sagacity are amazing. I have not seen a Shi'ah scholar with such sayings.

The confession of Jahiz

In my view, the confession of Jahiz is most important of all. Jahiz was a true mulla who lived from the end of the second century until the beginning of the third century. He was not only an amazing man of literature but also a sociologist and historian of his time. He wrote a book about zoology entitled, “Kitab al-Haywan” which up until today has cought the attention of many European scholars.

They have found certain things in “Ahmad Amin” of Jahiz that was not heard of in the Greek or non-Greek world of the time. In that time, even though Greek sciences had not yet entered the Muslim World, certain theories were first found in the Kitab al-Haywan by Jahiz. Jahiz was also a prejudiced Sunni. He had debates with some Shi‘ahs which caused him to be considered by some people as anti-Shi‘ah [Nasibi], which (judging from certain statements in his debates) I cannot say if he was one. He is almost of the same period as Imam al-Sadiq. His interpretations with regards to Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is as such, “Ja‘far ibn Muhammadwhose knowledge and experitise has filled the world. And it is said that Abu Hanifah and Sufyan ‘Ali Thawri (one of the great jurists and Sufis of that time) were among his students.”

The view of Mir ‘Ali Hindi

Mir ‘Ali Hindi is one of our contemporary authors who was also a Sunni. This is how he expresses his thoughts about Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq, “The spread of science in that time helped to free minds and release them from bounds. Philosophical and intellectual controversy[2] became prevalent in all the Islamic societies.” He then says, “We should never forget that the one who lead this intellectual movement in the Muslim World was the grandchild of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib. The same man who was famous as al-Sadiq. He was a man with exceedingly open intellectual horizons. He paid extreme attention and contemplation to the sciences of his time.” He then says, “And, in fact, he was the first person to establish the intellectual school[3] in the Muslim World.” He also says, “His students were not only great jurists like Abu Hanifah but also intellectual science students.”

The words of Ahmad Zaki Salih

It is quoted from Ahmad Zaki Salih in the book, “Al-Imam al- Sadiq” by Muzaffar (who is a contemporary author) in the magazine called, “Al-Risalah al-Misriyyah” that the Shi‘ah enthusiasm for science was more than any other Islamic sects (I want to state the extent up to which the contemporary authors confess to this), which itself is an issue. Iranians put this on their account and say this enthusiasm was theirs whereas this was related to the Shi‘ahs and most of the Shi‘ahs of the time were not Iranians. We will not enter this topic for the time being. This Egyptian person says,

“Whosoever is well-informed will know that the enthusiasm of the Shi‘ah sect was more than others. And, the Shi‘ism was the first Islamic school of thought that based religious issues on mind and intellect.” And by Shi‘ah he meant Imam al-Sadiq’s Shi‘ism.

The endeavour of the Shi‘ah towards intellectual issues

The best reason for stating that intellectual sciences ripened during the time of Imam al-Sadiq is that Sunni books including, Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Jami‘ Tirmidhi, Sunan Abi Dawud, and Sahih Nassa’i convey nothing but minor issues. There are the principles for ritual ablution [wudu], prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and holy war [jihad]. Points concerning the conduct of the Prophet, for example, the Prophet acted this way in that certain journey. However, if you refer to the Shi‘ah traditions, you will witness that its first subject and first book is “Kitab al-‘Aql wa al-Jahl” (the Book of Wisdom and Ignorance). Such issues were basically not mentioned in Sunni books.

Of course, I do not want to say that this was originated by Imam al-Sadiq. These take root from ‘Ali who is also originated from the Prophet himself. Imam al-Sadiq, however, continued this path. It was Imam al-Sadiq who found the opportunity in his time to save the inheritance from his ancestors and add more to those heritages.

After “Kitab al-‘Aql wa al-Jahl”, we come to “Kitab al-Tawhid”. We see that hundreds and even thousands of subjects about Tawhid (monotheism), Allah’s Attributes, the issues related to the divine positions, destiny, providence as well as compulsion, volition and intellectual affairs are put forward in Shi‘ah books which had not been mentioned in any other books (the books of other sects). All of these has caused the Sunnis to say that the first person to establish the philosophical[4] and intellectual schools in the Muslim World was Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq.

Jabir ibn Hayyan

There is an issue which has recently been explored. That issue is: a man in Islamic history by the name Jabir ibn Hayyan who is sometimes called Jabir ibn Hayyan Sufi. He was also a genius. Ibn al-Nadim has recalled Jabir ibn Hayyan in his book called, “Al- Fihrist”[5] which has attributed nearly hundred and fifty books to him. These books were mostly about intellectual sciences, (as they said in those days) about Alchemy (chemistry), industry, and also about the properties of things. Today, they call him “the Father (Founder) of the World’s Chemistry”. Apparently, Ibn Nadim has said, “He is one of Imam al-Sadiq’s students.”

Ibn Khalkan[6], who is also a Sunni, points out the name of Jabir ibn Hayyan saying, “He was an alchemist and a chemistry student of Imam al-Sadiq (‘a).” Others have also made such quotations about him. Such sciences were never heard of in the Muslim World. A man by the name Jabir ibn Hayyan who is a student of Imam al-Sadiq suddenly appears and writes journals about various topics, most of which still have scientific value today. The contemporary orientalists have debated a lot about Jabir ibn Hayyan. This very Taqi-Zadeh has discussed this alot. Of course, there are still a lot not known about Jabir ibn Hayyan and are yet to be explored. At the present time, what is really strange is the absence of his name in every Shi‘ah book. That is to say there is no mention of this man’s name in any Shi‘ah authority or jurisprudence or practice books. Imam al-Sadiq had such distinguished student that no one ever had.

Hisham ibn al-Hakam

Another one of Imam al-Sadiq's students was Hisham ibn al-Hakam who was superior to the theologians of his time (I say all these based on what Sunni books testify). Abu al-Hadhil 'Allaf was a powerful Iranian theologist. Shibli al-Nu'man wrote in his book entitled, "the History of Theology", "No one could debate with Abu al-Hadhil on any topic. The only person he was afraid of was Hisham ibn al-Hakam."

Nazzam, who was regarded as one of the geniuses of that time and who had some theories which are in accordance with some of the new theories of our time (for example with regards to smell and color, he believed that color and smell are separate from the object. This overrides the presumption that smell and color are fortuitous for an object. Especially, in the case of smell, he believes that smell is something that spreads in the air). He was one of Hisham's students (it has also been written that he got this theory from Hisham ibn al-Hakam) and Hisham was one of Imam al-Sadiq's students.

Now, you can see from this entire collection the cultural foundation which was made ready for Imam al-Sadiq. Such foundations were not prepared for any other imam before or after him. However, similar grounds were prepared for Imam al-RidaIn the case of Imam al-Kazim, the conditions were worse when issues such as imprisonment and the like came about. The rest of the Imams died in their prime as a result of being poisoned.

They were not allowed to live; otherwise, the situations would have been better to some extent. As for Imam al-Sadiq, both of these features were present. He had a long life (nearly seventy years) and his time and the conditions surrounding him were to his favor.

Now, how many of these features prove the differences between the time of Imam al-Sadiq and the time of Imam al-Husayn? In other words, what foundations were prepared for Imam al-Sadiq that were not present during the time of Imam al-Husayn? The Doyen of Martyrs [Sayyid al-Shuhada] must have either stayed at home all his life, worshipped Allah or in fact be a prisoner, or he must have gotten killed. This was not the same for Imam al-Sadiq (that he should either get killed or be in isolation). Rather, he would have either been killed or he could have used the constructive conditions of his surroundings to the utmost.

We cannot fathom the fact that subsequent Imams proved and clarified the values of Imam al-Husayn'suprising. If there was no Imam al-Sadiq, there would be no Imam al-Husaynjust as if there was no Imam al-Husayn, there would be no Imam al-Sadiq. That is to say, if Imam al-Sadiq was not there, the values of Imam al-Husayn'suprising would never have been proven or clarified.

At the same time, Imam al-Sadiq made no objection to the caliphate when everyone knew that Imam al-Sadiq never came to terms with the caliphs and that he would campaign against them surreptitiously. A kind of cold war was in the midst. News of the faults, cruelty and tyranny of the caliphs had spread in the Muslim World by Imam al-Sadiq. In this connection, Mansur made an incredible connotation about Imam al-Sadiq[7] ('a),

“Ja‘far ibn Muhammadis like a bone stuck in my throat. I can neither take it out nor can I swallow it. I cannot find any evidence against him nor can I tolerate him as I am actually informed that this neutralized ideology he has adopted is against us. This is because those trained under ideology are all against us. However, I cannot find any evidences against him.”

Yes. This is Mansur’s definition: a bone stuck in the throat. Neither can I take it out, nor can I swallow it.

The factors affecting scientific enthusiasm during the time of Imam al-Sadiq (‘a)

We said that an enthusiasm for scientific research appeared during the time of Imam al-Sadiq which intensified the war on beliefs. It was necessary for pious Muslims to get involved in this war in favor of Islam in order to defend it. What factors influenced this scientific enthusiasm?

There were three influential factors involved. Firstly, the one hundred percent religiously motivated community of people who had been encouraged by the Prophet to seek knowledge, the invitations and encouragements of the Holy Qur’an to learn, think and contemplate were the main factors causing this enthusiasm and keenness. Secondly, the admission of various racial groups into the Muslim World who had previously experience in the field of science and thought.

The third factor which prepared these foundations was the idea of a universal Islamic homeland. Islam had fought the homelands of water and soil and gave a new definition to the world homeland. Wherever Islam was, the homeland was there. The outcome of this was the relative destruction of racial prejudice in a way that people of different races were coexisting with one another and felt brotherhood and fellowship towards one another; for example, a student from Khorasan and a teacher from Egypt or vice versa.

The lecture session would be established and the one sitting as the teacher would be, for example, a barbaric slave, such as Nafi‘ or ‘Ikramah, slaves of ‘Abd Allah ibn Abbas. This barbaric slave would see Iraqis, Syrians, Hijazis, Egyptians, Iranians and Indians participating in his lecture. This was a major factor in preparing the foundations for this progression.

And above all was what we today call religious coexistence between Muslims and non-Muslims, especially with the People of the Book [ahl al-kitab]. This means, in order to coexist with the People of the Book, Muslims tolerated them and did not consider this against their religious principles. In those days, the People of the Book were learned. When they joined the Islamic society, Muslims welcomed their arrival and obtained their knowledge during the very early period of their arrival. In the second era, Muslims were at the pinnacle of the scientific society.

The issue of religious coexistence was a very important factor. This, itself has of course a root in traditions. We have numerous traditions in this regard. Even the late Ayatullah Majlisi quotes in Bihar (which is also in Nahj al-Balaghah) that the Prophet said (hikmah here means correct scientific saying), “Learn the correct scientific sayings even from a pagan.” The meaning is “hikmah is the long lost of the faithful”. What is meant by hikmah here is its definition in the following ayah,

"He gives wisdom to whomever He wishes, and he who is given wisdom is certainly given an abundant good. But none takes admonition except those who possess intellect."[8]

This carries the meanings convincing, valid, solid and correct sayings. This is an excellent definition: the long lost. If an individual has something in possession but loses it, how is it that he looks for it whereve he goes? If you have a priceless ring which you are really fond of and it gets lost, you will go through every hardship and focus on every corner that comes to your mind in order to find what you have lost.

This (hikmah is 'the long lost' of the faithful) is one of the best and most honorable Islamic definitions. The faithful will grab it wherever he finds it, even if it is in the hands of a pagan. This means if you lost your property, and your lost property is in the hands of a pagan, would you say "I want no business with it" or would you say "this is mine"?

'Ali says, "The faithful sees knowledge in the hands of pagan as a trust and himself as the main owner and would say, 'The pagan is not worthy of it. I am the one worthy of it'."

Some have put the issue of religious coexistence with the People of the Book on the account of the caliphs. They say that the tolerance of the caliphs demanded Muslims, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and others to include fellowship into their cultures and benefit from one another. But it was not because of the tolerance of the caliphs. It was the order of the Prophet. Even Jurji Zaydan directs this affair towards the tolerance of the caliphs. He quotes the story of al-Sayyid al-Radi and says,

"Al-Sayyid al-Radi is an amazing man. He is on the same level as the religious jurists. He is al-Sayyid al-Murtada's brother." When Abu Ishaq Sabi[9], his contemporaneous scientist, dies he recites an ode in praise of him,[10]

ارايت من حملوا على الاعواد ارايت كيف خبا ضياء النادي

Did you see who they were carrying upon the coffin?
Did you realize the light of our circle has gone out?
This was a mountain that collapsed…

Some critisized him and said, why a sayyid (a child of the Prophet), a great Islamic scholar praised a pagan man this way! He replied, "Yes, I wailed his knowledge. He was a knowledgable man! (In these days if somebody does such a thing, they throw him out of the city.)"

After narrating this story, Jurji Zaydan[11] says, "Look at the tolerance! A man of such a great spirit and an exalted position as well as knowledge praises a pagan this way." Later, he says, "These all initiate from the caliphs' imperial courts who were people with vast tolerance."

This is not related to the imperial courts of caliphs. Al-Sayyid al-Radi was the student of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and he was the one who gathered Nahj al-Balaghah. He is more familiar than anyone with the commandments of his ancestors, the Prophet, and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, who have said, "Knowledge and hikmah are respectable everywhere."

These were the factors that created this scientific enthusiasm which inevitably created the foundations for Imam al-Sadiq.

Our discussion, therefore, is that even though the basis for Imam al-Sadiq's leadership were not laid downif they had been prepared, they would have been the best of all prepared foundationsanother ground was laid down for the Imam and he used it in a way that can certainly be named a scientific movement.

The Muslim World, including both Shi'ahs and Sunnis, is linked to Imam al-Sadiq. This is noticeable in the Shi'ah school of thought. The Sunni schools also initiated from Imam al-Sadiq since the chief and head of Sunni schools, the University of al-Azhar, was established thousands imid∗of years ago by the Fat[12] Shi'ahs. All the rest of the Sunni schools branched from this university and they all result from Imam al-Sadiq's use of the situation of his time.

These questions are at minimum forwarded at the problem of whether or not it was better for Imam al-Sadiq to let go of these foundations, fight and get killed in combat against oppression? Islam is not only about fighting oppression. Islam consists of other issues as well. Therefore, I just mentioned this issue in order to compare the differences between the time of Imam al-Sadiq and the time of other Imams.

If Imam al-Sadiq had not used this opportunity, this question could have been asked: did the Imam not want the caliphate for the sake of spreading Islam? Why did he not use this opportunity and get himself killed? The answer is: if the grounds were suitable, they would not have disregarded it. The suitable opportunity for Imam al-Ridawas also to find a way into meetings of the faithful [mu'minin] and to raise his voice from there. Imam al-Ridamay have spent a year or two with Ma'mun but from everything narrated by him during that time may not have been narrated from any other period.

Question and answer

Question: Did Jabir ibn Hayyan obtain his knowledge from Imam al-Sadiq?

Answer: As I said before, some parts of the answer to this question are historically unknown. History has not yet been able to make this clear. From the evidence, it can be said that he learned these subjects from Imam al-Sadiq. Of course, there are some who do not trust him and claim that Jabir ibn Hayyan's time was slightly later than the time of Imam al-Sadiq and even those who claim that even though he came later, he was a student of Imam al-Sadiq.

But those who believe in this issue have written it down under the title that he learnt these lessons from Imam al-Sadiq. The outstanding thing is that such sciences were unheard of before him which goes to show that Imam al-Sadiq had students in various spheres. Not all people have the same spiritual and intellectual capacity. As Imam 'Ali says to Kumayl ibn Ziyad,

"Alas! I have vast knowledge but cannot find a talented individual for it."[13] He then says, "And when I find one, he is either talented and clever, but greedy and a cheat who wants to use religion as a materialstic tool, or he is religious and holy but stupid and has no talent for knowledge. ?I could not find one who is talented both in knowledge and in morals."

References

1. Ibn Abi al-‘Awja’ has a sweet and delicate interpretation in this regard. One day he came to Imam al-Sadiq and said, “O son of the Messenger of Allah! You are the head of this affair. You are so and so, it was your grandfather who has brought this religion and had done so and so, but I am very sorry, when one needs to cough, he should cough! When muscus blocks his throat, he must cough; when doubts appear in his mind he should say, ‘I must cough my sagacious cough, let me say my words’.” The Imam Said, “Go ahead and say it!”

2. The controversies based on reasoning are called philosophical controversies.

3. As I have said before, when the term ‘philosophical’ is used, it refers to reasoning and rational debates. Contrary to the opinion of traditionalist’s whose main topic was only quotations and repeating sayings.

4. The intention is towards the same rational traditions we have in Shi‘ah books.

5. “Al-Fihrist” by al-Nadim is a bibliology book of its own field which is today considered among the reliable books. He has discussed bibliology in such an academic way that, today, Europeans pay a lot of value to his book. Ibn al-Nadim lived in the fourth century AH. In this book, he not only introduces the books of the Islamic time, but also books of non-Islamic period (that were available during his time). He was essentially a genius. He was a paper- and book-seller but was such an erudite and learned man that makes one astonished when he reads his books. I have read this book from the beginning to the end. It shows the various handwritings, languages (that were popular in his time) and the roots of languages.

6. Judge Ibn Khalkan lived in the sixth century AH.

7. Mansur treated Imam al-Sadiq in a strange way and Imam al-Sadiq himself was the cause of it. He would sometimes go hard on the Imam, sometimes easy. Of course, he seemingly never put the Imam in prison but most times he would keep the Imam under surveillance. Once he had the Imam under surveillance for two years in Kufah, that is to say they had prepared a house exclusively for Imam al-Sadiq and controlled the Imam’s social activities. He summoned the Imam several times, vituperated and scolded him and said, “I will kill you; I will chop your neck! Are you propagandizing against me? Are you making people riot against me?” And etc. The Imam would respond in a peaceful manner.

8. Surat al-Baqarah 2:269.

9. Abu Ishaq Sabi was not a Muslim. He was a Sabi’i (there are a lot to be said about their ideology. Some have said that the Sabaen ideology was rooted in Zoroastrianism although it is a Christian sect. There are lots of controversies today about where it is rooted). He was a very erudite and polite man. Because he was a man of literature, he was very fond of the Qur’anic literature and used to refer to Qur’anic verses constantly. During Ramdan, he would not eat anything. He was asked, “But you are not a Muslim, why do not you eat anything?” He would reply, “Manners demand me to be concordant with the people of my time.”

10. I have narrated this ode in “Dastan-e Rastan” by the Martyred Professor, vol. 2, p. 237.

11. Jurji Zaydan [also spelled: Gurgi Zaydan] (1861-1914) was a Lebanese Christian emigrant. He was born into a poor Greek Orthodox family in Beirut. He wrote historical novels and biographies and became a pioneering figure in Egyptian journalism.

12. imiyyun is the Shi‘ah Fatimid caliphate or al-Fatimids,. The Fat dynasty that ruled over varying areas of the Maghrib, Egypt, and the imite is sometimes Levant from 5th January 910 to 1171. The term Fat used to refer to the citizens of this caliphate. The ruling elite of the state belonged to the Isma‘ili branch of the Shi‘ism.

13. Nahj al-Balaghah, Fayd al-Islam, wisdom [hikmah] 139.

Chapter 5: The Reasons for Imam Musa al-Kazim's (‘a) Martyrdom

“You are the main means of approach and the right way, you are the martyrs in this mortal world and the Day of Judgement will make equal what was unequal before.”[1]

All of the infallible Imams, except for the holy being of the Imam of the Time who is still alive, died as martyrs. None of them died a natural death or as a result of an illness. This was one of their big glories. Firstly, because they always wished for martyrdom in the path of Allah and we can see the inner sense for this in the supplications they used to read which they have taught us. ‘Ali said, “I would hate to die in bed. I would prefer be killed with one thousand sword strikes than dying peacefully in bed.”

The supplications and ziyarat we read during pilgrimage to their resting places remind us of their virtues and that they are among the martyrs. The sentence I referred to at the beginning of speech was from the Jami‘ah al-Kabirah supplication in which we read, “You are the straight path and the main means of approach, you are the martyrs in this world and the intercessors of the next world.”

The term “shahid” (martyr) is the title for the holy being of Imam al-Husaynwho is usually referred to as Shahid, “Al-Husaynal-Shahid” (the Martyred Husayn); just as we call Imam al-Sadiq “Ja‘far al-Sadiq” (the Truthful Ja‘far); and Imam ibn Ja‘far, “Musa al-Kazim” (the one who is dominant over his anger). This, however, does not mean that Imam al-Husaynis the only martyred Imam among the infallible Imams. Just as calling Musa ibn Ja‘far, al-Kazim, would not mean the rest of the Imams were not al-Kazim (dominant over their anger); addressing Imam al-Rida, as al-Ridadoes not mean that this is not applicable to the rest of Imams or if we say Imam al-Sadiq it does not mean that the rest of the Imams were not [God-forbid] truthful.

The influence of time on the type of combat

Now the question put forward is: why did the rest of the infallible Imams become martyrs? Even those Imams whose history does not confirm them to uprise against tyrant rulers of their time, or the ones whose apparent conduct demonstrated that their methods differed to those of Imam al-Husayn)?

All right! Imam al-Husaynwas martyred; however, why is it claimed that Imam al-Hassan, Imam al-Sajjad, Imam al-Kazim, Imam al-Sadiq (as well as all the other Imams) should have also been martyrs? The answer to this is as follows: it is incorrect for us to assume that the methods and objectives of the rest of the Imams were different to Imam al-Husaynin this regard. Some have this presumption and claim: among the Imams, Imam al-Husayn’sdecision was to fight against the tyrannical system of his time.

However, the rest of the Imams did not fight. If this is our assumption, then we are mistaken. History informs us of the opposite and all the evidence and explanations are contrary to such a conclusion. If we look at this issue from a different point of view, with correct understanding of the evidence, then we will find that it is impossible for a true Muslim to actually come into terms with a tyrant and oppressive systems of his time, let alone

someone in the holy position of an imam. On the contrary, he would fight them, the only difference being the forms of their combat.

At one time, the fight may be visible, declaring a war and fighting with weapons. This is one form of combat. At other times, there is fighting, by means of condemnation of the other side, as well as discouraging people from his side, revoking the other side and inclining the society against him but not in the form of drawing weapons.

This is how time requirements can influence the form of combat. Time requirement can never be effective in a situation where in one case agreeing to peace with oppressors is permissible in one situation and forbidden in another situation. No, coming to terms with oppressors is never permitted at any time or place. The form of combat, however, may vary. It can be overt or covert.

The history of the infallible Imams generally demonstrates their constant battle against oppression. If they speak of fighting while in dissimulation [taqiyyah], it does not mean stagnancy and idleness. The root of taqiyyah is from waqy, just like taqwa, the root of which is from waqy. This is what taqiyyah means: defending oneself undercover or metaphorically speaking, using a shield to defend oneself during battle to get hit less but in no way withdrawing. This is why we see that all the infallible Imams have the honoryes the honorof not coming to terms with any tyrant caliph and were continuously hostile with them.

Today, after one thousand and three hundred years (more for some Imams and slightly less for some others) you see caliphs like ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (from before his time and during his time; the children of ‘Abd al-Malik, the cousins of ‘Abd al-Malik, Bani al-‘Abbas, Mansur Dawaniqi, Abu al-‘Abbas al-Saffah, Harun al-Rashid, Ma’mun, and Mutawakkil) are among the most ill-reputed people in history.

Among us and even among the Sunnis, it is clear that they were bespattered. Who bespattered them? If it were not for the resistence of the infallible Imams who revealed their depravities and debaucheries and other people like them, we would consider Harun and especially Ma’mun on the same rank as saints. If the infallible Imams had not revealed Ma’mun’s inner intentions and had not fully introduced him, he would have definitely been regarded as one of the greatest heroes in religion and science in this world.

Our topic of discussion is about the martyrdom of Imam Musa ibn Ja‘far. Why did they martyr him? First of all, the fact that Imam Musa ibn Ja‘far was martyred has been made certain and no one can deny it. According to the most famous and most valid narrations, Musa ibn Ja‘far spent four years in the corner of prison dungeons and passed away there. There are historical texts about the time the Imam spent in prison; suggestions were constantly forwarded to the Imam demanding for apology or even a verbal confession from him, but the Imam never agreed.

The Imam in Basrah Prison

The Imam served time not only in one prison, but in several prisons. They kept on transferring him from one prison to another and this was done, interestingly, because any prison they took the Imam to, it would not take

long for the prisoners there to become devoted to him. At first the Imam was taken to Basrah Prison. The Imam was handed over to the governor of Basrah, who at that time was ‘Isa ibn Ja‘far ibn Abi Ja‘far Mansur, the grandchild of Mansur Dawaniqi. ‘Isa ibn Ja‘far ibn Abi Ja‘far Mansur was a violent man who did not take intrest in moral issues. As one of his relative says, “They took this pious and holy man to a place where he heard things, he never had heard before.”

The Imam was taken to Basrah Prison in the Arabic month of Dhu al-Hijjah, of the year 178 AH, which was supposed to be a time of celebration and happiness due to ‘Id al-Duha.

The Imam spent a period of time in Basrah Prison after which even this very ‘Isa had gradually become fond of the Imam. He too, at first, truly imagined the Imam to be what the government had broadcasted of him, which was a rebellious man whose only skill was ‘to claim to be the rightful successor’. In other words, the desire to become a leader had made him crazy. Upon his personal aquaintence with the Imam, he realized that the Imam was a spiritual man, whose only purpose of raising the issue of successoral was to address its spiritual aspects. The situation then changed. He ordered a very good room to be put at the Imam’s disposal and entertained the Imam publicly.

Harun sent a secret message, in which he ordered ‘Isa to get rid of him. ‘Isa responded, “I will not do such a thing.” Finally, ‘Isa wrote a letter to the Caliph,

“Order them to come and take him back; otherwise, I will set him free myself. I cannot keep such a man as a prisoner.”

Since he was the Caliph’s cousin and the grandchild of Mansur, his words were, of course, observed.

The Imam in various prisons

They took the Imam to Baghdad and handed him over to Fadl ibn Rabi‘. Fadl ibn Rabi‘ was the son of Rabi‘, the chamberlain.[2] Harun vested Imam to him.

After a while, he also became fond of the Imam, changed the Imam’s conditions and placed the Imam in a better prison. The spies informed Harun that the Imam was not having a difficult time in Fadl ibn Rabi‘’s prison. They informed him that the Imam was not actually a prisoner but actually a guest. Harun took the Imam away from him and handed him over to Fadl ibn Yahya Barmaki.

After a while, Fadl also started treating the Imam that way which this really frustrated Harun. He sent his spies to investigate. They found out that the story was true. He finally took the Imam away and Fadl was disfavoured by Harun. In one of Harun’s gathering, Fadl’s father (an Iranian minister who was hostile towards the Shi‘ahs), to stop his child from being lowered in esteem by Harun, said in Harun’s ear,

“If my son has done something wrong, I am prepared to follow any orders you may have. My son has repented, my son this and my son that…”

Afterwards, he came to Baghdad and took the Imam away from his son and handed him over to someone else called Sindi ibn Shahik who they say

was not a Muslim. The Imam went through a lot of difficulties in his prison; that is to say the Imam was not left in peace in his prison.

Harun's request from the Imam

During the last few days of the Imam's imprisonment, which was not more than one week before his martyrdom, Harun sent this very Yahya Barmaki to the Imam and through him, in nice and soft tone, he told the Imam,

"Send my regards to my cousin and tell him it has been proven to us you have committed no sin and are blameless. However, I have unfortunately made an oath and cannot break my word. I have made an oath not to free you before you have confessed to sinning and asked me for forgiveness. No one needs to know. It is enough if you confess in the presence of Yahya. I do not need to be there either; the presence of others is not also needed. I do not want to break my oath. You only need to confess in Yahya's presence and say I am sorry that I have breached and I want the Caliph to forgive me. I will then set you free. Then, you can come to me and etc."

Now look at his resistive spirit! Why are they referred to as the intercessors of the transient realm [barzakh]? Why did they become martyrs? They become martyrs in the way of their true faith and belief. They wanted to show that true faith does not allow taking steps with the oppressor. The Imam's response to Yahya Baramaki was, "Tell Harun that there is not much left of my life and that is it." And, after a week, the Imam was poisoned.

The reasons for the Imam's arrest

Now why did Harun order for the Imam's arrest? Because he was jealous of the Imam's position and felt threatened by it even though the Imam was not revolting against him, nor has he taken the smallest steps to form a revolution (a discernible revolution). Harun, however, had realized that they had started a spiritual revolution of beliefs. When Harun decided to consolidate his son Amin for the position of crown prince, followed by Ma'mun who would subsequently be followed by his son Mu'tamid, he invites the scholars and the prominent figures of all the cities to come to Mecca that year. He organizes a massive convention and takes oaths of allegiance from everyone.

Who in his opinion could have been a potential obstacle for this task? Who is the one in whose presence looks would be directed upon him and would cause others to think that he would be the one worthy of the position of the caliphate? Musa ibn Ja'far.

When Harun comes to Medina, he orders for the Imam's arrest. This very Yahya Barmaki is reported to have said, "During today or tomorrow, I think the Caliph will order the arrest of Musa ibn Ja'far." They asked him, "How come?" He replied, "I accompanied him in his pilgrimage of the Prophet in Masjid al-Nabi.[3] When he wanted to say salutation to the Prophet, I saw him say, 'Peace is upon you, O son of my uncle! O the Messenger of Allah'!" Then, he said, "I am very sorry that I have to arrest your son Musa ibn Ja'far (as if he can lie to the Prophet) this is what is deemed advisable. If I do not do this, there will be upheaval in the land. To stop this and, for the interest

of this land, I have to do such a thing. O the Messenger of Allah, I am apologizing."

Yahya told his friend, "I imagine, today or tomorrow, he is going to order the Imam's arrest."

Harun ordered his men to go after the Imam. It just so happened that the Imam was not at home. Where was he? He was at the Prophet's Mosque. The Imam was praying when they entered. They did not permit him to finish his prayers and dragged him out of the Prophet's Mosque. The Imam looked at the Prophet's grave and said, "Do you see how your nation is treating your children?"

Why does Harun do this? This was because he wants to take oaths of allegiance for his children as future crown princes. But, the Imam had not rioted. He had not rioted but his situation was basically a different one. His situation is explained by the fact that Harun and his children were trying to usurp the caliphate.

Ma'mun's saying

Ma'mun's actions caused some historian to consider him a Shi'ah. In my opinion, there is nothing holding someone back from believing in something but acting against it. He was a Shi'ah and he was one of the Shi'ah scholars. This man had some debates with Sunni scholars that have been recorded in historical texts.

A couple of years ago, a Turkish Sunni judge wrote a book which was translated into Farsi and it was called, "Descriptions and Trials about Muhammad's Family". Ma'mun's discussion about 'Ali's immediate caliphate is quoted in the above-mentioned book. This discussion is so interesting and scholarly, the form of which is rarely seen to have taken place by any Shi'ah scholar.

It has been written that once Ma'mun himself said, "Can any of you imagine who taught me Shi'ism?" They said, "Who?" He said, "My father." They replied, "But your father was the worse enemy of Shi'ism and the Shi'ah Imams." He said, "This is the story. We were on a pilgrimage to Hajj with my father. I was very young. Everybody, especially the elders and noblemen, came to visit. He had everyone introduce themselves: say his name, his father's name and his ancestor up to his great ancestors. This was so that the Caliph could get to know him and see whether he was from Quraysh or not and if he was from the Helpers [ansar] of the Prophet, whether he was a Khazraji or an Awsi. Whoever came, the chamberlain would come and say to Harun, 'This certain person with this name and this father's name and etc… had come.' One day the chamberlain came and said, 'The one who is here to visit the Caliph said, 'Tell him Musa ibn Ja'far ibn Muhammadibn 'Ali ibn al-Husaynibn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib is here'.' As soon as he said this, my father got up and said, 'Tell him to come in.' He then said, 'Tell him to come in on horseback and not get off.' He ordered us to go and welcome him. We went and saw a man on whose face traces of piety and worship were clearly visible. He appeared to be from among the first class worshippers and a person of great piety. My father shouted from a distance, 'Please come in mounted for so and so's sake.' Then, he very politely seated him higher than himself and started to ask him questions,

‘How many are your dependents?’ ‘It was discovered that he had lots of dependents.’ ‘How are your living conditions?’ ‘My life’s situation is so and so.’ ‘What is your income?’ ‘My income is this much.’ He then left. When he was leaving, my father told us to go, accompany him and see him off. To Harun’s command, we escorted him to the door. That was when he quietly told me, ‘You will become the caliph. I will give you only one advice that is not to treat my children badly.’

We did not know who he was. We returned. I was the most inquisitive from amongst the rest of my siblings so when the place got empty, I asked my father who the man was to whom he paid so much respect. He smiled and said, ‘Frankly, this seat that we are sitting on belongs to them.’ I asked, ‘Do you really believe this?’ He said, ‘I do.’ I said, ‘Why then don’t you give it to them?’ He replied, ‘Do you not know that kingdom is sterile? If I come to know that even you, my son, ever had the idea of becoming my adversary, I will take off your body that which carries your eyes.’

This passed. Harun was giving recompense. He would send exorbitant amounts of money to this and that person’s house. This ranged from four thousand red gold dinars to five thousand and so on. We thought the sum he would send the man he paid so much respect to would probably be very high. It was, however, the least; two hundred dinars. Again, I went and asked my father about this, he replied, ‘Do you not know that they are our rivals? Politics demands that they always be in need of financial aid and short of money. This is because if their economical facilities ever improve, it is possible that one thousand swords will rise against your father’.”

The Imam’s spiritual influence

You can imagine how much spiritual influence the Shi‘ah Imams had. They neither had swords nor propagandized, but they had hearts. There were the Shi‘ahs present among Harun’s closest allies in his government.

Truth and reality has a kind of attraction that one cannot neglect. Tonight you read in the papers that Malik al-Husaynsaid, “I found out that even my driver was with the partisans.”

My chef was also one of them. ‘Ali in is∗ibn Yaqt Harun’s minister. He is the second person is the land but a Shi‘ah and undercover. He is aiding Musa ibn Ja‘far’s aims but his guise is for Harun. He reported to the Imam two or three times but Musa ibn Ja‘far, who because of his special perception realized the dangers he could be facing, gave him instructions which saved his life. There were some people among Harun’s system who were very fond of the Imam and were limitlessly enamoured by him but never dared to contact the Imam.

One of the Ahwazi Iranian Shi‘ahs has said, “I had become subject to some very heavy taxes which were put down for me. If I wanted to pay those taxes they had made up for me, my life would crash down. By chance the governor of Ahwaz was deposed and a new governor replaced him. I was really worried that he would ask me for those taxes.

A friend, however, advised me to discuss the issue with him because both the governor and I were Shi‘ahs but I never dared to go to him and say that I am a Shi‘ah because I could not believe it myself. I said to myself that it would be better if I went to Imam Musa ibn Ja‘far in Medina. If he

confirmed that the governor is Shi‘ah, then I will ask him for advice. I went to the Imam and he wrote a letter which was not longer than three or four sentences; three to four imperious sentences, the type an imam would write to his follower. They were about helping to resolve the problems of a Muslim believer who was in need, and something about the position a believer holds with God and that was it.

I secretly brought the letter with me to Ahwaz. I realized that I should give this letter to the governor confidentially. One night, I went to his door. His door-keeper came and I said, ‘Tell him someone has come from Musa ibn Ja‘far and has a letter for you.’ I saw him coming; he greeted me and said, ‘What are you saying?’ I said, ‘I have come from Imam Musa ibn Ja‘far and have brought a letter.’ He took the letter from me.

He recognized the letter and kissed it. He then kissed my face and my eyes. He immediately took me inside the house and sat in front of me like a child and said, ‘You went to the Imam?’ I said, ‘Yes.’ He said, ‘What is the problem that you are facing?’ I replied, ‘They have put down very heavy taxes for me. If I pay them, my life will be in ruins.’ He ordered for the book to be brought on the same night and corrected it.’ Because the Imam had written, ‘If any one makes a faithful person happy, such and such…,’ he said, ‘Will you let me do you another service?’ I replied, ‘Yes.’ He said, ‘I want to halve whatever I own with you tonight. I will halve all the money I have with you and will ask the price of whatever goods I own. Accept this from me.’ The Ahwazi says, ‘I came out in that condition and in a trip I later had to Medina I told the story to the Imam.’ The Imam smiled and was contented.”

What was Harun afraid of? He was afraid of the attraction towards the truth. “Language is not the only tool for propagation.”[4] Language has little influence on propagation. True propaganda is through actions. Whoever confronted Musa ibn Ja‘far, his generous father or his pure children and spent time with them, he would basically see the reality within them. He would see that they know Allah deeply and truly fear Him. They truthfully love Allah and whatever they did was truly for Him.

Two common customs among the Imams

Two customs were visible among the Imams. One was worship, fear of Allah and their monotheism. There is a very amazing monotheism in their being. They are weeping and shivering in fear of Allah as if they can see Allah, the Resurrection Day, Hell and Paradise. We read about Musa ibn Ja‘far, “The allied party of long prostrations and effervescence tears! One will not cry before he has a disturbed fiery inside.”[5]

The second custom observed among the children of ‘Ali (the infallible Imams) was their sympathy for and intimacy with the weak, oppressed, dispossessed and needy. Man basically values these differently. By studying the history of Imam al-Hassan, Imam al-Husayn, Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, Imam al-Baqir, Imam al-Sadiq, Imam al-Kazim and other subsequent Imams, we see that being attentive to the condition of the needy was basically part of their routine. It was in the form of personal tending and not only ordering for it to be done. They never passed this sort of responsibility to someone else. It is obvious that people perceived these issues.

The plot of Harun's system

During the time the Imam spent in prison, Harun's system plotted to maybe lower the Imam's reputation. They assigned a very beautiful young woman to become the so-called slave girl of the Imam in prison. In prison, someone obviously has to bring food and if the prisoner is in need of something, he can ask that person. They assigned a very beautiful young slave girl for this task and said, "No matter what kind of a man he is, he has been in prison for a long time, he may at least look at her which makes it possible to accuse him and a group of prattlers can say, 'How could this be possible, a man and a young woman alone in an empty room'?"

They were suddenly informed that a dramatic change had occurred in this young slave girl and that even she had started worshipping. They saw that this slave girl had become another follower of the Imam.[6] They saw her completely disturbed. She was in a different mental state. She kept looking at the sky and at the earth. They said to her, "What is the matter?" She replied, "When I saw this man, I understood what I am and realized that I have committed a lot of sins in my life. I have committed many faults. I think, I should now only stay in a state of repentance." She did not change her mind until she died.

Bishr Hafi and Imam al-Kazim ('a)

You have heard the story of Bishr Hafi.[7] One day the Imam was passing through the alleys of Baghdad and sounds of howl, tar and tambourine could be heard from a house. They were playing and dancing and one could hear the sound of gambling.

Incidentally, one of the servants of the house came out to empty the trash for them to be taken by the rubbish men. The Imam told him, "Does this house belong to a freeman or a slave?" This was a strange question. The servant said, "Can you not realize for yourself from the luxurious state of the house? This is Bishr's house, one of the authorities, one of the aristocrats; of course, he is free." The Imam replied, "Yes,[8] it must belong to a freeman. If he was enslaved, all these noises would not be coming out of his house."

Now whatever else was said is not written. They have only written that other comments were exchanged between them when Bishr realized that the slave who went to empty the rubbish outside had taken longer than he needed to. He came after him and said, "What took you so long?" The slave replied, "A man was talking to me. He asked a very strange question." Bishr said, "What did he ask?" He said, "He asked me whether the owner of this house was free or enslaved?" I replied, "Of course, he is free." He then said, "Yes, he is free, if he was a slave, such noises would not have come out." Bishr said, "What did he look like?" When the servant described him, he realized that it was Musa ibn Ja'far. He asked, "Where did he go?" He said, "He went this way." Bishr was bare-footed and did not take the time to put his shoes on in fear that he may not find the Imam. He ran out barefoot. He ran and threw himself on the Imam's lap and asked, "What did you say?" The Imam replied, "This is what I said." He said, "Sir! From this very hour,

I want to be Allah's slave;" and he meant it. From that moment onwards, he was Allah's slave.

This news reached Harun. This was why he felt threatened and said, "They just should not be. Basically, your presence (Imam al-Kazim) is a sin in my view." The Imam asked, "What have I done? What uprising have I caused? What actions have I performed?" These questions had no reply but were saying in an adequate expression, "Basically, your presence is a sin." At the same time, the Imams never failed to enlighten their followers and other people. They told and conveyed the story to them and they understood what what happening.

Safwan Jammal and Harun

You have probably also heard the story of Safwan Jammal. Safwan owned what the today call, 'transportation rental services' which was an agency that rented out camels in those days. He was very reputable and his services were so abundant that the government would frequently ask him for transportation services.

One day, Harun wanted to go on a trip to Mecca and requested his services. He signed a contract with him for renting the transportation. Safwan, however, was one of the followers and companions of Imam al-Kazim.

One day he came to visit the Imam and said (or the Imam may have been informed previously): I have done such a thing. The Imam said, "Why did you offer your camels to such a tyrant man?" He replied, "I did not offer them out for a sinful trip! His trip was a pilgrimage to Hajj and a trip of obedience; that is why I loaned them; otherwise, I would not have." The Imam asked, "Have you received your money yet? Or at least, is there any rent to be paid still?" He replied, "Yes, there is." The Imam said, "Refer to you heart, now that you rented your camels out to Harun, do you not wish, deep down in your heart, that Harun stays alive at least until he comes back and pays the rest of your rent?" He said, "Yes." The Imam said, "It is enough that you are contented with the survival of the oppressor and this itself is a sin."

Safwan came out. Harun's men were suddenly informed that Safwan had sold out all his camels. He basically left this job. When he sold them, he went to the other party of the contract and said, "We shall terminate this contract because I no longer want this job," and tried to bring some excuses. Harun was informed and said, "Bring him here." When they brought him, Harun asked, "What is going on?" He replied, "I have grown old. I can no longer do this job. I thought even if I want to work, it can be something else." Harun realized and said, "Tell me the truth! Why did you sell your camels?" Safwan replied, "That was the truth." Harun said, "No, I know what the story is. Musa ibn Ja'far was informed you loaned your camels to me and he told you that this transgressed the law. Do not deny it. I swear to God, had it not been for the long years of acquaintance we have had with your family, I would have ordered your execution right here."

So, these are what caused the martyrdom of Imam Musa ibn Ja'far. Firstly, his presence was, in a way, what caused the caliphs to feel threatened. Secondly, they were publicizing against the caliphs and telling

the stories of their oppression. They, however, dissimulated, which means they acted in a way that no evidence was left available for their opposition.

The conditions of their time demanded for them to do their jobs undercover and try not to leave any evidence behind for the other party or at least the least possible. Thirdly, they had an amazingly resistive spirit. As I said before, when they say, “Sir! You just become a little apologetic in the presence of Yahya,” and he replies, “My life is ending.” In another time, Haruns sent somebody to prison and wanted him to get the Imam’s confession, and repeated the same things, “We are very fond of you; we are devoted to you. It is to the best interest that you do not go to Medina; otherwise, we do not intend to keep you imprisoned.

We have ordered them to keep you in a safe place near my self. I sent you my special chef, as you may not be used to our foods, to prepare for you whatever you desire.” Who was this agent? It was Fadl ibn Rabi‘ in whose prison the Imam once was and he was one of Harun’s high ranking officers. He went to see the Imam in prison while he was wearing his official uniform and he was armed. The Imam realized that Fadl ibn Rabi‘ had come (now observe the soul power): Fadl is standing waiting for the Imam to finish his prayer so he could communicate the Caliph’s messege.

As soon as the Imam said the prayer salutations [salams] and he said, assalamu ‘alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh, he gave no chance and said Allah-u Akbar and stood up to pray. Again Fadhl waited. The Imam’s prayer finished again and as soon as he said, assalamu ‘alaykum, the Imam again gave him no chance to begin and said, “Allah-u Akbar.” This was repeated a couple of times. Fadl realized that this was being done deliberately. He thought at first the Imam has some prayers in which he has to read four, six, eight rak‘ah’s one after the other.

Afterwards, he found out that this was being done because the Imam had no desire to pay any attention to him. He did not want to accept him. He eventually figured out that he has to fulfil his mission and if he stays for long, Harun would become suspicious of him. This time he started talking before the Imam began to say his salams. He may have said salam first.

He said whatever Harun had said. Harun had also told him, “Don’t go there and say this is what Commander of the Faithful [Amir al-Mu’minin] has said; don’t use the term, ‘Amir al-Mu’minin’. Say this is what your cousin has said.” He said in the utmost courtesy and politeness, “Your cousin has said that it is proven for us that you have committed no faults and sins but it is to the best interest you stay in this place and not go to Medina. I have ordered a special chef for the time being to come, order whatever food you desire so he prepares it for you.” They have written that the Imam’s response to this was, [Allahu Akbar],

“My own wealth is not here. If I want to spend, I will spend from my own licit wealth. The chef is coming so I give orders? I am not a kind of person to ask, ‘How much my ratio is or give my portion for this month.’ I am not also a man who begs.” As soon as he finished speaking, he said Allahu Akbar and stood for prayers.

This is how the caliphs realized that they can in no way force them to surrender and become obedient followers. Otherwise, the caliphs themselves

knew how costly martyring the Imams would be for them. Their tyrannical policies, however, did not allow them to avoid this. They considered this the easiest way.

The manner of the Imam's martyrdom

As I said before, the last prison the Imam was kept in was the Prison of Sindi bin Shahik who, I have read, was basically a non-Muslim man. He was one of those people who would vehemently put into action whatever was commanded to him. They placed the Imam in a dungeon and then tried to publicize to everyone that the Imam had died a natural death. They have written that, "In order to exonerate his son Fadl, this very Yahya Barmaki promised Harun to carry out the duties others did not carry out." He saw Sindi and said, "You do this job (the job of martyring the Imam)." When he accepted Yahya prepared a very dangerous poison and handed it over to Sindi. In there they had prepared poisonous dates which were fed to the Imam and then they immediately summoned witnesses.

They invited the city scholars and Judges (they have written that they invited the faithful men who were considered as honorable, pious and trusted by people). In that meeting they called the Imam as well as Harun and said, "O people! Have you heard what rumours these Shi'ahs are spreading about Musa ibn Ja'far? They say: 'He is not comfortable in prison and Musa ibn Ja'far this and that…' See for yourselves that he is completely healthy."

As soon as he finished, the Imam said, "He is lying! Right now I have been poisoned and not more than two or three days is left of my life."

This time they missed their target. Then after the Imam's martyrdom, they took his body next to Baghdad's bridge and kept taking people there and saying, "See, the master is unharmed, none of his bones are broken, his head is not cut either, his throat is not black. We did not kill the Imam, he died a natural death." They kept the Imam's body next to Baghdad'd bridge for three days to make people believe that the Imam died of natural causes. The Imam, of course, had many devotees, but the group who reacted like wild rue seeds on fire were the Shi'ahs.

There is a very touching story which has been written, "Once a group of the Imam's followers came from Iran with a lot of hardship, they were used to these difficult journeys during those days. When they succeeded to come to Baghdad, they really wished, at least, to visit this prisoner. Visiting a prisoner should not be considered a crime but they were given no permission whatsoever to visit him. They said to themselves, 'We will beg them, they may accept.' They came and begged. As it happened, they accepted and said, 'All right! We will arrange it today. You wait here.' These desperate people were assured that they will visit their Master and then return to their city and say, 'We had the good fortune of visiting the Master. We visited him and asked so and so questions from him and this is how he answered it.' While they were waiting outside the prison to see when they will be given the permission to visit, they suddenly saw four porters carrying a body out on their ?shoulders. The officer said, 'This is your Imam'."

References

1. Ziyarat Jami‘ah al-Kabirah.

2. The ‘Abbasid caliphs had a chamberlain called Rabi‘, who was the chamberlain for Mansur first. After Mansur, he stayed in their system and his son was in Harun’s system. They were the special people in the imperial court of the so-called ‘Abbasid caliphs and were extremely trustworthy.

3. 1. These shamefuls truly believed in their heart. Do not think that these people had not beliefs. If they had no beliefs, they would not have been as wretched as they were with beliefs like the assassin group of Imam al-Husayn. When the Imam Asked, “How are the people of Kufah?” Farazdaq and a couple of others said, “Their hearts are with you. In their hearts, they believe in you, but at the same time, they fight against their heart, they have risen against their faith and belief and that has caused them to draw their swords on you. Woe the state of man when materialistic goals and ambition force him to fight against his belief. If they truly did not believe in Islam, if they did had no belief in the Prophet and no belief in Musa ibn Ja‘far and had some other beliefs, they would not have been scolded as much and were not as wretched and under suffer by Allah, but they had beliefs and acted against their beliefs.”

4. Usul al-Kafi, Section on the Truth [bab al-sidq] and Section on Scrupulousness [bab al-wara‘]

5. Muntahi al-Amal, vol. 2, p. 222.

6. Because the Imam was in prison and had nothing to do, the only thing he could do over there was to worship. Such unendurable worship that is not possible for man to carry out unless he has an extreme love.

7. The pure Imams implement power as such, that is to say it happened naturally and it was not as if they wanted to act.

8. Meaning if he was the servant of Allah.

Chapter 6: The Issue of Imam al-Rida (‘a) as the Crown Prince (Session 1)

Our discussion today, is a historical debate and of the secondary issues related to Imamate (the leadership of Ahl al-Bayt) and caliphate. This issue is better known as Imam al-Rida“as the crown prince”.

Ma’mun brought Imam al-Ridafrom Medina to Khorasan (Marv) of that time and appointed him as his crown prince. Even the words “heir” or “crown prince” which are both used for the same meaning, are definitions not only relative today but also linked to that time.

A couple of years back, I was trying to find out when these words appeared. These words were not used at the beginning of Islam and such issues were basically not raised; therefore, such words were not required.

The act of introducing a successor by the Caliph during his time and taking oath of allegiance from his successor was first carried out during the time of Mu‘awiyah for Yazid. It, however, did not carry the name “giving oath of allegiance to Yazid as the crown prince”. Even though I focused on this issue, I do not remember seeing this definition in the period after him. But here we see this word is used and is also continuously repeated. Therefore, we shall use this definition because it has been stated in history and we should inevitably use it.

As in the case of Imam al-Hassan’s peace, there are also suspicions in this issue even though the appearance of the affair resembles these two issues as opposite and contradictory. This is because Imam al-Hassan abandoned the caliphate or as history or even the Imam himself defines it: he submitted the affairs. Here, it is the opposite.

The issue was not leaving the job but the oppositetaking it. The following question can cross ones mind: what are the Imams supposed to do then? When they leave the job they get criticism and if others want to hand over the job to them and they accept, they will still be criticized? What therefore must be done?

However, the critics have one issue in common; they all agree that in both cases, of handing over leadership and acquiring it, there is a kind of agreement. Handing over was a form of coming to terms with the present Caliph who had, for sure, taken over the caliphate unjustly and the acceptance of the position of successor was also ultimately a form of agreement.

Those who criticize say: Imam al-Hassan should not have handed over the affairs and come to term in the situation. He should have fought until he was killed. And in the case of Imam al-Rida, he should not have accepted. He should have resisted and fought as until he got killed, even if he was forced to accept it.

We shall now analyze the isse of successoral, which is a very important historical issue, so that the matter is made clear. The peace of Imam al-Hassan was to an extent discussed previously.

We must first investigate the historical view point irrespective of the issue why and how Imam al-Ridaaccepted this offer, to see what the story was.

The ‘Abbasid attitude towards the ‘Alawis

Ma’mun is the heir to the ‘Abbasid caliphate. Since the first day the ‘Abbasids came to power, their plan was to fight the ‘Alawis and kill them. The crime the Abbasids committed towards the ‘Alawis when they were in power was not little and even worse in some aspects.

However, because of the tragedy of Karbala (where Imam al-Husaynis the one they dealt with) takes place in the time of the Umayyads, the course of events really gets heated. Otherwise, apart from the tragedy of Imam al-Husayn, the disasters they created for the ‘Alawis was nothing less than the tragedy of Karbala and it was at time even worse.

What did Mansur, the second ‘Abbasid Caliph, do with the ‘Alawis, with Imam al-Hassan’s children to whom he gave oath of allegiance? He killed many of them and took them to really hideous prisons. That was where he took a large group of these poor sayyids (the children of the Prophet) to a prison where he gave them no water, no bread and even no permission to go out and go to toilet. This was a form of gradual torture. When he wanted to kill them, he would say: go and destroy the roof on their heads.

Anyone, who came after Mansur, did the same thing. During Ma’mun’s time, five of the Imam’s children rebelled, whose names are mentioned in “Murawwij al-Dhahab” by Mas‘udi and “Kamil” by ibn Athir. During the time of Harun and Ma’mun, seven to eight of the ‘Alawis rebelled. Therefore, hatred and enmity between the ‘Alawis and ‘Abbasids is not a small issue.

The ‘Abbasids did not refrain from any action for gaining power over the caliphate. Even if someone from their own dynasty became their rival, they would not hesitate and immediately killed him. This was true in the case of Abu Muslim, who had served them so much, but who was killed as soon as they felt the slightest bit of threat from him. All the service the Barmakis gave to Harun and all the cordiality these two had towards each other (the cordiality between Harun and Barmak had became a historical proverb)[1] did not do any good for the Barmakis. Suddenly, Harun got rid of them for a very little political issue and scorched their family. Even His Excellency Ma’mun got into a fight with his brother Amin. These two brothers fought each other and Ma’mun won and his bother got killed in a terrible manner.

Now, the question is how Ma’mun, who had such a personality, prepare to call up on Imam al-Ridafrom Medina and order for Imam al-Ridato be brought to him?

When they brought Imam al-Rida, he suggested to the Imam to accept the caliphate from him.[2] What was his motivation for this? What was going on? It is not easy to analyze this event historically.

Jurji Zaydan in the fourth volume of his book, entitled “Tarikh-e Tamaddun” (the History of Civilizations), discusses this issue with a special perception which I will talk about later. But he confesses to a matter that the ‘Abbasids used to keep their policies a secret even from their very close people and their policies are still unknown.

The issue of Imam al-Rida’s successoral and historical citations

The secrets, however, will ultimately not stay hidden as they should. In our (Shi‘ah) view, the secrets of this story are up to a large extent very clear. In our reports and narrations, that is the historical quotes that have reached us through Shi‘ah scholars and not the narration that have been narrated by the Imams, like what Shaykh Mufid has quoted in the book “Al-Irshad” or what Shaykh Saduq has quoted in the book, “‘Uyun al-Akhbar al-Rida”. There are many points about the successoral of Imam al-Ridaespecially in the book “‘Uyun al-Akhbar al-Rida”. Before I refer to these Shi‘ah historical resources, I will firstly name a book as evidence from Sunni references which is called “Maqatil al-Talibiyyin” by Abu al-Faraj Isfahani. He is originally an Umawi and from the Umayyad generation and this is a fact. He lived in the age of “Al-e Buyeh” and because he was residing in Isfahan he became famous as Abu al-Faraj Isfahani.

This man was not a Shi‘ah so we could claim he has written his books based on Shi‘ah emotions. He is definitely a Sunni. He also was not a very pious person either so that we could claim that he was influenced by the reality of events. He is the author of the book called, “Al-Aghani”. Aghani is plural for Ughniyyah and Ughniyyah means songs.

He has explained the history of music in the Muslim World and in proportion to that, a lot of other histories in this book which is apparently about eighteen thousand big volumes. They say Sahib ibn ‘Ubbad who was contemporaneous with him, used to take two or three loads of books wherever he went. But when he had Abu al-Faraj’s book he would say: I am no longer in need of a library. This book is so comprehensive that even though its writer is Abu al-Faraj and it is about music and musicians, a group of traditionalist such as the late ‘Allamah Majlisi and the late Shaykh ‘Abbas Qummi continuously quoted from the book of Aghani by Abu al-Faraj.

We said that Abu al-Faraj has a book that is considered as a valid Islamic history book and is called, “Maqatil al-Talibiyyin”. It is the history of the killings of the sons of Abu Talib. In this book, which is still now available, he has gathered the history of ‘Alawi rebellions and the murder and martyrdom of the children of Abu Talib, who were, of course, mostly ‘Alawi. He has exclusively attributed about ten pages of this book to Imam al-Ridaand has said the story of Imam al-Rida’s successoral.

When we study this book, we see that it is in accordance with the history quoted by the Shi‘ah scholars. I paid exceptional attention when comparing “Maqatil al-Talibiyyin” with what has been mentioned in “Al-Irshad” by Shaykh Mufid. They were very similar, as if they were both the result of a merger of the same historical evidence into one source which they have been written from. Therefore, our comments in this regard have been taken from not only Shi‘ah sources.

Now let’s investigate Ma’mun’s motivation to figure out what really forced him to raise this issue. Was Ma’mun really thinking of handing the job over to Imam al-Ridathat in case of his death or murder, the caliphate would be transferred to the ‘Alawi family and to Imam al-Rida? If he really had this belief, did it remain with him till the end? In that case, we must not then accept that Ma’mun poisoned Imam al-Rida

We should accept the words of those who claim that Imam al-Ridadied a natural death. They thought that Ma'mun had good intentions from the beginning and that his good intentions stayed with him until the end is not acceptable by Shi'ah scholars. Most westerners have such beliefs. They believe that Ma'mun was truly a Shi'ah and truly fond of 'Ali's family.

Ma'mun and the Shi'ism

Ma'mun was the most knowledgeable of the caliphs and perhaps the most knowledgeable of kings in the world. It may not be possible to find a king from among those in the world who is more erudite and knowledge loving.[3] Again, there is no question of Ma'mun's intellectual and spiritual inclinations towards the Shi'ism.

He repeatedly took part in meetings where Imam al-Ridaspoke about the Shi'ism or the meetings where other Sunnis were present. One famous Sunni scholar by the name of Ibn 'Abd al-Birr has quoted a story, which has also been mentioned in Shi'ah books, in his famous book which goes as follows:

Once, early in the morning Ma'mun summoned forty of the greatest Sunni scholars to come to him. He told them that he wanted to discuss the issue of caliphate with you. Some of this discussion has been quoted by Mr. [MuhammadTaqi] Shari'ati in his book called, "Khilafat wa Wilayat" (Caliphate and Leadership). I have definetly seen very few scholars of religion to have argued the issue of the caliphate as well Ma'mun has. He discussed the issue of 'Ali's caliphate with all of them and overcame them all.

It has been narrated in Shi'ah books and the late Aqa Shaykh 'Abbas Qummi has also quoted in the book titled, "Muntaha al-Amal":Once somebody asked Ma'mun, "Who did you learn Shi'ism from?" He said, "From my father Harun." He then told a detailed story about his father's inclinations towards the Shi'ism. He had this kind of reverence towards Musa ibn Ja'far.

This was how fond of him he was. But at the same time he treated Musa ibn Ja'far in the worse possible manner. Once I asked my father, "If you have so much regard for this man why are you treating him like this?" He said, "Kingdom is sterile (an Arabic proverb) which means that a kingdom does not take into account his own child, let alone other things." He then said, "My little boy! Even if you, my child, fight with me over the caliphate, I will take of your body whatever carries your eyes, meaning I will separate your head from you body."

Thus, there is no doubt that Ma'mun was fond of the Shi'ism, however, he was famous for being "an imam-killing Shi'ah". Was it not true that the people of Kufah had Shi'ah inclinations yet they took part in killing Imam al-Husayn? There is no doubt that Ma'mun was an erudite and knowledge-loving man and this is the reason why westerners believe that he had plans to transfer the caliphate to Imam al-Ridaout of sincerity, belief and good intentions. They believe that events in Imam al-Rida's life stopped him and that he died a natural death. This, in their belief, was how the issue was terminated.

But, of course, Shi‘ah scholars believe that this is not acceptable. The evidences are also contrary to this belief. If the matter was this serious, Imam al-Rida’s reaction towards accepting the caliphate would not have been the way they were. We see that Imam al-Ridadid not regard this matter as a serious one.

The views of Shaykh Mufid and Shaykh Saduq

Other assumptions which are also not improbable, since people like Shaykh Mufid and Shaykh Saduq have accepted it, are that in the beginning Ma’mun had sincere intentions but he later changed his mind.

It has also been mentioned in history (quoted by Abu al-Faraj and in more detail by Shaykh Saduq and Shaykh Mufid) when Ma’mun gave this suggestion, he said, “Once my brother, Amin, summoned me (Amin was the Caliph even though part of the kingdom had been handed over to Ma’mun, who was also crown prince). I did not go.” He then sends an army after me to take me with my hands tied. Upheaval had taken over parts of Khorasan and I sent an army there that was later defeated. I noticed that the leader of my army had a weak spirit which gave me certainty that I would not have the power to resist my brother and that I would be captured and handed over to him handcuffed only to face an ominous future.

One day I repented. He shows a room to the one he was talking to and says, “In this very room, I ordered for some water to be brought to me. First I washed my body, purified myself (I am not sure whether it is ironical to ghusul or the just washing). I then ordered for clean white clothes and in this very place I read the parts of the Qur’an which I had memorized. I prayed four rak‘ahs of prayer and made a vow to Allah to return the caliphate to its rightful owners if he were to keep me safe and sound and make me victorious over my brother, I did this with pure sincerity. From there onwards, I felt the disentanglements in my affairs open. After that, I was never defeated. I had sent a group to the front in Sistan and I received news of their glory. I then sent Tahir ibn al-Husaynto my brother. He also became victorious; one victory after another. Because my prayers were granted by Allah, I wanted to fulfil my promise.”

Shaykh Saduq and others have approved of this story. The only motivation driving Ma’mun was the oath he had made to Allah. This is one probability.

The second probability

Ma’mun basically had no power over this event. The initiative was not Ma’muns. The initiative was from al-Fadl ibn Sahl Dhu al-Riyasatyan (Ma’mun’s Minister)[4] who came and said, “Your father treated ‘Ali’s family very badly. They did such and such, now it would be proper for you to bring the best of ‘Ali’s family and make him your crown prince.” Ma’mun was reluctant to do this but he saw no other options because Fadl had requested this of him.

Therefore, if we again assume this to be Fadl’s initiative, then why would he do it? Was Fadl a Shi‘ah? Did he do this because of the belief he had in Imam al-Rida? If so, then why did he still accept his Zoroastrian beliefs? Where his intentions only to transform the caliphate even though he was not

a Shi‘ah of Imam al-Ridaand he was bad? And, therefore, if his plans worked, the danger would mostly be towards Ma’mun’s government, because Ma’mun was ultimately a Muslim caliph. However, maybe they wanted to separate Iran from the Muslim World and take it towards Zoroastrianism.

Everything I am saying are all questions, I do not want to imply that history has given definite answer to these questions.

Jurji Zaydan’s view

Jurji Zaydan is one of the people who believe this transferral plan was initiated by Fadl ibn Sahl. He also believes that Fadl ibn Sahl was a Shi‘ah and did this because of his beliefs. This statement, however, is neither true nor correct because it is not consistent with history. If Fadl was as sincere and truly wanted for the Shi‘ism to prevail over the Sunnis, Imam al-Rida’s reaction towards the transfer of caliphate would not have been the way it was. On the contrary, it has been mentioned in Shi‘ah history and narrations that Imam al-Ridastrongly opposed Fadl even more than he opposed Ma’mun. He was against Fadl ibn Sahl and considered him a danger. He would sometimes say to Ma’mun, “Fear him! He and his brother are dangerous.”

It has also been mentioned that Fadl ibn Sahl constantly vilified Imam al-Rida.

We have so far pointed out two probabilities. One is that Ma’mun initiated for this transfer to take place in sincerity because of the oath he had made but was led astray, which is acceptable by Shaykh Saduq and others. Or that he kept his sincerity until the end which is what the orientalists believe.

The second probability is that the initiative was basically not Ma’mun’s but that Fadl ibn Sahl initiated it. Some have said that Fadl was a Shi‘ah and was sincere, others agree that he had dangerous intentions.

The third probability

A) To attract the attention of Iranians:

The other probability is that the initiative was Ma’mun’s and that he had no sincerity from the beginning, considering this issue a ‘kingdom policy’. What was that policy? Some have said that it was aimed at attracting the attention of the Iranians because the Iranians generally preferred the Shi‘ism and ‘Ali’s family and had risen against the ‘Abbasids from the beginning under the title “Al-Rida” or “Al-Radi” from Muhammad’s family. Therefore, based on history and not traditions, the title al-Ridawas given to Imam al-Ridaby Ma’mun, meaning the day he appointed Imam al-Ridaas the crown prince, he said, “From now on, we call him by the title ‘al-Rida’.” He wanted to show the Iranians that he had satisfied their ninety-year-old request they had when they rose under the title “al-Ridafrom Muhammad’s family” or “al-Radi from Muhammad’s family”. He thought to himself, “We will please them and deal with Imam al-Ridalater.”

There was also the issue of the difference between their ages, Ma’mun was a young man of less than thirty years whereas Imam al-Ridawas about fifty years old (as Saduq and others have suggested that the Imam had forty

seven years of age which is probably more correct). Ma'mun thinks to himself, "On the surface, this individual's leadership can not pose a threat to me. He is at least twenty years my senior. Even if he does continue to live for another few years, he will still die before me."

There is, therefore, another view that the transfer of caliphate to Imam al-Ridawas Ma'mun's policy. It was initiated by Ma'mun political intentions to calm the Iranian nation down and attract their attention.

B) To destabilize rebellions by the 'Alawis:

Some have suggested another reason for Ma'mun's initiative. They believe that the reason behind it was to destabilize the uprising of the 'Alawis. The 'Alawis had become an issue themselves. Every few years or sometimes every year there would have been an uprising in one corner of the land which was most likely led by an 'Alawi.

Ma'mun came up with this initiative in order to please the 'Alawis and keep them quiet or at least to disarm them in front of the people. When he brings the leader of the 'Alawis into his system, they would definitely think that they too have a share of the government. Ma'mun forgave most of them even though, in his opinion, they had committed enormous crimes. This included Zayd al-Nar, Imam al-Rida's brother, who was pardoned by Ma'mun. Ma'mun thought to himself, "I will eventually please them and stop their uprising." He, in fact, wanted to give them a share of the government so they would calm down and the people around them disintegrate. He wanted to disarm the 'Alawis so wherever they go to assemble an uprising against the Caliph, people tell them, "You also have a share in the government. Imam al-Ridais now the crown prince. Do you want to rise against Imam al-Rida?"

C) Imam al-Rida's disarmament

The other probability in relation to Ma'mun's initiative was the policy to disarm Imam al-Ridahimself. It is in our narrations that one day Imam al-Ridatold Ma'mun, "This is what you intend." You know, one way to disarm people who criticize a system is to give them a post in that system. Then, whatever the situation, if people were still unhappy, their dissatisfaction could no longer be put to use. On the contrary, the dissatisfied people will get provoked against them (i.e. if Imam al-Ridahad a post in the government, those people who claimed that the caliphate rightfully belonged to 'Ali's family, or that the world would be a garden if they became Caliphs, or that justice would be established, etc., they would turn against him). Ma'mun wanted to select Imam al-Ridaas the Crown Prince so that people would say afterwards, "No, the situation did not change. Nothing happened." Or maybe he wanted to accuse 'Ali's family and say, "They say so and so when they have no access to anything, but when they gain access, they become silent and do not act."

It is very difficult for one to reach a definite conclusion from Ma'mun's point of view using historical stand points. Was this Ma'mun's initiative? Or was it Fadl ibn Sahl's initiative? If it was Fadl's initiative, what was it based on? And if it was Ma'mun's initiative, were his intentions sincere or not? If he had sincerity, did he revert from it at the end or not? And if he did

not have sincerity, what was his policy? From historical points of view, these matters are uncertain.

Most of these, of course, have a reason but not ones that we could say are one hundred percent definite. Maybe what Shaykh Saduq and others believe is correct even though it may not seem palpable to the Shi‘ahs to say that Ma’mun had pure intentions from the beginning but later he changed his mind. Just as people make decisions by reverting to the truth when they are faced with difficult situations but forget about their initial intentions when they are freed from those difficulties.

“And when they mount upon the ship, they pray to Allah, making their faith pure for Him only, but when he bringeth them safe to land, behold! They ascribe partners (on to Him).”[5]

The Qur’an says when people get entrapped in the four sea waves, they become very pure and devoted but once they are out, they gradually forget. Ma’mun was also stuck in these four sea waves. He made this oath at first and decided to fulfil it. But, gradually he forgot and reverted from it completely.

It is better to analyze the matter through Imam al-Rida’s own words. In my opinion, if we analyze the situation from his point of view, especially by taking into consideration the historical facts, then a lot of questions, even those related to Ma’mun, will be answered.

The historical facts

1) Summoning Imam al-Ridafrom Medina to Marw

Summoning Imam al-Ridato Marw from Medina was decided without previous consultation with him. No single person has written about any previous negotiation or correspondence with Imam al-Ridain Medina about the reasons why they needed him there.

Ma’mun summoned the Imam without clarifying the issue at stake. He ordered for not only the Imam but a large group of ‘Ali’s relatives to be brought from Medina, under surveillance and despite of their free will. Even the route they chose to take Imam al-Ridathrough was one specifically chosen so that the Imam would not pass through Shi‘ah neighbourhoods. He ordered them not to take the Imam through Kufah but through Basrah and Khuzistan towards Neyshabur. He had defined the route for journey.

Those chosen to complete this mission were hand-picked from among people who had extreme hatred towards the Imam and who were the strongest of all. The general appointed for this task was a man called “Jaludi” or “Juludi” (apparently an Arab) who was very loyal to Ma’mun and opposed Imam al-Ridato such an extent that when Ma’mun informed him of his plans in Marw he said, “I disagree.” However much Ma’mun told him to shut up he still said, “I do not agree.” Because of this, he along with two other people was put in prison and was later killed for the sake of this matter. This was done one day when Ma’mun had summoned them along with Imam al-Ridaand a group including Fadl ibn Salh Dhu al-Riyasatayn. He again asked them for their opinions on this matter. They disagreed with utmost bluntness and gave a very sharp response. He decapitated the first one. He asked the second one who insisted on his response. Ma’mun

decapitated him as well. He then turned to Jaludi.[6] Imam al-Ridawas sitting next to Ma'mun, he whispered to Ma'mun, "Skip this one." Jaludi said, "Oh the Commander of the Faithful! I have a request from you. For God's sake do not accept this man's word about me." Ma'mun said, "Your oath is practicable that I will never take this man's word about you." (He (Jaludi) did not know that the Imam was interceding for him). He was beheaded right there.

In any case, they brought the Imam to Marw in that state. They placed everyone from 'Ali's family in one place and Imam al-Ridain a special place, under surveillance and under arrest. It was there that Ma'mun discussed the matter with the Imam. This is among the historical facts.

Imam al-Rida's refusal

Apart from not discussing this issue with Imam al-Ridabeforehand in Medina, when it was brought up in Marw, the Imam strongly rejected it. Abu al-Faraj has written in Maqatil al-Talibiyyin, "Ma'mun sent Fadl ibn Sahl and al-Hassan ibn Salh to Imam al-RidaThese two raised the issue. The Imam rejected and was not intending to accept. At the end, they said, 'What are you saying? This is not optional. We have the order to behead you if you refuse (this has repeatedly been quoted by Shi'ah scholars).' Faraj then says that the Imam still refused to accept. They went to Ma'mun. Ma'mun negotiated with the Imam again and threatened to murder him. Once he said, 'Why do you not accept?[7] Was it not your grand father, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib who participated in that council'?"

He was trying to say that the matter did not violate the Imam's family customs, since it was similar to the time when 'Ali participated in the council which had congregated to choose a caliph. It meant that he had temporarily withdrawn from the right, which he considered was bestowed upon him by Allah and surrendered to the situation so that he could see what the situation was and how the conditions were from the people's point of view.

Will the job be handed over to him or not? 'So if the council had given the caliphate to your father he would have accepted it. You should accept it, too.' The Imam finally agreed because his life was threatened; that is, if he had not accepted it, he would have been killed. Of course, the question whether or not Imam al-Rida's refusal to accept the position of 'crown prince' was worth the cost of his life will remain for you to decide. Is this similar to the oath of allegiance Yazid wanted from Imam al-Husayn? We shall discuss all these questions later.

Imam al-Rida's condition

Another historical fact is that Imam al-Ridamade a condition and secured its approval that was, 'I will accept under the condition that I do not interfere in anything and not take the responsibility for anything.'

He actually did not want to take responsibility for Ma'mun's actions and as they say today continue his opposition, insisting on the fact that 'We (us and them) do not go together and can not cooperate.' Of course, Ma'mun accepted this condition. The Imam was not even participating in the 'Id Prayers. Until that famous event, when Ma'mun requested that Imam al

Ridaper form an ‘Id prayer. The Imam said, “This is against my condition and promise.” He said, “Your not accepting any responsibilities have made people say things behind us. You have to accept.” The Imam replied, “All right! I will accept this prayer.” He accepted it in a way that made Ma’mun and Fadl regretful and they said, “If he reaches the place, a revolution will take place there.” They came and stopped the Imam and returned him and did not let him go out of the city.

The Imam’s attitude after the issue of acceptance

The other issue which is again a historical fact and quoted by the Sunnis as well as the Shi‘ahs (quoted by Abu al-Faraj as well as citations in our books) is the Imam’s attitude after the issue of acceptance of the position of ‘Crown Prince’. The speech the Imam gave in Ma’mun’s meeting (the acceptance of heir-apparency meeting) was especially amazing and interesting.

In my opinion, the Imam clarified his position in this one and half sentence speech. He read a sermon and in that sermon he made no mention of Ma’mun and did not thank him one single bit. The norms are to mention his name and, at least, thank him a little.

Abu al-Faraj Says, “They finally set a day and said, ‘On this day, people can come and give oath of allegiance to Imam al-Rida.’ People came. Ma’mun made a seat for the Imam and sat him next to himself. The first person he ordered to come and give oath of allegiance was his son, ‘Abbas ibn Ma’mun. The second person was one of the ‘Alawi sayyids. Then, on the same pattern, he called one ‘Abbasi and one ‘Alawi to come and give oath of allegiance to the Imam and gave them lots of prizes and they left. When they were coming to give oath of allegiance, the Imam was holding his hand in a certain way towards people. Ma’mum said, ‘Extend your arm so they can come and give oath of allegiance.’ The Imam said. ‘No, this is how my grandfather, the Prophet, used to take oath of allegiance and held his hand this way when people place their hand on his.’

Then, poets and rhetoricians, who are subject to situation and condition changes, came and started to read sermons, read poems, speak in praise of Imam al-Rida, speak in praise of Ma’mun and eulogize these two people. Ma’mun then told Imam al-Rida, ‘Stand up and give a speech yourself to the people.’ Ma’mun definitely expected the Imam to endorse him and his government. It is written, ‘He first praised Allah and…’[8]?”

References

1. I, of course, do not want to defend the Barmakis just like many of the so-called Iranian worshippers, only because they were Iranian. They were on the same level as the ‘Abbasids. Barmak did not have the slightest amount of difference (spiritually or by nature) with caliphs like Harun.

2. This, however, is not certain according to all the historians but it is as such in writing of most of the historians.

3. This does not mean the encourager of scholars.

4. Ma’mun has a vizier called Fadl ibn Sahl. They (the Sahls) are two brothers: al-Hasan ibn Sahl and Fadl ibn Sahl. They both are pure Iranians and originally Zoroastrians. During the Barmak Period (who the generation before) Fadl ibn Sahl who was clever, intelligent and educated and especially had some information about the science of astrology, entered the Barmak system and became a Muslim by them (some say their father became a Muslim and some others say, no, they were Zoroastrians and became Muslims there and then). Later on, his job flourished and he reached a level where he became Ma’mun’s vizier and occupied two positions are the same time. First of all, he was the vizier (the vizier in those days was like the prime minister today, meaning he was the boss because in those days there were no council of ministers, one person was the vizier who was in power and authority after the Caliph), in addition to this he was as it is so called today the head and commander in chief of the army. This was the reason they called him Zoroastrian because he was in the ministry position and the commander in chief position. Ma’mun’s army are all Iranians (there are very little Arabs among them) because Ma’mun was in Khorasan; the war between Amin and Ma’mun also was a war between Arab and Iranian. The Arabs supported Amin and the Iranians especially the Khorasanis (as Khorasan was the centre) supported Ma’mun. Ma’mun is Iranian from his mother’s side. Mas‘udi has written in both Murawwij al-Dhahab and Al-Tanbih wa al-Ashraf (others have also written) that Ma’mun’s mother was a Badqisi woman. This went as far as Fadl ibn Sahl’s dominance over everything and turned Ma’mun into a tool without will power.

5. Surat al-‘Ankabut 29:65.

6. Jaludi had a bad record after an uprising by one of the ‘Alawis who was later defeated, Harun had apparently ordered this very Jaludi to seize all the belongings of the Abi Talibfalmily, ‘Do not even leave any jewlleries for their women, and take all their clothes except for one set out of their homes.’ He came to Imam al-Rida’s house; the Imam blocked his way and said, ‘I will not let you in.’ He said, ‘I have a mission, I must go and take off the women’s clothes myself and not leave other than one set of cloth for them.’ The Imam said, ‘I will do whatever you are saying but I will not let you enter.’ No matter how much he insisted the Imam did not let him in. Afterwards, the Imam himself went and told the women, ‘Give everything you have to him so he leaves.’ He then collected their clothes and even their earrings and bangles then left.

7. They knew very well what their intentions were and why Imam al-Rida was not accepting. Imam al-Rida refused to accept, because later he himself told Ma’mun, ‘Whose property are you giving away?’ Imam al-Rida questioned whose property Ma’mun was giving away? And accepting this position from him meant approving of him. If Imam al-Rida considered the caliphate a right bestowed upon him by Allah, he tells Ma’mun, ‘You have no right to make me the crown prince. You must hand over the leadership and agree that you had no rights until now.’ This was our right and if choosing the Caliph was the people’s responsibility, again what business was this to him?

8. [Unfortunately the last few minutes of this speech were not recorded on the tape].

Chapter 6 : The Issue of Imam al-Rida(‘a) as the Crown Prince (Session 2)

The topic of discussion was the issue of Imam al-Rida’s heir-apparency. We said in the previous session that there are a series of historical facts and a series of doubtful ones. Even historians like Jurji Zaydan have clearly stated that the policies of Bani al-‘Abbas were confidential and they rarely let their political secrets be exposed and, therefore, their true intentions remain unknown in history.

What is definite and unquestionable is, first of all, that the issue of heir-apparency was not initiated by Imam al-RidaIt was initiated by Ma’mun and even when it started, it did not take the form of a single suggestion on Ma’mun’s part and an acceptance on the part of Imam al-Rida; rather, they had decided on this without prior discussion with the Imam. They had gathered a group from Khorasan, Marw, Transoxiana, lands which are today considered parts of Russia and Ma’mun was there and sent them to Medina.

Then, they summoned a group of Bani Hashim the head of which was Imam al-Ridato Marw. There was no discussion of their desire or free will. They even had defined the route through which they (the Bani Hashim group) were going to pass beforehand. This was through the villages and routes that had no or very few Shi‘ahs. They had especially specified that they should not cross Imam al-Ridathrough Shi‘ah neighbourhoods.

When this group reached Marw, they separated Imam al-Ridafrom his group into a house and the rest in another place. That is where the issue was first discussed and suggested to Imam al-Ridaby Ma’mun which was to accept the crown prince position. The first words Ma’mun used were, “I want to hand over the caliphate (this of course is not very definite).” In any case, he either proposed to transfer the caliphate to Imam al-Rida first and later said if you do not agree to take the caliphate then accept the position of crown prince or he offered the crown prince position from the beginning and Imam strongly refused.

Now, what was the Imam’s logic for refusing? Why did the Imam refuse? We cannot of course answer all these with definite answers but according to the narrations quoted by the Shi‘ahs in the “‘Uyun al-Akhbar al-Rida” which says, “When Ma’mun said, ‘I thought of deposing myself from the caliphate, appointing you instead of my self and pledging my allegiance to you’, the Imam replied, ‘You are either the rightful leader or you are not. If this caliphate rightfully belongs to you and if this caliphate is a divine caliphate, then you have no right to take off the garb that Allah has chosen for you and give it to someone else.

And if it does not belong to you then you still do not have the right to give it out. Why should you give something that is not yours to someone else? This means that the caliphate does not belong to you. You must announce like Mu‘awiyah, the son of Yazid that I am not rightful and inevitably denigrate your father just as he denigrated and say, ‘My fathers put this garb on unrightfully. I also wore it unrightfully throughout these times, I will therefore leave.’ You must not say I am handing over and entrusting the caliphate.’ When Ma’mun heard these words, he immediately changed the manner of his approach and said, ‘You have no choice.’

Then, Ma'mun threatened the Imam and mixed logic into his threat.[1] The sentence he used which was both threatening and logical was, 'Your grandfather, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, participated in the council (which consisted of six people) 'Umar had chosen. 'Umar who was the Caliph of the time, threatened and said, 'They must decide within three days and if they don't or one of them disobeys the decision made by the majority, Abu Talhah will be appointed to behead him'.'

He was trying to say you are in the same situation your grandfather was in and I am in the position 'Umar was in. You will follow your grandfather and participate. This sentence implicitly carried the meaning that even though your grandfather 'Ali considered the caliphate as his right, why did he take part in the council? He participated, so he could exchange views about the issue whom the vice-regency should be handed over to? This was a kind of demotion shown by your grandfather 'Ali who did not show obduracy and say, 'What is this council? The caliphate belongs to me. If you are stepping down, then step down so I will be the Caliph; otherwise, I will not participate in this council.' The meaning of his participation in that council was that he dispersed his explicit and definite right and placed himself among the people in the council.

Your situation is now similar to that of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib's situation. This was the rational aspect of the story. But the threat aspect, 'Umar was a caliph whose actions were regarded almost as evidence for the time and age. Ma'mun was trying to say if I make a rigorous decision, society will accept it and would say he made the same decision the second Caliph made. He said, 'The Muslim interest lies in the council and if anyone violates it, behead him.

And I give this order upon the decree that I am the Caliph and I say it is to the best interest of Muslims that 'Ali ibn Musa accepts the heir-apparency and if he disobeys I will behead him because I am the Caliph.' He mixed logic and threat. Therefore, another one of the historical facts is that Imam al-Ridarefused to accept to be Ma'mun's crown prince but later agreed because of Ma'mun's threats.

The third issue which is again among definite historical facts is that from the beginning, the Imam set a condition for Ma'mum which was I will not interfere in anything meaning practically I do not want to be a part of this system whether under the title of 'crown prince' or not. They can make coins in my name if they want to, read sermons in my name if they want to, but do not involve me in any job practically. I do not want to interfere in judgements or the administration of justice nor in any removals from or appointments to a position or any other job.[2]

In that same formal ceremony (for his crown prince position), the Imam behaved in such a way which proved his separation from Ma'mun's system. In my opinion, the first sentence he read in his first 'crown prince' speech is very amazing and valuable. Ma'mun prepared that great ceremony and invited all the heads of the country including the ministers, the army heads and other figures to all participate with green clothes that was the slogan they set then.[3]

The first person he ordered to come and give oath of allegiance to Imam al-Ridaas the crown prince was his son ‘Abbas ibn Ma’mun who was apparently the previous crown prince or the candidate for this position. They all then came one by one and gave oath of allegiance. Then, the poets and rhetoricians came and read excellent poems and dictated some brilliant sermons.

It was then decided for Imam al-Ridato read a sermon. The Imam stood up and only said one and a half sentence which was actually criticizing all their actions. This is the content of it,

“We (meaning us Ahl al-Bayt, the infallible Imams) are benefactors to you as your guardians.”

This meant: the right is basically ours and not something for Ma’mun to hand over to us. (I cannot remember the exact phrase) and you are indebted to us. Your right is for us to manage you and once you respect our rights meaning when you accepted us as caliphs, it would be obligatory upon us to carry out our duty in regards to you. Wassalam.

Two sentences: we have a right that is the caliphate and you, as a people, have a right to be maintained by a caliph. You people must give our right and if you give our right, we have a duty to fulfil towards you and we will fulfil it. No thanking Ma’mun and nothing else. The content was not in tune with the spirit of a ceremony held for a newly-elected crown prince.

This story then carries on the same way. Imam al-Ridais a crown prince by so-called formalities who is not willing to interfere in any jobs. In case he is forced to interfere, he gets involved in such a way that does not fulfil Ma’mun’s intentions. Just like the story of ‘Id Prayers when Ma’mun sends somebody to the Imam and the Imam says, “We had a deal with you which was not getting me involved in anything.” He replied, “But, because you are not getting involved people are making accusations towards me. Now there is no harm in this one duty.” The Imam says, “If I do this, I have to do it according to my grandfather’s customs and not the customs that are common today.” Ma’mun says, “Alright.” The Imam leaves his home. Such an upheaval was formed in the city that made them return the Imam from half way.

Therefore, the issue is definite to this extent that Imam al-Ridawas brought to Marw forcefully and the title crown prince was imposed on him. They threatened to murder and after this threat the Imam agrees under the condition that he does not get involved in any practical duties and he later did not interfere and kept a low profile. This was in such a way that, in brief it proved the Holy Imams not to go with them and them not to go with us.

Doubtful issues

The issues we discussed are doubtful. There are many doubtful cases here. This is where the difference in analytical thought of scholars and historians appears.

What was this issue of crown prince? How come Ma’mun prepared to summon Imam al-Ridafrom Medina for the crown prince position and delegate the caliphate to him? Or take the caliphate away from the ‘Abbasids and hand it over to the ‘Alawi family? Was this his own initiative or was it Fadl ibn Sahl Dhu al-Riyasatayn Sarkhasi’s initiative and it was

him who had imposed on Ma'mun because he was a very powerful minister and the majority of Ma'mun's army, who were mostly Iranians, were under his supervision, giving him the power to impose whatever view he had? Now why did Fadl do it?

Some (which, of course, is of a very small probability even though some people like Jurji Zaydan and even Edward Brown have accepted it) say, "Fadl ibn Sahl was basically a Shi'ah and he had sincere intentions in this regard and he truly wanted to transfer the caliphate to the 'Alawi family." If this assumption is correct,

Imam al-Rida should have then cooperated with Fadl ibn Sahl, because the foundations were truly prepared for the transfer of power to the 'Alawis and the Imam should not have rejected, before he was threatened to be murdered and when he accepts, say: it should only be a formality. I will not interfere in any jobs. He should have rather accepted it seriously and must have gotten involved in jobs and practically expropriated Ma'mun from the caliphate.

There is, however, a fault here which is if we assume this took place so that as a result of the cooperation between Imam al-Ridaand Fadl ibn Sahl, Ma'mun would have been expropriated. This would not have changed the situation of the caliphate to a more organized one since Khorasan was only a part of the Islamic territory. As soon as you enter Rey borders, from there onwards meaning the part of Iraq which was previously the capital and also Hijaz and Yemen and Egypt and Syria, all had different situations. They were not keen on following the desires of the Iranian or Khorasani people and had rather opposite desires to them.

This means, even if we assume that this was the case and was put into practice and Imam al-Ridawas the caliph in Khorasan, Baghdad would have stood up against him very strongly in the same way when the news of Imam al-Rida's acceptance of the position of crown prince reached Baghdad, and the 'Abbasids were informed about what Ma'mun had done, they immediately deposed Ma'mun's representative and gave oath of allegiance to one from among themselves (Bani al-'Abbas) who was called "Ibrahim bin Shiklah", even though he was incompetent for the task.

They announced riot and said we refuse to accept the 'Alawis. Our ancestors have drudged and toiled for one hundred years, now hand over the caliphate to the 'Alawis? Baghdad would have rebelled and following that, lots of other places would have rebelled. This, however, is just an assumption and yet the basis of this assumption has not been proven.

Thus, the saying that Fadl ibn Sahl Dhu al-Riyasatayn was a Shi'ah and did all this out of sincerity and the respect he had towards al-Ridais not acceptable. There is room to doubt whether the initiative was his or not? Secondly: assuming the initiative was his, what is more probable is that Fadl ibn sahl who had recently converted to Islam wanted to turn Iran to the way it was before Islam by this means.[4]

He thought to himself, now Iranians will not accept this as they are true Muslims and truly belive in Islam. It was enough to name fighting against Islam to raise their opposition. He thought to himself to get rid of the 'Abbasid Caliph through a man who was reputable himself.

He thought of bringing Imam al-Ridaon the job and later entangle him with the trouble of ‘Abbasi oppositions from outside and from inside prepare the basis for returning Iran to how it was in the age before (i.e. the Zoroastrian era). If this assumption is correct, the duty of Imam al-Ridawould be to cooperate with Ma’mun to crack down the bigger danger; meaning the danger of Fadl ibn Sahl is one hundred percent bigger than the danger of Ma’mun to Islam, because no matter what Ma’mun was a Muslim caliph.

I must also say that we should not think that all of the caliphs, who were against the Imam, martyred them and are all on the same level. What is, therefore, the difference between Yazid ibn Mu‘awiyah and Ma’mun? They were as different as chalk from cheese. On this level, meaning the level of caliphs and kings, Ma’mun is one of the best caliphs and kings from a scientific, as well as political, point of view.

The same goes for aspects relative to justice and oppression, management and usefulness towards people’s living standards. He was a very intellectual man. This massive civilization in which we pride ourselves was created by this very Ma’mun and Harun. That is to say, they had an extra ordinary broad-mindedness and intellectuality that made most of the duties they fulfilled a case of pride for the Muslim World. The issue of ‘kingdom is infertile’ and Ma’mun uprising because of kingdom and kingship against his beliefs and poisoning the Imam he believed was one issue and the other parts another issue.

If, in any case, the issue of Imam al-Rida’s heir-apparency had been intiated by Fadl ibn Sahl, and, as the evidents have proven, Fadl ibn Sahl had evil intentions, then the Imam must have taken Ma’mun’s side. Our narrations can confirm that Imam al-Ridahad more hatred towards Fadl ibn Salh than he had towards Ma’mun. At times, where there was a disagreement between Fadl ibn Sahl and Ma’mun, the Imam would take Ma’mun’s side.

It has been mentioned in our narrations, Once, Fadl ibn Sahl and another person called “Hisham ibn Ibrahim” went to Imam al-Ridaand said, ‘The caliphate is your right. They are all usurpers. Give us your consent and we will kill Ma’mun.

You will then officially be the caliph.’ The Imam repudiated the two strongly and made them realize that they had made a mistake. They immediately went to Ma’mun and said, ‘We were with ‘Ali ibn Musa. We wanted to test him and made this offer to him to see if he has good intentions towards you or not, we realized that he has good intentions. We told him that come and cooperate with us to kill Ma’mun. He strongly denied.’

Later, in a meeting Imam al-Ridahad with Ma’mun (who had previous knowledge of what had happened), he disclosed the issue and said, ‘They came to me. They were lying, they were serious.’ Then, the Imam advised Ma’mun to beware of them!”

According to these narrations Imam al-Ridaconsidered the danger of Fadl ibn Sahl more severe and serious. Therefore, assuming that the ‘crown prince’ initiative was Fadl ibn Sahl’s[5], Imam al-Ridaconsiders the position

innovated by this man dangerous. He warned, “There are bad intentions involved. They want to use me to return Iran from Islam to Zoroastrianism.”

We are thus talking based on assumptions. If the intiative had been Fadl ibn Sahl’s and he truly was a Shi‘ah (as some European historians have said) Imam al-Ridashould have cooperated with him against Ma’mun. And if the Zoroastrian spirit was involved, he (Imam al-Rida) should cooperate with Ma’mun against them to get rid of them. Our narrations mostly confirm the second assumption, meaning the assumption that the initiative was not Fadl ibn Sahl’s. Imam al-Ridaand Fadl were not on good terms and Ma’mun was even warned of his danger by the Imam. This is an incontrovertible issue among our narrations.

The other assumption is that this was not Fadl ibn Sahl’s initiative and that it was Ma’mun’s. If the initiative was Ma’mun’s, why did Ma’mun do such a thing? Did he have good intentions or did he have evil intentions? If he had good intentions, did he keep his good intentions till the end or did he eventually change his mind? It is unacceptable to say that Ma’mun had good intentions and kept his good intentions till the end. This was never the case. We can at most say he had good intentions at the beginning but they changed in the end.

As we have already mentioned Shaykh Saduq and apparently Shaykh Mufid also believed this to be true. In his book entitled, “‘Uyun Akhbar al-Rida”, Shaykh Saduq writes that Ma’mun had good intentions at the beginning and had truly made an oath. When he found himself entangled in trouble with his brother Amin, he made an oath that if Allah made him victorious over his brother Amin, he would return the caliphate to its rightful owners.

The reason why Imam al-Ridarefused was because he knew that Ma’mun was under the influence of his emotions at the time and would later regret it. Of course, most of the scholars do not agree with Shaykh Saduq and believe that Ma’mun did not have good intentions from the beginning and a political ploy was involved. Now what was this political ploy? Did he want to diffuse the ‘Alawi movement in this way? Did he want to disrepute Imam al-Rida? Because when they were aloof, they would continue to criticize their policies.

He wanted the Imam involved in the system so that he, too, would have had enemies from among the people, just as what is usually done in politics. In order to disrepute an active and well-liked national critic, they give him a position only to sabotage his job later. First, they give him a position and then they cause disruption so that all those who were in favor of him turned away from him.

It is in our narrations that Imam al-Ridasaid to Ma’mun in one of his sayings, “I know you want to disrepute me by this!” And Ma’mun got angry and upset and said, “What are these words that you are saying? Why are you making such accusations towards us?”

Analysing the assumptions

Among these assumptions is one which suggests Imam al-Rida’s full cooperation, i.e. the assumption that Fadl was a Shi‘ah and the initiative was his. According to this assumption, there was no criticism toward Imam al

Rida for accepting the position of crown prince and if there was, it would be why he did not accept it seriously. From here, we should realize that this was not the way the story was. We are not saying this as a Shiah but as a so-called impartial person. Imam al-Ridawas either a religious man or a materialistic man? If he was religious, he should cooperate with Fadl, when he saw such grounds prepared for the transfer of the caliphate from Bani al-‘Abbas to the ‘Alawi family. If he was materialistic, then he should still cooperate. Therefore, the fact that the Imam did not cooperate and rejected him is a reason that makes this assumption wrong.

But if the assumption is that the transfer was initiated by the Zoroastrians whose intentions were aimed against Islam, then what Imam al-Ridadid was completely correct. Therefore, between the two evil ones, he chose the less evil and by doing so (cooperating with Ma’mun), he limited himself to the least.

The problem mostly arises when we say the initiative was Ma’mun’s and that it was Imam al-Rida’s duty to resist when Ma’mun invited him to cooperate because he had evil intentions. Imam al-Ridamust have resisted from the beginning. He must have consented to being killed and, in no way, agreed to go through with the formalities of the crown prince title, even at the cost of getting killed.

This must be reviewed from a religious perspective. We know that getting killed (doing something that would lead to getting killed) is sometimes permissible in a situation where the probability of getting killed is higher than staying alive. Therefore, the issue is either limited to a person getting killed or his toleration of a certain depravity, just as in Imam al-Husayn’sstory.

They wanted his oath of allegiance to Yazid and it was the first time Mu‘awiyah was practising the issue of crown prince. Imam al-Husay nopted to get killed rather than to give oath of allegiance. In addition, Imam al-Husaynwas in a situation where the Muslim World was in need of an awakening by enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, even at the cost of his blood. He did this and achieved some results.

But was Imam al-Ridain the same situation? Or, in other words, was he truly at a crossroad about whether it was permissible for him to get killed? One may reach a point where he is killed in spite of his free will, for example, by being poisoned which is historically incontrovertible. Most historians, even Shi‘ah historians like Mas‘udi[6], believe Imam al-Ridaleft this world as a result of a natural death and that he was not killed. However, according to the famous Shi‘ah belief, Imam al-Ridadied as a result of being poisoned by Ma’mun.

All right! An individual may be put in a situation where he gets poisoned in spite of his free will. Sometimes, however, he is in a situation where he has freedom of choice and has the liberty to choose one from between the other.

He must choose either to get killed or take over the job. And do not tell me that everyone will eventually die! If I am certain that I will die at dawn today, but I am given the option to choose between getting killed and taking over a certain job, can I say that I am dying at dawn anyway and that these

two remaining hours are not really worth it? I must evaluate, during the hours I have left to live, is choosing the other side [getting killed] worth losing my life with my own hands? Imam al-Ridais given the freedom to choose between the two, either accept the heir-apparency, which was also incontrovertible historically, or get killed, so history can later condemn and find him guilty. In my view, he must definitely choose the first one. Why not choose the first one? Just because of cooperating with someone like Ma'mun who we all know is not sin? The form of cooperation is the one that matters.

Cooperation with caliphs from the holy Imam's point of view

We all know that during the time of the 'Abbasids, despite all the strong oppositions our Imams had towards the Caliphs, by prohibiting people from collaborating with them, in certain cases they recommended and even encouraged cooperation with their system (the 'Abbasids) for the sake of acquiring certain Islamic goals.

Safwan Jammal who was one of the followers of Musa ibn Ja'far lent out his camels to Harun for a Hajj pilgrimage. He then discusses this with Imam Musa ibn Ja'far. The Imam tells him, "Every thing about you is good except for one thing." He asks, "What is that?" The Imam replied, "Why did you rent out your camels to Harun?" He said, "But I did not do a bad thing! It was for a Hajj pilgrimage and not for bad purposes." The Imam then said, "Then, perhaps some of the rent money is still due which you will receive later?" He said, "Yes." Imam said, "If you were informed that Harun was going to get perished, would you become happy? Or would you rather he paid his debt to you and then die. Would you want him to survive for this cause?" He replied, "Yes." The Imam then said, "Even this much agreement to the survival of a tyrant is a sin."

Safwan is a devoted follower but has a lot of history with Harun. He immediately went and sold all his trade goods. He owned a business which provided transportation services. Harun was informed that Safwan had suddenly sold all his trade goods. Harun summoned him and said, "Why did you do such a thing?" He said, "I have grown old and I am not as flexible as I used to be. I cannot manage my family well. I have thought of completely giving up this job." Harun said, "Tell me the truth." He replied, "This is the truth." Harun was very clever, he said, "Would you like to tell me what the story is? I think once you signed this contract with me, Musa ibn Ja'far informed you of something." He said, "No, there was no such thing." Harun said, "Do not reject this in vain. If it was not for the many years of history I have had with you, I would have had you beheaded right here."

The same holy Imam who prohibited people from collaborating with the caliphs, considering it forbidden, regarded certain cooperations permitted but only when the cooperation was intended for the interest of the Muslim society, to help reduce oppression and wickedness. His endeavors were in the way of his religious purposes. This, however, is not what Safwan Jammal did. At times, a person cooperates with tyrant system so he can use this position to his own advantage. This is exactly what our jurisdictions allow, as well as the holy Imam's normative practices and the Holy Qur'an.

Imam Rida's reasoning

Some objected to Imam al-Ridainquiring as to why his name went among theirs? He said, "Is the status of a Prophet higher or the status of his trustees?" They replied, "The status of the Prophet." The Imam then said, "Is a pagan king better or a Muslim licentious king?" They said, "A pagan king." The Imam then asked, "Is the one who is asked for cooperation better or one who has been demanded to cooperate?" They said, "The one who is asked." The Imam said, "Truthful Yusuf was a prophet." The Egyptian 'Aziz was a pagan and a non-believer. Yusuf himself requested,

"He said, 'Set me over the storehouses of the land. Lo! I am a skilled custodian'."[7]

This was because he wanted to occupy a position which he could put to best use. In any case, the Egyptian King was a pagan, Ma'mun is licentious Muslim. Yusuf was a prophet, and I am the Prophet's trustee. Yusuf suggested it and I have been forced. One cannot be criticized just for the sake of this."

Now, on the one hand, Imam Musa ibn Ja'far strongly prohibits Safwan Jammal, whose cooperation was only to their benefit by asking him, "Why did you lend out you camels to Harun?" On the other hand, the Imam encourages 'Ali in who denied∗ibn Yaqt being a Shi'ah and had intriguing contacts with Ma'mun to remain in the system but to continue to deny that he was a Shi'ah by not letting anyone find out. Make wudu their way, pray as they do, conceal you Shi'ism in the strictest of ways, but stay in their system so you can be active.

This is what logic permits. Any individual with any religion must allow his people to enter the enemy's system in order to help maintain their religion on the condition that their purpose is for the sake of religion not personal benefits. This means to use a system for one's own purposes and not be used by that system for the system's goals. The two are different: one is being part of the system, employing the system's force in the way of his interests and to the advantage of the goals he has.

In my opinion, if someone claims that even this much should not be there, then this is a kind of pointless dogmatism and stagnation. This is how all the holy Imam's were; from one side they strongly prohibited cooperation with the Umayyad and 'Abbasid systems, even if people made excuses such as 'if we don't do it, someone else will ultimately do it,' they would say, "Everyone should not do it. This is not an excuse. When no one does it, the system will cripple."

From the other side, they encouraged those who followed the principle of using the system. They were in the system for the sake of their own goals. When they were in the Umayyad or the 'Abbasid systems, they received encouragements from the Imams. Examples of such people are "'Ali ibn in" or "Isma'il ibn Bazi'". Narrations which admire and praise∗Yaqt such people are amazing. They have been introduced as first class saints of Allah. Their narrations are quoted by Shaykh Ansari in "Makasib" when he is discussing the issue of "undertaking a task from a tyrant" [wilayat-e ja'ir].

Undertaking a task from a tyrant [wilayat-e ja'ir]

We have an issue in jurisprudence called “undertaking a task from a tyrant” [wilayat-e ja’ir]. This means accepting a post from a tyrant which is inherently forbidden, but jurists agree that even so, in some cases it is recommended and in other cases obligatory. It has been established that if the capability to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil (where enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil is actually a service) is dependent upon accepting a post from a tyrant, accepting it becomes obligatory.

This is also logically acceptable because if you agree to it, you can work toward your goals and be of use. You can strengthen your forces and weaken your enemy’s forces. I do not think that people of other ideologies, the materialists and communists, would ever reject accepting a post from an enemy in this way. They would say, ‘Accept it but do your job.’

We see that during the time when Imam al-Ridaundertook the position of crown prince; however, nothing was accompolished in their favor. Everything was carried out in favor of the Imam, their cliques became more distinguished. In addition, the Imam proved his qualifications in the crown prince post unofficially which would not have been proven otherwise. From among the holy Imam’s, the scientific qualities of no other Imam had been confirmed as much as Imam al-Ridaand Imam ‘Ali’s (and for Imam al-Sadiq in another aspect). For Imam ‘Ali, this was achieved during the four to five years of caliphate and the sermons and arguments that were left behind from him. Imam al-Sadiq achieved this through the period in which the war between the ‘Abbasid and Umayyad dynasties took place. In this period, the Imam established four thousand individual study sessions.

As for Imam al-Rida, this was achieved through the limited period of heir-apparency and Ma’mun’s knowledge loving character and the amazing session Ma’mun formed in which he gathered the scholars of all religions including the materialstic philosophers, Christians, Jews, Mazdakis, the Sabi’is and the Buddhists and invited Imam al-Ridato speak to all of them. In those sessions, Imam al-Ridatruly confirms his scientific qualifications and was of a lot of service to Islam. In fact, he used his crown prince post unofficially. He did not undertake those tasks but at the same time used his position this way.

Question and answer

Question: When Mu‘awiyah chose Yazid as his crown prince, everyone disagreed. This was not because Yazid had a corrupt personality but because everyone disapproved of the position of crown prince. Then, how come there was no objection towards the crown prince position during the time of Ma’mun?

Answer: Firstly, when they say it was disagreed with, there was not really such a disagreement. At that time, others had not yet realized the dangers of such an idea. Only a small group were aware. This was an innovation created for the first time in the Muslim World. This was the reason for Imam al-Husayn’sstrong reaction and his attempt to make clear the invalidity and unlawfulness of this job, which he did.

Later on, this affair lost its religious aspect. It took the same shape as that of the crown prince position of the pre-Islamic era which had to use force as

its only support; therefore, losing its so-called Islamic aspect. This was another reason for Imam al-Rida's disagreement to accepting this position. According to the Imam, "The title of 'crown prince' is essentially false, since 'crown prince' means that I hold the right to choose so and so as my successor." This is also present in the statement where the Imam said, "Is this yours or does it belongs to someone else (the caliphate)? If it belongs to someone else, you have no right to give it away. This also includes the position of crown prince."

Question: Assuming that Fadl ibn Sahl was truly a Shi'ah, it would have been to the Imam's best interest to cooperate with him during his time as crown prince and then deprive Ma'mun of access to the caliphate. A problem would be created here which is: in this case it would have become necessary for the Imam to confirm Ma'mun's actions for a while whereas according to Imam 'Ali, permitting the actions of a tyrant is not permissible to any extent?

Answer: It appears that this problem is not relevant. You said assuming Fadl ibh Sahl was a Shi'ah, should the Imam consent to Ma'mun's actions for a while whereas this would not have been permitted by Imam 'Ali during Mu'awiyah's government.

There are many differences between Imam al-Rida's circumstances in relation to Ma'mun's and Imam 'Ali's circumstances in relation to Mu'awiyah. Imam 'Ali permitted Mu'awiyah to be his representative, as someone appointed from his behalf. Therefore, an oppressor like Mu'awiyah fulfilled the role of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib's deputy. But in the case of Imam al-Rida: he should have left Ma'mun on his own for a while which meant not creating any obstacles on his way.

In general, logically as well as lawfully, there are many overall differences between the times when we want to influence the formation of corruptionin which case we have one dutyand times when we want to prevent the spread of corruption which is presentin which case we have another duty. I will explain both situations with an example.

When I intentionally cause an overflow of water in your yard by leaving the tap open and by doing so, I create destruction, here I am the warrantor of your yard, because I was involved in its destruction. Another time, when I am passing by your house and I see that has been left open and water has reached the base of your wall, I have a moral duty to close this tap and do you service. If I do not do this, your property will be damaged as a result. Here, this duty is not my obligation. I said this because there are a lot of differences between a task that is carried out by an individual and a task that is carried out by one person and stopped by someone else.

'Ali was superior to Mu'awiyah. Mu'awiyah's consolidation meant that 'Ali had accepted Mu'awiyah as his representative. But Ma'mun's consolidation by Imam al-Ridameant that Imam al-Rida ould not object to Ma'mun's actions for a while. These are two different obligations. There, 'Ali is superior whereas in Imam al-Rida's case the story is the opposite. Ma'mun is superior in power.

The Imam's temporary cooperation with Fadl ibn Sahl or as you said [Ma'mun's consolidation by Imam al-Rida] meant that he had to refrain

from objecting to Ma'mun's actions temporarily. There are no problems in keeping silent for a bigger interest and awaiting a better opportunity. In Mu'awiyah's case, the issue is not Imam 'Ali's disagreement with his leadership only for one day (this is, of course, another issue about which the Imam said: "I will not consent to an oppressor's leadership even for one day.") The issue was that if the Imam was to keep Mu'awiyah, he would grow stronger day by day and not revert from his aims. The assumption here, however, is that they must have waited until Ma'mun grew weaker by the day while they became more powerful. These two cases are, therefore, incomparable.

Question: My question was related to Imam al-Rida's poisoning because during your speech you said that it was not clear if Imam al-Ridawas poisoned. The fact is that as more days passed, it became more and more clear that the caliphate was Imam al-Rida's by right and Ma'mun intentionally poisoned the Imam.

Their reason was Imam al-Rida's age. Imam al-Rida left this world at the age of fifty two. It is very unlikely for an imam who observes all aspects concerning his health and hygiene and who is not on the two extremes like us, to die at the age of fifty two. Also, the famous narration says, "There is none among us who was neither killed nor murdered." Therefore, this matter is unquestionable from the Shi'ah point of view. The author of Murawwij al-Dhahab (Mas'udi) made a mistake, this is no reason for us to say that Imam al-Ridawas not poisoned; rather, the view of the majority of Shi'ah historians is that Imam al-Ridawas definitely poisoned.

Answer: I did not say Imam al-Ridawas not poisoned. I personally approve of your view based on the collective evidences. The evidences show that he was poisoned and one of the main reasons for it was the uprising by the 'Abbasids in Baghdad. Ma'mun poisoned Imam al-Ridawhile going from Khorasan to Baghdad and was being constantly informed of Baghdad's situation.

They reported to him that upheaval had taken over Baghdad. He knew that he could not depose the Imam and go there in such circumstances, because it would become very difficult. In order to prepare the basis for going to Baghdad and to tell Bani al-'Abbas that the job had been done (murdering Imam al-Rida), he poisoned Imam al-RidaThis was the fundamental reason they mentioned, which is also acceptable and in accordance with history.

This means Ma'mun realized that going to Baghdad would not have been possible as well as the continuation of the position of crown prince (even though Ma'mun was younger than Imam al-RidaHe was about twenty eight and Imam al-Ridawas about fifty five years old. At the beginning, Imam al-Ridahad told Ma'mun: I am older than you and will die before you).

Therefore, if he had gone to Baghdad in such circumstances, it is impossible that Baghdad would have surrendered and a massive war would have taken place. He saw the dangerous situation facing him. This is why he also decided to take out Fadl ibn Sahl as well as Imam al-RidaHe got rid of Fadl in the Sarakhs Bath House.

So much is known that when Fadl was in the Bath House, a group of men with swords rushed into the Bath House and then left him there in pieces. It was later rumoured that there was a group who had a grudge against him (incidentally one of his own cousins was also among the group who murdered him) and defiled his blood. However, it seems that this was also Ma'mun's doing. He realized that Fadl had gained a lot of power and would cause trouble. So, he got rid of him. After Sarakhs, they came to Tus.

Reports were constantly arriving from Baghdad. He realized that he could not enter Baghdad with Imam al-Rida, an 'Alawi crown prince. This is why he killed Imam al-Ridaright there.

Once we say that an issue is incontrovertible from our point of view. According to Shi'ah narrations, there is no doubt that Imam al-Ridawas poisoned by Ma'mun. This, however, is not the view of other historians.

For example a European historian does not accept this. He studies the historical evidences and comes to the conclusion that the phrase "it is said" [qila] has been written in history. Most Sunni historians, who have quoted this event, wrote, "Imam al-Ridacame to Tus, fell ill and passed away." As such, "It is said [qila]" that he was poisoned. This is why I wanted to discuss this issue based on a non-Shi'ah rationale; otherwise, all the evidences show that Imam ?al-Ridahad been poisoned.

References

1. Ma’mun was a truly informed and erudite man. He was knowledgeable in hadith, history, logic, literature, philosophy and also in medicine and astrology. He was basically a scholar and maybe there is none like him from among the kings and caliphs of the world.

2. The Imam, in fact, did not want to become a part of Ma’mun’s system as if he was clinged to it.

3. In response to the question, ‘Why green clothes?’ Some say this was Fadl ibn Sahl’s tact, because the ‘Abbasid’s slogan was black cloth. Since that day, Fadl ordered eveyone to come with green cloth. They have also said this tact carried Zoroastrian spirit and green color was the slogan of the Zoroastrians, but I do not know how founded this saying is.

4. As we said none of these are definite and are among the historical doubts; however, this is what some narrations say.

5. Now either he had recently become Muslim or his father had become a Muslim and converted to Islam via the Barmakis, his Islam was for political purposes because a Zorostrian person could not be the minister of a Muslim caliph.

6. Majority of the scholars believe that he was a Shi‘ah historian.

7. Surat Yusuf 12:55.

Chapter 7: On the Topic of Imam al-Hassan al-‘Askari (‘a)

It is the night of Imam al-Hassan al-‘Askari’s birthday. It is a night of celebration. It is a night for which we should all congratulate the holy existence of Sahib al-Amr, the Imam of the Time (may Allah hasten his glorious advent). We should of course have expressed esteem and paid our respect. The holy being of Imam al-Hassan al-‘Askari was one of the infallible Imams who was under extreme pressure. This was because the closer the time of the holy Imams got to the time of the Imam of the Age, the more difficult their task would have become.

He was in Samirra’, which was the center of the government at that time. The center of government was transferred from Baghdad to Samirra’ during the time of “Mu‘tasim”. The reason for this was the oppression the army of Mu‘tasim had towards the people, who later complained. Mu‘tasim did not listen at the beginning but they finally managed to make him agree to the transfer of the center to Samirra’, so that his army would be far away from the people.

Imam al-‘Askari and Imam al-Hadi were residing in Samirra’ by force in an area called, “al-‘Askar” or “al-‘Askari”, which means the location of the army and it was in fact the army base. In other words, the house they were residing in was especially chosen in an army base so that they could be under surveillance.

The Imam died at the age of twenty eight (and his great father was about forty two when he left this world). The period of his Imamate lasted only six years. According to the historical facts, during these six years, he was either imprisoned or if he was free, he was forbidden to socialize and forbidden any visits. It was a bizarre situation.

It seems, as you know, that each of the holy Imams had a certain quality that was more apparent in them. Khwajah Nasir, in his twelve-verse poem, has described each of the holy Imams with their special quality. The holy being of Imam al-‘Askari was distinguished by dignity and so-called good looks. The greatness and dignity reflecting on his face was in such a way that whoever visited him would get influenced by his appearance even before the Imam said a word. This story is fully specified in the majority of narrations. Even the enemies, who constantly pursued the Imam and were sometimes taking the Imam to prison, could not resist paying their respect towards him when confronting the Imam.

In this relation, “Muhaddith Qummi” narrates a story from Ahmad ibn ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Khaqan in his book entitled, “Al-Anwar al-Bahiyyah”. Ahmad ibn ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Khaqan was the son of the minister al-Mu‘tamid ‘Ali Allah. He quotes from his father a story in which he was also present. It is an extremely amazing story which at the moment I have not got time to narrate.

It was wide spread among people and they all knew that al-Mahdi of the Nation will emerge from the backbone of this holy existence. This was the main reason for the extreme surveillance of the Imam. The same thing Pharaoh did with Bani Isra’il when he had heard that a birth from among Bani Isra’il would cause his downfall. He killed all the new-born boys of

Bani Isra'il and only kept the girls alive. He had appointed some women to go to the houses of Bani Isra'il and to find out which of the women were pregnant and keep them under surveillance.

This is exactly what the caliphate system did with Imam al-'Askari. How good Mawlawi says,

You attacked the hidden prisoners,

To close the way on the concealed one.

This foolish man never thought that if this were true, could he stop a divine order? Once in a while, they would send some more people to search the Imam's house. This was done especially when the Imam passed away, because they were often hearing that Imam al-Mahdi had been born.

You all have heard the story of the Imam's birth when Allah, the Almighty, veiled the birth of this holy being and only a few people found out during his birth. He was six when his great father passed away. During his childhood the special Shi'ahs who came from different places, the Imam would introduce him to those special followers. The general public was not aware of this but finally the news that a son is born for Hassan al-'Askari and they are hiding him spread among people.

They would sometimes send somebody to the Imam's house to find this child and, in their thoughts, get rid of him. But, when Allah wants something, can the servant do anything against it? Meaning when the divine decree has been decided for something, a human being can no longer have any role there. After the Imam's death and coincidently with his demise, their officers poured into the Imam's house and thoroughly searched it. They sent their woman spies to inspect all the women, whether a slave girl or not, to see if there were any pregnant women among them. They suspected one of the slave girls to be pregnant. They took her and kept her for a year. Then, they realized that they had made a mistake. The mother of the holy being of Imam al-'Askari is called "Hudayth". She was famously known as "Jaddah" (grandmother) because she was the grandmother of the Imam of the Time (may Allah hasten his glorious advent).

There are other women in history who were famous because of the prestige of their grandchild and they are called Jaddah. One such woman is the grandmother of Shah 'Abbas. There are two schools in Isfahan by the name of Jaddah. A woman whose fame is because of her grandchild will inevitably become famous as Jaddah. This honorable woman became famous by the title Jaddah. But it was not only being a grandmother that made her famous. She had a certain status, greatness and a special personality which have been written.

The late Muhaddith Qummi (may he reside in Allah's paradise) wrote in "Al-Anwar al-Bahiyyah", "She was the Shi'ah shelter after Imam al-'Askari." In other words, this honorable woman was the Shi'ah refuge. Inevitably, in that time (because Imam al-'Askari was twenty eight, when he passed away and if we also calculate the age of Imam al-Hadi), she was a woman of fifty to sixty years of age. This woman was so learned and great that when a Shi'ah came across a problem, he would present it to this woman.

A man said, “I went to visit Imam al-‘Askari’s aunt; i.e. Hakimah Khatun, the daughter of Imam al-Jawad. I went and spoke to her in relation to the dogmas and beliefs and the issues of Imamate and etc. She spoke about her beliefs until she got to Imam al-‘Askari and said, ‘At present, his child, who is hidden and in occultation, is my Imam.’ I said, ‘Now that he is in occultation, who do we refer to if we have any problems?’ She replied, ‘Refer to Jaddah.’ I said, ‘How strange! The Imam passed away and made a will to a woman?’ She replied, ‘Imam al-‘Askari did the same thing Imam al-Husayndid. The real trustee of Imam al-Husaynwas ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn, but did he not leave most of his will with his sister Zaynab? Al-Hassan ibn Al-‘Askari did exactly the same thing. His inward trustee is this child who is hidden but he could not overtly say he is my trustee. He had ostensibly appointed this awesome woman as his trustee.’”

By Your Name, O the Great, the Most Magnanimous, the All-mighty, the Most Glorious, the Most Generous, O Allah!

O Allah! Make us appreciative of Islam and the Qur’an.

O Allah! Make us be grateful for our Prophet.

O Allah! Make us appreciate the pure Ahl al-Bayt.

Shine the beams of love and spiritual knowledge on our hearts.

Shine the beams of love and knowledge of the Prophet (s) and his family in our hearts.

Make our deeds liable for your divine interventions, absolute mecy and your forgiveness.

Chapter 8, Part 1: The Universal Justice

"Allah hath promised those of you who have faith and do righteous deeds that He will surely make them succeed (the present rulers) in the earth, just as He made those who were before them succeed (others) and He will surely establish for them their religion which He hath approved for them, and will give them in exchange safety after their fear. They serve Me. They ascribe nothing as partner unto Me. And those who disbelieve; henceforth, they are the miscreants."[1]

All of the divine prophets who have been sent among humanity by Allah, the Almighty, came for two essential reasons, one of which is to establish the correct relationship between a servant and his Creator or, in other words, to prevent man from worshipping other creatures except his Creator. This is summarized in the Godly saying, "There is no God but Allah." [la ilaha illa Allah]

The second reason for the delegation of the great prophets from God is to establish fair and righteous relations between the human beings, based on justice, peace, purity, cooperation, benevolence, affection, and service to others. The Noble Qur'an has mentioned these two issues as two reasons for the prophets in the most explicit way. In relation to the first reason, about the Seal of the Prophets, the Holy Qur'an says,

"O Prophet! Indeed, we have sent thee as a witness, as a bearer of good tidings and as a warner. And, as a summoner unto Allah by His permission, and as a radiant lamp."[2]

And about the second reason, it is said in the Holy Qur'an,

"Certainly, We sent Our messengers with manifest proofs, and revealed with thement down with them the Scripture and the Balance, so that mankind may maintain justice; and We sent down iron, wherein is mighty power and many uses for mankind, and so that Allah may know those who help Him and His messenger, thought unseen. Indeed, Allah is Strong, Almighty."[3]

See how explicitly the Qur'an states the favor of the prophets and even their mission to establish justice among mankind? In this verse, it says: we sent our messengers with clear reason and with them we sent the Scripture, commandments and writings with a balance (which means just rules and regulations). What for?

"… So that mankind may maintain justice."[4]

So, all individuals behave justly and the principles of justice are established among mankind. Therefore, the issue of establishing justice was the main and general aim of all the prophets. In other words, according to the exact sayings of the Holy Qur'an, the prophets came and had a mission and a message which was Justice.

The second matter which I must mention here is this: the issue of justice (that is the universal justice and common justice not the relative or individual justice)by justice we mean that there will come a day in this world for mankind when all traces of tyranny, oppression, discrimination, war, hatred, bloodshed or exploitation and their tools such as lies, hypocrisy and deception will ultimately be nonexistent. Will man ever see this day? Is this only a wish that will never come true? Is it even possible for some who

does not have a spiritual disposition to say: I do not deny the universal justice, I am not a supporter of widespread oppression as the basis for our world but I believe that our world is so ominous, shallow and gloomy that there will never be a place for universal or true justice, peace, purity or true humanity? There will never be a day that human beings will actually live together in peace. The world is the place of darkness and oppression, all the oppression will be compensated in the next world. Justice only belongs to the next world.

This idea exists among non-Muslims and people of other religions. One of the main advantages of Islamic belief (and especially in the eyes of the Shi'ahs in relation to Islam) is: do not be pessimistic. The age of war and fighting, the age of moral corruption and the age of darkness are temporary. The final outcome is luminosity and justice. Even if this teaching is present in other doctrines, it is not as certain and clear as it is in the Shi'ah doctrine.

Another matter regarding the future of man in this world is goodness, death of oppression and the advent of justice. If man were to contemplate the Qur'an, he would see that the Qur'an emphasizes and confirms this matter and also gives glad tidings about the future of the world. There are numerous verses in this regard one of which is the verse which I recited at the beginning of my speech,

"Allah hath promised those of you who have faith and do righteous deeds that He will surely make them succeed (the present rulers) in the earth, just as He made those who were before them succeed (others) and He will surely establish for them their religion which He hath approved for them, and will give them in exchange safety after their fear. They serve Me. They ascribe no thing as partner unto Me. And those who disbelieve; henceforth, they are the miscreants."[5]

It has been promised to the faithful and the people whose deeds are righteous and admirable that the end of the world is in their hands. The one who will finally rule the world is the divine religions, spirituality and "There is no God but Allah." [la ilaha illa Allah]. Materialism and material worshipping and selfishness will be destroyed. The end of the world is security,

"And that He will give them in exchange safety after their fear."[6]

The world's destiny is divine unity to all its degrees.

Therefore, we used two topics from the Holy Qur'an: firstly, that the main reasons for the existence of prophets are two: divine unity [tawhid] and the establishment of justice. The first reason is related to man's relationship with God and the second is related to the relationship of man with his kind.

The issue of justice is not just a dream or a wish, it is a reality that the world is going towards; it is the divine custom; God will eventually dominate justice over this world and man will rule over this world for centuries and centuries (which we do not know how long this could be. Maybe a million, maybe ten millions or even one hundred million years), but a mature and true human being, in whom darkness and oppression is present today, does not exist.

My discussion is about this topic: will universal justice be established in this world? I will especially discuss one aspect that is: on what basis does Islam claim that universal justice will be established in the world?

For this I must explain three subjects; the first is, ‘What is justice?’ Second, ‘Is there an inclination towards justice in man or do tendencies toward justice essentially not exist in the human nature? Is it true that any time justice is given to man it has been done so by force and imposed upon him? Can it be possible for man to acquire justice without his own consent and desire?’ And the third is, ‘Is justice practical or not? And if it was to become practical, what mean would be required to make it possible?’

Definition of justice

The first subject “What is justice?” does not really need defining. Human beings are, more or less, familiar with oppression. They know discrimination. Justice is the opposite of oppression. It is the opposite of discrimination and, in other words, human beings will find eligibilities on the basis of their creation and their activities and any talents they show from themselves. Justice consists of eligibility and the right which is given to any human as a reason for his creation and what he has obtained as a result of his deeds and activities.

It is the opposite point to oppression. One will not get something he does not qualify for and it will be taken away from him.

It is the opposite of discrimination so when we have two people of equal state, one is not given a privilege while the other is withheld from it. But, at the same time, in the olden days, there were people who essentially denied justice. This included the ancient Greek philosophers until the European ages, who believe that justice basically has no meaning. Justice is equal to force. Justice means what the law has dictated, and therefore justice is ultimately decided by force.

I do not want to discuss this issue because then I will not be able to finish my discussion. This saying is rejected. Justice itself is real because “entitlement” is real. How is entitlement real? Entitlement has taken form the text of creation because creation is real. Any creature in the textual content of creation has some merits and qualities. As a result of his deeds and activities, man creates certain eligibilities. And the justice defined as giving the right to its rightful owner, will be meaningful. Those sayings are delusive words.

Is justice-seeking instinctive?

The second part of my talk that needs further explaining is, ‘Is there an instinct in the human nature which seeks justice?’ Man desires something according to his nature and essence. This means that he has no justification for those desires apart from his physical and spiritual structure. For example, when you participated in this respectful session and saw these lovely writings, you see the “la ilaha illallah” in the middle, “‘aliyyun waliyullah” on the left and a black star as a symbol of the impeccablity of imah al-Zahra’, the name of the rest of the Twelve Infallibles, all∗Fat the Qur’anic verses that are used as the Islamic slogans, Imam al-Husayn’ssaying, lovely caligraphy, you enjoy them all and like them.

Why? Who forced you to like it? Nobody has forced you. You like it because it is beautiful. A power is placed in any human nature that makes him praise whatever beauty he comes across. This no longer needs a law to be set or a force to be imposed on him. This is in the human nature. They call such things affairs that exist in the human nature. Loving science, knowledge and lots of other things are in the human nature. This is the desire for justice, meaning the desire and interest to be just even if it has no benefit for man. Or the desire of man himself to be just as well as society to be just, not considering any benefits that man may receive from justice, among man's ideals? Is there such a thing in man's nature or not?

The theory of Nietzsche and Machiavelli183

Some believe that such power and force does not essentially exist in human nature. The majority of European philosophers believe this and it is this idea of these philosophers which has set the world on fire. They say: justice is the innovation of the wretched people. The weak and the wretched people created this word when they confronted the powerful. Because they did not have the power to fight the powerful, they said justice is good, humans must be just. They believed that this was all nonsense and that if this supporter of justice became powerful, he would do the same things the other powerful people do.

The famous German philosopher, Nietzsche says: So many times it happened that I laughed when I heard the weak talking of justice and justice seeking. When I look, I see that they say justice because they have no claws. I say to them: Oh you reckless, if you had claws, you would never say such words. These philosophers say that man basically has no faith and believes in justice.

Those who do not believe in justice to be something in the human nature can be divided into two groups: the group who claims that man should not go after justice even as a dream, one must go after power and force. Justice is nonsense. You should not even dream about it. They use an expression which goes along with our definition. The brief version of this expression is: two knots of horn are preferred to a meter of tail, where the horn represents power and the tail represents justice. What is justice? Go after power. Nietzsche and Machiavelli are from this group.

The view of Bertrand Russel

This, however, is not what other groups believe. They say: no, one must go after justice but not because justice is ideal but because one's interest lies in justice for all. This is the belief of Bertrand Russel. With this belief, he is even a philanthropist. He has no choice to say anything else because this is what his philosophy requires. He says: on the basis of his nature, man has been created as a one who seeks that which is in his benefit. So what must be done in order for justice to be established? Must we order man to demand for justice?! If this cannot be imposed and justice seeking is not in his nature, then how can we force mankind to seek justice? Something else can however be carried out to enhance man's wisdom, knowledge and science so that a point is reached where he can be told: Man! It is true that benefit is the only authoritative thing and no one or thing can lead you anywhere

unless you are being directed to a place which leads you to your benefits. But, the interest of one lies in the establishment of justice for all.

If there is no justice for all, one's interest cannot be obtained. It is true that, on the basis of your nature, you want to assault your neighbour but when you assault him, he will assault you and you, instead of gaining more benefits, will gain fewer benefits. So, start thinking and calculate. You will then realize that your interests, too, lie in justice.

They have the idea of justice in the world but regard the way to approach justice, strengthening the mind by science and knowledge. That is, familiarize man with the fact that the interests of an individual lie in the public interest.

Evaluation of this theory

It is also very clear that this view is not practical because it only applies to those who do not have much power. It may apply to me. I am a powerless individual. I am afraid of my neighbors and I see my neighbor has a lot more power than I have. I become just because of the fear from my neighbor's power. However, from the instant I gain power, I will no longer have any fear from my neighbor and I will fully be certain that if I trample him, there will be no power to confront me. How could I then be just? Because you sir, say that man is benefit-seeking. Knowledge says be just for the sake of your interest and that is when I see power in front of me. But, when I see no power in front of me, how can I be just? And, thus, the philosophy of Bertrand Russel (on the contrary to all his philanthropical slogans) gives the right to all the powerful, who have no fear of the powerless, to be as oppressive as they want to be.

The Marxist view

We have a third group who can be included with the second group. This group says: justice is practical but not through man. Man cannot bring about justice. It is neither possible to train man in a way that he would truly seek justice from the bottom of his heart. Nor is it possible to strengthen man's wisdom to an extent that he sees his interests in justice. Justice can automatically be sought by machines. Justice should not be demanded from economical instruments or in a more correct definition: it should not be desired for. It is not your business. It is a lie if you think you can became a justice-seeker. It is also a lie if you think your wisdom will one day lead you to justice.

However, machines will automatically draw man towards justice. The transition that economical and production instruments will go through (according to calculations they did for themselves which mostly came out wrong) will reach a capitalist world. A capitalist world will involuntarily end in socialism. In a socialist world, justice will naturally and neccesserily be brought about, whether you want it or not. You are not the element of justice enforcement. So, do not calculate if my wisdom will draw me to justice or not? Or will my training draw me justice? He says: all these are lies.

The Islamic view

There is, however, a third opinion here that says: this is just pessimism towards nature and human essence. If today you see man running away from justice, it is because he has not yet reached the perfection stage. Justice does exist in the human nature. If man is trained well, if he gets placed under the hands of a perfect coach, he will reach a stage where he will truly seeks justice. He would truly prefer public justice to his personal interests and would love justice as he loves beauty. Justice can be considered as a kind of rational beauty and not a perceivable one.

In our ideology, which is a religious ideology, there is a reason for this statement; that is, when you say man is not justice-seeking because of his nature and justice must be imposed on him by force or when you say his wisdom should reach a stage where he is able to see his interests in a public justice or when you say evolution of production tools will automatically bring about justice, we can show you people who were just and justice-seeking when these were not called for in their interests. Despite their personal interests, justice was their ideal and wish. They loved justice and sacrificed themselves in the way of justice. They are examples of perfect humans in the previous ages. These examples show that it is possible to put man in the path of justice so he can become like those examples before him. Now if he did not reach that stage, he could at least be one little example of it.

‘Ali ibn Abi Talib himself is an example that rejects all these philosophies; ‘Ali and those raised by ‘Ali and other human beings who have existed in all the ages. Now, when we bring ‘Ali as an example, it may cross one’s mind that ‘Ali was an exceptional person. No, there is no such thing. Even now there are a lot of people among the true pious ones who truly love justice. Their essence is bonded with justice and what a bond that is! Man will also become like this in the future.

Most of the human individuals think that the issue of the Imam of the Time’s reappearance is a matter that equals the world’s decline and the return of man to the Age of Ignorance [jahiliyyah]. It is actually the opposite. It is the intellectual, moral and scientific upgrading for man according to all the evidents and reasonings we have obtained from religion. The same religion that has talked about the topic of the Imam of the Time’s reappearance has also made mention of this.

It is in the “Usul al-Kafi” that when the Imam of the Time reappears, Allah will give privilege to human individuals and the wisdom of individuals will enhance. Their intellect and deeds will also increase. When his holy being will reappear, there will no longer be wolf and sheep relation in the world. Even wolves will live at peace and purity with one another. Which wolves? Is it the wolves that live in the desert or the human-figured wolves? This means wolves will no longer have a wolfish nature.

Before I read a part of the other numerous indications of the situations in the time of the Imam for you, I must raise a point:

The issue of the Imam’s lifetime

When the topic of the Imam of the Time is raised, most people say: can a human live one thousand and two hundred years? This is against natural laws. They think that all affairs taking place in this world are fully in

accordance with the normal laws of nature (laws recognized by the knowledge man has today). Basically, all the big changes that have taken place in the life's history and the lives of living creatures (including plants and animals) are all abnormal changes. According to which biological principle did the first embryo on earth form? With what natural law does the first life on earth match? According to the scientific theories today, it is scientifically definite that nearly forty billion years have passed from the birth of the Earth.

Billions of years ago, our earth was a red hot planet and it was impossible for any living creature to live on it. According to scientific estimations, millions of years passed until the first creature appeared on the Earth. Science today agrees that a living creature emerges from a living creature and it cannot be proven that a living creature emerged from a non-living creature. Science has yet not been able to answer this question: how did the first creature appear on earth? That is to say, how did the first living embryo came into existence on the earth?

They say: when the first embryo and first cell appeared, they evolve and reach a stage where it branches: the vegetation branch and the animal branch; the vegetation branch with certain characteristics and the animal branch with certain characteristics where they are against and complementary to one another in some aspects.

The strange thing is: if there was no vegetation, would there be no animal? And if there were no animals, would there be no vegetation, especially taking into consideration the need to take up and pass out gasses existent in the air?

Science has still not been able to prove that how the stage of change in life and existence appears and takes place? Also, science has not yet been able to rationalize the other stages in the appearance of man himself, a creature with such power, wisdom and will power.

Is the issue of revelations a common affair? Is the issue of man reaching a stage where he can get orders from beyond nature any less than the issue of one living for one thousand and three hundred years? This is basically a normal and common issue. It is something that man is now going after and there may even be a natural law for it. Humans today are attempting to create methods (with certain drugs or certain formulas) to extend man's lifespan.

Nobody can say whether or not this is the natural law for man to live one hundred, two hundred or five hundred years. It is true that the human body cells have a certain life cycle, but this is when the situation is limited. Maybe one day, a method will be discovered that is very simple yet increases man's life by five hundred years or more.

This is not something that one can doubt. Allah, the Almighty, has always shown that when the world's status reaches a certain stage, a sudden change will take place in a way as if a hand had come out of the invisible and intervened in the situation in such a way that was not at all possible to predict using natural laws. Therefore, this topic has no ambiguity that one needs to think about or, God-forbid, even doubt. Religion has been created for the very purpose of opening man's eyes and removing all the barriers

which obstruct the progression of man's thought. What will happen in that age, the age of evolution of science, wisdom, morals and the society? I will explain this to you in an example.

The characteristics of Imam al-Mahdi's age

As a common opinion among Shi'ah and Sunni scholars, this sentence has been narrated by the Prophet and no one has any doubt that the Prophet has said, "If there is only one day left of the world, Allah will make that day long so a man from my children appears."

Which means if we assume there is only one day left of the world, Allah will make that day long so al-Mahdi from my children appears. The point is that this is a definite divine decree and if we assume only one day is left of the world, the task will definitely be carried out.

Some of our friends were surprised to find that our brother from Hijaz, Mr. Shaykh Khalil al-Rahman[7], who always speaks of 'awaiting the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi,' is not a Shi'ah? How is it that he is awaiting this reappearance? Most of us probably believe this out of habit or our geographical locations but he spoke of this out of faith and belief. As I said, this matter is not specific to the Shi'ahs. The Sunnis also believe in this and it has been repeated in their sources many times.

Now observe how clearly the Prophet sees that day and the age of man's perfection. He says, "Al-Mahdi will come at a time when there are strong disagreements among my nation and when constant earthquakes occur."

Note: By earthquakes we do not mean those which result from tectonic stress.

Then he will fill the world with justice and fariness after it has been filled with oppression and tyranny.

When this container has been filled with oppression and tyranny, he will fill the world with justice and fairness.

Both Allah and those beings in the skies and the people on earth are pleased with him. They say, "Praise be to Allah, who removed the evil of these oppressions from us." He then says, "He will divide wealth in the correct way."[8]

The companions asked, "Oh Messenger of Allah! What do you mean in the correct way?" He said, "He will divide it fairly and equally. And Allah will fill the hearts of the Islamic nation with opulence (spiritual wealth)."

That means do not think that this opulence and wealth is the same as the materialistic wealth. The hearts will be filled with spiritual wealth. Poverty, need, inferiority, misery, hatred, jealousy and everything else will be removed from the face of the Earth. In Nahj al-Balaghah, Imam 'Ali says, "Till war wages among you with full force, showing forth its teeth, with udders full of milk, milking it is sweet but it has a bitter outcome."

He predicts that before the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi, there will be strange tumults, massive and dangerous wars in the world. He says, "War will stand on its feet, show its teeth like a predator. It will show the milk in its breasts which means the combative and instigators believe that the war will be to their advantage. However, they do not know that the end of the world is to their disadvantage."

“Milking it is sweet but, the outcome is bitter.” “Beware, it will be tomorrow and the morrow will come soon with things which you do not know.”

“Be informed that tomorrow is pregnant with things that you cannot predict or even be familiar with. But know that it is there and tomorrow will bring it with itself.” “The Man in power, not from this crowd, will take to task all those were formerly appointed for their ill deeds.”

The first thing the divine ruler will do is: he will catch the rulers and agents one by one and ameliorate his agents and the world will be amended. “And the earth will pour forth its eternal treasures.”

The earth will give out parts of its heart, which means the earth will give out whatever blessings it has inside it including any minor talents that you can imagine. It will give out everything. It will give out whatever it has begrudged till today. “And fling before him easily her keys.”

The earth will come like a surrendered servant and hand over its keys to his authority (these are all paraphrases and expressions). It means there will be no secrets in the nature that does not get exposed in that time, “He will show you the just way of behaviour.”

He will then show you what true justice means. He would show you that all the utterances about freedom and human rights posters were all lies. All the utterances about peace were lies; they were all dissent and selling barely pretending its wheat. “And he will revive the Qur’an and the Sunnah which have become lifeless (among people).”

He would revive the rules of the Scripture and customs which have been abandoned or destroyed. He also says, “If al-Qa’im rises, he will rule with justice.”

Each of the infallible Imams have a title; for example, the title of ‘Ali is: ‘Ali al-Murtada; Imam al-Hassan: al-Hassan al-Mujtaba; Imam al-Husayn: Sayyid al-Shuhada; and the rest of the Imams: al-Sajjad; al-Baqir; al-Sadiq; al-Kazim; al-Rida; al-Taqi; al-Naqi; al-Zaki, al-‘Askari. The Imam of the Time has title special to him, a title which has been taken from the concept of rising; the one who will rise in the world: al-Qa’im.

We basically know Imam Mahdi by rising and justice. Every Imam is known by a feature. This Imam is recognised with rising, “There will no longer be any cruelty and oppression.”

All the routes, the routes on earth, sea and sky will become safe because the source of all those insecurities were frustrations and injustices. When justice is brought about, there will no longer be any reasons for insecurities because the human nature has a tendency to seek justice.

“The earth will bring about all its blessings.” “Do you know what the people are upset with in those says? They are upset only because they want to give out charity and be of help but they cannot find a needy person. There will not be a single poor on the earth.” And about security, he says, “A weak old woman will travel from the east to the west of the world without any trouble and difficulty.”[9]

A lot has been said about justice: about peace and tranquility; about freedom and security; fair division of wealth and abundance of fruits and

toolstools for farming, etc. Corruption will disappear and man will have hatred towards lying, backbiting, false accusations and oppression.

Upon which philosophy is this based? Islam says that the future of man is justice but it does not say that this final justice concludes in that which man's thought leads him to; i.e. that his interests lie in the safeguarding of other people's interests. No, [at that time] justice will be very special to mankind object of worship. This means that his spirit will be upgraded, his training will be completed and there will not be anything but global justice on the basis of faith, worshipping of God and knowledge of God and finally the creation of a government based on the Qur'an.

We Muslims are lucky that, contrary to all the pessimism towards humanity which has been created in the western world, we are optimistic to man's future. Russell says in his book entitled, "New Hopes", "Today, majority of scientists have lost hope in man and believe that science has reached a stage that will soon cause man's destruction." He says, "One of these people is Eienstein. Eienstein believes that man is not far from the grave he has digged for himself."

Man has reached a stage that pressing several buttons is equal to the earth's destruction. And if we truly do not believe in God and his hidden assistance and if the reassurance that the Qur'an gives about man's future had not made us certain then that would mean that they are right. There has not been a day when horrific destructive tools of great strength had not been built. Look at how much man's destructive ability has multiplied since twenty years ago, after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

We have reached a stage when we constantly hear that there are no longer winners and losers in this world. If a Third World war were to take place, then it would no longer be a question of whether America, Russia or china wins. If a Third World war takes place, the main loser will be the earth and the human race. There are no winners.

We believe that these falls had taken place in the past as well. The divine decree is above all these,

"And you were on the brink of a pit of Fire, whereat He saved you from it."[10]

We have been told, "The best of deeds is awaiting the reappearance." This optimism and awaiting the reappearance generally have superiority over all our other deeds. Why? Because, this is faith at its highest level of excellence.

O Allah! Turn us into true waiters of Imam Mahdi (may Allah expedite his glorious advent).

O Allah! Grant us the eligibility to feel the rightful government.

Oh Allah! We ardently desire that in (his) kind, just and fair period Thou should reactivate Islam and stimulate its followers and humble and humiliate the impostors. Include us among those who invite people unto Thy obedience and lead them to Thy approved path.?

References

1. Surat al-Nur 24:55.
2. Surat al-Ahzab 33:45-46.
3. Surat al-Hadid 57:25.
4. Surat al-Hadid 57:25.
5. Surat al-Nur 24:55.
6. Surat al-Nur 24:55.
7. One of the Qur’an recitors who was invited by the Husayniyyah Irshad.
8. A‘lam al-Wara, p. 401.
9. Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon 138.
10. Surat Al ‘Imran 3:103.

Chapter 8, Part 2: The Promised [Maw‘ud] al-Mahdi

“Allah hath promised those of you who have faith and do righteous deeds that He will surely make them succeed (the present rulers) on the earth, just as He made those who were before them succeed (others), and He will surely establish for them their religion which He hath approved for them, and will give them in exchange security after their fear. They serve Me. They ascribe no thing as partner unto Me. And those who disbelieve henceforth, they are the miscreants.”[1]

In continuation to the discussion, we had regarding the holy being of Hujjat ibn al-Hassan; we shall also dedicate this meeting to the discussion of the same issue. Our discussion will be based on historical facts. Those who have no information in this regard, especially the people who do not believe in the fundamental principles of the Shi‘ah ideology, think that belief in Mahdism dates back to the middle of the third century AH, which is the time of the Imam’s birth. I want to tell you about how and where this topic began and whether it has been specifically explained or not.

Mahdism in the Qur’an and in the sayings of prophets

Firstly, this matter has been spoken about in the Holy Qur’an in the most explicit way in the form of general glad tidings. Whoever studies the Holy Qur’an will see that in numerous verses the Holy Qur’an has mentioned that the outcome that is derived from the holy being of the Imam of the Time is something that is definitely going to take place in the future. One such ayah is,

“Verily, we have written in the Scripture, after the Reminder: ‘Indeed My righteous servants shall inherit the earth’.”[2]

Allah says in the Qur’an that We have in the past (after dhikr where they have said it means) written in the Psalms, after announcing it in the Torah [Zabur] that,

“Indeed My righteous servants shall inherit the earth.”[3]

This does not pertain to a specific area or city. Thought is as extensive as the earth: the earth will not always be in the hands of the powerful oppressive tyrants. This is a temporary matter. In the future, the pious will be the leaders. They are going to rule the whole earth. There is not even the slightest shred of doubt in this issue.

It has been mentioned in the Holy Qur’an that Islam will become the universal religion of mankind and that all other religions will perish or be overshadowed by Islam which is another one of the outcomes of the holy being of the Promised al-Mahdi.

“He is it who hath sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all religions, however much the idolaters may be averse.”[4]

He sent this religion through His Prophet so in the end He will make it victorious over all other religions in this world, which means all the people in the world will become the followers of this religion (and other verses as such). After the Qur’anic verses comes the issue of the Prophet’s sayings. What has the Prophet said in this regard? If the sayings related to the Promised al-Mahdi were exclusive to Shi‘ah narrations, then there will be a

point for skeptics to be critical of. If the issue of the Promised al-Mahdi is real, then the Prophet must have mentioned it; and if the Prophet has mentioned it, then it should have been narrated by other Islamic sects and not only the Shi‘ahs alone.

Coincidentally, narrations about the Promised al-Mahdi have not only been narrated by the Shi‘ahs. The Sunnis also have narrations regarding this issue if not more than the Shi‘ahs. Books have been written in this regard which can bare witness to this fact. During the years we were in Qum, two books were written concerning this issue.

One is by the late Ayatullah Sadr (may God raise his status), which of course is written in Arabic and is entitled, “al-Mahdi” and has, I think, been published as well. In that book, all the narrations he has quoted are from Sunni sources. When one studies it, he will see that the issue of the Promised al-Mahdi is more visible in the narrations quoted by the Sunnis than those quoted by the Shi‘ahs.

There is also another book which, fortunately, is in Farsi, titled, “Muntakhab al-Athar”. It is written by one of the scholars of Qum Theological Center (who is fullah Safi” (Golpaygani). It was∗still in Qum) called, “Aqa Mirza Lut written under the supervision of the late Ayatullah Bojnurdi; that is, he gave a general request for this book, chose the design, layout and customs of the book. It was followed up by this gentleman who later wrote the book. If you read this book, you will see that many Sunni traditions have been quoted in it in this regard, for various definitions and contents.

I would like to stress that I do not want to touch upon these sayings or verses in much detail. The main question I would like to discuss is another aspect of this issue: what effect has this issue had on Islamic history?

When we study the Islamic history we see that apart from the narrations of the Prophet and Imam ‘Ali in this regard, events have been taken place in the Islamic history as a result of declarations about the Promised al-Mahdi.

‘Ali’s saying

Before I begin to speak about the first historical event regarding this issue, I will quote you sayings by Imam ‘Ali which can be found in the Nahj al-Balaghah and I have heard from Ayatullah Bojnurdi. These sentences can be found in sources other than the Nahj al-Balaghah.

In his conversation with Kumayl ibn Ziyad Nakha‘i, ‘Ali talks about this issue. Kumayl says, “It was during night time. ‘Ali held my hand (this was apparently in Kufah) and took me to the desert with himself. When we reached the desert, he took a very deep breath. He sighed from the bottom of his heart and then said, ‘People are three groups: numinous scholars, the learner and the idiotic people.’ Then, he complained, saying, ‘Kumayl! I cannot find a worthy person, onto whom I could pass what I know. There are those who are good people but idiotic and there are those who are clever but not religious, who only use religion as a tool for their worldly interests. Kumayl! I feel lonely. I do not have someone worthy of knowing the secrets I have in my heart.’ In the end he suddenly said, ‘But, of course, the earth will never stay empty.’ He said, ‘At the same time, the earth will not stay

empty of Allah's proof, either the evident proof or the proof that is hidden and concealed from eyes'."

Mukhtar's uprising and belief in Mahdism

The first time we see the effect of Mahdism emerging is in the event of Mukhtar's revenge for Imam al-Husayn'smurder. Mukhtar was undoubtedly a political man, who had a political approach rather than a religious one. I of course do not want to discuss whether Mukhtar was good or evil. I have no business in that aspect.

Mukhtar knew that, even though the issue was about taking revenge from the murderers of Imam al-Husayn and that the conditions were just right, people were not willing to accept his leadership. He may have (according to a narration) contacted Imam Zayn al-'Abidin on this issue but the Imam did not approve of it either. He raised the issue of the Promised al-Mahdi, about whom people had been informed of. He told them that Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah, 'Ali's son and Imam al-Husayn's brother, was the Promised al-Mahdi, whose name was Muhammad. This was because the Prophet had said, "His name is the same name as mine." Mukhtar declared, "O people! I am the representative of the al-Mahdi of the Time, the al-Mahdi whom the Prophet had given news of."[5] He carried out his political play for a while with the name "Representative of the al-Mahdi of the Time". Now did Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah truly accept himself as the Promised al-Mahdi? Some say he accepted so they could take revenge but this is of course not proven.

There is not doubt that Muhammadibn Hanafiyyah was introduced as the al-Mahdi of the Time by Mukhtar and this is where the Hanafiyyah ideology emerged from later. When Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah died, they said, "The Promised al-Mahdi will not die before he has filled the earth with justice and fairness, so Muhammadibn Hanafiyyah has not died. He is hidden in the Radwa Mountain."

The words of Zuhri

There are again other events in the Islamic history. Abu al-Faraj Isfahani who is an Umawi by birth and is not a Shi'ah historian writes in "Maqatil al-Talibiyyin", "When the news of Zayd ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn[6] reached Zuhri[7], he said, 'Why are the Ahl al-Bayt rushing it so much. The day when the al-Mahdi will emerge from them will come.' It is, therefore, determined that the issue of the Promised al-Mahdi was so clear and definite that when they give the news of Zayd's martyrdom to Zuhri, his mind immediately gets directed to another issue: why Zayd even rebelled? And asked, 'Why are the children of the Prophet rushing? They must not fight back now; their rebellion is for the Promised al-Mahdi.' I do not want any business with whether Zuhri's objection is valid or not, which it is not, my point is: Zuhri said, 'A day will come when one from among the Prophet's Household will emerge and his rising will be successful and redeeming.'"

The rising of "Nafs Zakiyyah" and the belief in Mahdism

Imam al-Hassan has a son who has the same name as he had; thus they called him, "Hassan al-Muthanna", which means the Second Hassan, al

Hassan ibn al-Hassan. The “Second Hassan” was Imam al-Husayn’s son in law. Fatimah bint al-Husayn was the wife of the “Second Hassan”. A son is born from Hassan al-Muthanna and Fatimah bint al-Husayn by the name of “‘Abd Allah”. Because this son reached Imam ‘Ali and Hadrat Fatimah from both his mother and his father and was very pure, they called him, “‘Abd Allah al-Mahd”, which meant someone who is a pure ‘Alawi and a pure Fatimi.

‘Abd Allah al-Mahdhas two sons called, Muhammadand Ibrahim. Their time is contemporaneous with the end of the Umawi era, which was about the year 130 AH. Muhammadibn ‘Abd Allah was a very noble man and was famously known as “Nafs Zakiyyah”. At the end of the Umawi era, the Hassani sayyids rose (which has a long story). Even the ‘Abbasids gave oath of allegiance to Muhammadibn ‘Abd Allah al-Mahd. They also invited Imam al-Sadiq to a meeting and told him that they had planned to uprise and give their oath of allegiance to Muhammadibn ‘Abd Allah al-Mahd. “You are also a Hassani sayyid, so give oath of allegiance”, they said. The Imam replied, “What are your intentions in this task?” If Muhammad wants to uprise under the slogan of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, I will accompany him and will approve of him. But he is making a mistake, if he wants to uprise as the al-Mahdi of the Nation. He is not the al-Mahdi of the Nation, someone else is, and therefore I will never approve of this. This mistake may have, up to some extent, been made about ‘Abd Allah al-Mahd, because he too had the same name as the Prophet and had a beauty mark on his shoulder.[8] People were saying, “Could this be a sign of him being the al-Mahdi of the Nation? Most people gave oath of allegiance to him under the title al-Mahdi of the Nation.”

It is then evident that the issue of the al-Mahdi of the Nation was so definite among Muslims that when someone who was a bit religious rose they would say, “He is the one, he is the al-Mahdi of the Nation that the Prophet foretold about.” This would not have happened, if the Prophet had not said so.

The deceit of Mansur, the ‘Abbasid Caliph

We even see one of the ‘Abbasid caliphs having the name al-Mahdi who was the son of Mansur, the Third ‘Abbasid Caliph. Their First Caliph was Saffah, the second was Mansur and the third was Mansur’s son: Mahdi ‘Abbasi. Historians including “Darmster” have written that Mansur deliberately named his son Mahdi so he could use it politically to deceive people and say, “The Mahdi you are awaiting is my son.” Maqatil al-Talibiyyin and others have therefore written that when he sometimes confronted those who were close to him, he would confess that this was not true. Once he confronted a man called Muslim ibn Qutaybah who was one of his relatives, and said, “What is this ‘Abd Allah Al-Mahdsaying?” He replied, “He says I am the al-Mahdi of the Nation.” Mansur said, “He is wrong, neither he nor my son are the al-Mahdi of the Nation.” But, at other times when he confronted other people he would say, “This ‘Abd Allah is not the al-Mahdi of the Nation, my son is the al-Mahdi of the Nation.”

As I said the majority who gave oath of allegiance, believed they were pledging their allegiance with: the al-Mahdi of the Nation. People had heard

the Prophet's saying about al-Mahdi; however, since they would not fully investigate to find out more about the person caliming to be the al-Mahdi of the Nation, public mistakes were constantly made.

Muhamamd ibn 'Ijlan and Mansur 'Abbasi

We again see more events in the history of Islam including: one of the scholars from Medina called "Muhammadibn 'Ijlan" went and gave oath of allegiance to 'Abd Allah al-Mahd. Bani al-'Abbas, who were their supporters at the beginning, when the issue of vice-regency was put forward, they took over the vice-regency and then killed the Hassani sayyids (the descendent of Imam al-Hassan ('a)).

Mansur summoned this learned man (Muhammadibn 'Ijlan). He investigated and it became evident that he has given oath of allegiance to 'Abd Allah al-Mahd. He ordered for his hands to be chopped of. Mansur said, "The hands that have given oath of allegiance to my enemy must be chopped off."

They have written that Medina scholars gathered and interceded and said, "O Caliph! It is not his fault; he is a learned man and a possessor of knowledge in narrations. This man thought 'Abd Allah al-Mahdis the al-Mahdi of the Nation and he therefore gave oath of allegiance to him. He otherwise has no hostile intentions towards you." This is why we see that the issue of the Promised al-Mahdi is among the definite and certain issues in Islamic history.

As we review the past ages, we see incidents emerging in Islamic history that were initiated by the very issue of belief in the reappearance of the Promised al-Mahdi. When the majority of our pure Imams passed away, a group would come and say: maybe he has not died, maybe he has disappeared, may be he is the al-Mahdi of the Nation. This happened in Imam al-Kazim' case, even in Imam al-Baqir's case, and apparently also for Imam al-Sadiq as well as some of the other pure Imams.

Imam al-Sadiq had a son called Isma'il. The Isma'ilis are attributed to him. Isma'il passed away when the Imam was still living. The Imam loved Isma'il very much. When Isma'il passed away and was made ready for burial, the Imam would go over Isma'il's head, open his coffin, show Isma'il's face and say, "This is my son Isma'il. He has died. Tomorrow do not claim that he was the al-Mahdi of the Nation and he has disappeared. Take a good look at his corpse. Look at his face, identify him and then bear witness."

These all show that the issue of 'the al-Mahdi of the Nation' was so definite that left no place for doubt and hesitation. As far as I have researched, up to the time of Ibn Khaldun, maybe not even one scholar had been found to have said, "The narrations about Mahdi have no basis." They all had accepted it. If there was any disagreement, it was on minor things such as if al-Mahdi was this person or that person? Is he the son of Imam al-Hassan al-'Askari or not? Is he from the children of Imam al-Hassan or Imam al-Husayn? And, therefore, there was no hesitation in the reality of the al-Mahdi and him being from among the children of the Prophet and that his task is to fill the world with justice and equality.

The words of Di‘bil

Di‘bil al-Khuza‘i comes to Imam al-Ridaand recites his lamentations,

O Fatimah! If you find your al-Husayn fallen while he has died thirsty next to the Furat River.[9]

He addresses Hadrat al-Zahra and lists the calamities that had fallen upon her children one after the other. They are among the most eloquent odes of the Arabic language and one of the best lamentations written in this regard.

Imam al-Rida cried a lot. Di‘bil, in his poem and his expression of sorrow, names the children of Hadratal-Zahra one after the other; the graves that are in “Fakhkh”, the graves that are in Kufah. He refers to the martyrdom of ‘Abd Allah al-Mahd. He refers to the martyrdom of his brother. He refers to the martyrdom of Zayd ibn ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn, the martyrdom of Imam al-Husaynand the martyrdom of Musa ibn Ja‘far, “And a grave in Baghdad for a pure soul.”

It is written that at this stage, Imam al-Ridasaid, “I too will recite a poem and you add it to yours, ‘And a grave in Tus, and what a tragedy!’”

When Di‘bil said: “Sir! But I do not know this grave.” The Imam replied, “This is my grave.”

In these poems, Di‘bil has an ode, which refers to the issue of Mahdism, in which Di‘bil clearly states all these stories existed and still exist and will exist until the reappearance of an imam whose reappearance will unquestionably and definitely take place.

There are many more historical facts we can list but I do not think that it would be necessary to mention all of them. I mentioned these facts because I wanted to say that the issue of the Promised al-Mahdi was certainly a definite matter for Muslims since the beginning of Islam and imitated major historical events from the second half of the first century.

Mahdism in the Sunni World

If you want to find out if this issue is only exclusive to the Shi‘ahs,[10] take a look and see whether the Sunnis have claimed belief in Mahdism or not. You will see that those claiming belief in Mahdism are also numerous among the Sunni people one of whom is “Mahdi Sudani” or “Mutamahdi Sudani” who appeared less than half a century ago in Sudan and created a mass there that was still in existence until just recently. Basically, when this man appeared, he appeared claiming that the belief in Mahdism existed among the Sunni resident countries to an extent that created the grounds for false Mahdis to emerge. Those claiming to be Mahdi were also numerous in other countries. In India and Pakistan, the Qadiyans emerged claiming to be Mahdi. It has also been mentioned repeatedly in our narrations that impostors, claiming to be the Mahdi, will be plentiful.

The words of Hafiz

At the moment, I do not know whether Hafiz was truly a Shi‘ah or a Sunni and I also do not think that someone can say, for sure, that Hafiz was a Shi‘ah. However, we also see in Hafiz’s poems, references to the issue of Mahdism. I can remember two cases, where one says,

Where is that imposter eye atheist-form Sufi?

Tell him to burn, that the religion saving Mahdi arrived.[11]

And the other is the famous ode and how pleasantly has he said it!
Glad tiding oh my heart that a Messiah breath will come,
From whose breath I can smell someone.
Do not cry and complain from all these pains and sorrows that yesterday,
I made an augury and it said a rescuer will come.
I am not happy nor am I safe from the fire in the land,
Moses will come here in the hope of a Qabas.
No one knows where the intended resting place is,
Just as much as the hearing of a holler of a bell.
Do not ask me about the nightingale of the Garden, because
I hear a cry coming from a cage.[12]

My discussion about the historical aspects of this issue has come to an end. Now, what kind of false claimant will be found after the Imam of the Time's age is a story which I will not get into for the time being. I want exclusively dedicate the end of my speech to these three next topics.

The fact that after the world is filled with injustice and tyranny, the universal justice will be found has created an issue that is: on reliance upon this fact, some people are against any reform. They say the world must be filled with injustice and tyranny so that there will suddenly be a revolution and it will get filled with justice and fairness. Even if they do not mention it, deep in their hearts they are against reform. If they see somebody taking a step toward reform, they become upset. When they see that the society has become attracted to religion, they truly become upset. They say, "This should not happen." They must get worse so that the Imam reappears. If we are suppose to do something so people come towards religion we have betrayed the reappearance of the Imam and have caused delay to the reappearance of the Imam. Is this really the way or not? I will give an explanation for this so the matter is cleared.

The essence of al-Mahdi's uprising

Some of the events taking place in the world only have an explosive effect rather like an abscess appearing in your body. This abscess must reach an extent that it will suddenly burst; therefore, if anything is carried out to stop the bursting of this abscess it would not have good effects. If you want to put any medications on it, you should use a medication that will cause this abscess to burst sooner.

Some philosophical ideologies that favor the social and political systems are supporters of revolution defined as explosion. In their belief, anything that stops the explosion is bad. Therefore, you see some of the social methods oppose every social reform and say: what are these improvements that you are trying to make? Let no reform take place. Let corruption increase. Let hatred and obsession increase. So be it that tasks become more and more chaotic; chaos after chaos so suddenly everything is turned over from the base and a revolution takes place.

Our jurisprudential laws have a clear status here. Must we Muslims think this way about the reappearance of the al-Mahdi? Must we say let sin and disobedience intensify? Let the situation become more chaotic? Therefore, we must not enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil. We should not train and discipline our children to play a part in Imam al-Mahdi's reappearance.

We should rather, God-forbid, not pray, not fast and not perform any other duties we may have. We should also encourage others to abandon prayer, abandon fasting, abandon zakat (religious tax), and abandon Hajj. Let all these be destroyed so the conditions for his reappearance become prepared?! No, undoubtedly this is against Islamic principles. That is to say, by awaiting the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi, none of our obligatory duties become invalidated.

That is, neither our personal duties nor social duties in the Shi‘ism (that essentially is a belief exclusive to the Shi‘ah World let alone the Sunni people). You cannot find a single scholar who claims that reappearance invalidates even a small duty from us. It will not invalidate any duty from us. This was one form of interpreting the reappearance of the Imam.

The other form talks about ripening not exploding just like a fruit that is on the way to perfection. A fruit has timing just as an abscess has timing. However, an abscess has to burst but a fruit has to ripen. That is to say, it must reach the stage when it can be picked.

The issue of Imam al-Mahdi’s reappearance is more similar to the ripening of a fruit rather than a bursting of an abscess. This is not because there are very few sins; rather, because the world has not yet reached that certain competence. Therefore, you see constantly in Shi‘ah narrations that when the three hundred and sixty minorities are found, the Imam will reappear. Yet still those three hundred and sixty minorities do not exist.

That is to say, time must progress to an extent that it, in some opinions, becomes corrupted in any aspects or, to another view, those who want to form the government following him (Imam al-Mahdi) under his banner and his rein of power are brought into being. Such worthy men have yet not come into existence in the world.

Yes, “the task will get settled before it gets too chaotic”, but this chaos is a different chaos. Chaos will always be found in the world. After chaos comes organization. This organization then turns into chaos but a higher scale of chaos and not a low scale. That chaos will then again change into organization at a higher scale than the first level of organization. This organization then changes to chaos but again in a higher scale meaning this chaos after that organization is superior even over that organization (the one before it).

Therefore, it can be said that man’s social movement is snail-shaped. This means it is an upward circular movement. At the time the social movement of man is turning, it is not turning on a horizontal surface but turning in an upward direction. Yes, the organization is constantly converting into chaos but at the same time chaos is on a higher scale. Undoubtedly, our world is one in which at the moment the authority is even out of the hands of its first class rulers. But this chaos on a worldly scale is as different as chalk from cheese, to the chaos in a village. Therefore, we are going towards chaos as well as organization.

When we go towards the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi, at the same time, we go towards chaos because from organization one must go to chaos and then to organization again because it is chaos on a higher scale. When had such thoughts, which have emerged among men today, appeared

hundred of years ago, let alone five hundred year ago? Nowadays, the world's intellectuals say: the single solution of the miseries of man in the world today is forming a single universal government. Such thoughts never stroke the pale of man's imagination before.

Thus, because we are going towards chaos and organization at the same rate, Islam never commands not performing duties. If it was other than this, it would have commanded to commit the forbidden and abandon obligations and say do not enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, do not discipline and train your children! Let corruption intensify! When you go after praying, fasting, enjoining what is good, writing books, speeches, and propagations, you are causing delay to the reappearance of the al-Mahdi.

No, these kinds of reforms will make his reappearance closer just as those chaoses will bring the reappearance of the Imam closer. In no way must the issue of awaiting reappearance bring this thought to our minds that we are awaiting the reappearance so this duty is no longer on our shoulders (whether big or small). No duty will become invalidated.

There are other matters but our time is now finished and I must gradually end my speech. I will tell you my last thoughts:

Mahdism, a global philosophy

Try to adjust your thoughts, with regards to the Imam of the Time, with what has come in the Islamic contexts. The majority of us have turned this into a childish dream of an individual who is trapped with revenge and obsessions. It is as if Imam al-Mahdi is only waiting for Allah to give him the permission to come and for example lead us Iranians, or the Shi'ahs to happiness (and what Shi'ahs we are! We are not true Shi'ahs!). No this is a big global philosophy because Islam is a big global religion, because the Shi'ism, in its true definition, is a global matter. When the Qur'an says the following, we should regard this as a big global philosophy,

"Certainly, we wrote in the Scripture, after the reminder: 'Indeed My righteous servants shall inherit the Earth'."[13]

It talks about the earth and there is no talk about a certain region or a certain race. First there are hopes in the future, that the world will not be destroyed.

I have repeatedly said that this thought has emerged today in the European world which is: man has reached a certain stage in his life that is only a step away from the grave; he has dug for himself. This is true according to the apparent principles but our religious principles and ideology tell us that: man's prosperous life is in the future. The life in this world is only temporary. Secondly: that our time is the time of intellect and wisdom.

You know that a person has three general periods in his life: the period of childhood, which is the time of play and childish thought; the juvenile period, which is the time of rage and desire; and the period of man's senior years, which is the period when wisdom rules. This is how the human society is. The human society must plan three periods. One period is the time of legends, myths and as the Qur'an defines, the period of ignorance.

The second one is the period of knowledge but knowledge and juvenility; that is to say ruling period of rage and desire. Truly on what axis is our age

rotating? If one computes correctly, he will see that the rotation axis of our time is rage and lust more than anything else. Our time is the age of bombs (meaning rage) and the age of mini skirts (meaning lust).

Will there come a time when neither legend nor rage, neither lust nor bombs rule and the age of wisdom, justice and spirituality prevail? Will it truly come? How can such a time not come? How could it be possible for Allah who created this world and created man as the most noble of all creations to suddenly overturn him before he has reached this complete maturity period?

Mahdism is, thus, a very big philosophy. Do you see how excellent the Islamic contents we have are? It is near the auspicious month of Ramadan. You will hopefully be successful in reading the Iftitah Supplication during the nights of Ramadan. The end of this supplication is exclusive to the pure being of the Imam of the Time. I shall read those parts in conclusion as my end of session prayers,

Oh Allah! We ardently desire that in this kind, just and fair period, Thou should reactivate Islam and stimulate its followers and humble and humiliate the impostors, and include us among those who invite people unto Thy obedience and lead them to Thy approved path.

O Lord! Please place us among those who are subject to Your privilege and mercy in this world and the next world.

O Allah! We swear by Your Holy Essence and the truth of the saints of generosity to place us among those worthy of this big dream.

References

1. Surat al-Nur 24:55.
2. Surat al-Anbiya’ 22:105.
3. Surat al-Anbiya’ 22:105.
4. Surat al-Tawbah [al-Bara’ah] 9:33.
5. Pay attention to this also: in the beginning of Islam, the time of reappearance of was never specified. Of course, a group of special people knew whose son he was, but the Prophet only said this much in the narration: “Al-Mahdi from my children must definitely reappear.” There was nothing specified by history.
6. You know that Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin has a son called Zayd. Zayd rebelled and was martyred. What kind of person Zayd was, whether he was good or bad, there are some sayings in which our holy Imams have praised Zayd. It is in the al-Kafi narrations that Imam al-Sadiq has said, “By God Zayd left this world as a martyr. Zayd is the same one from the Zaydis (the Shi‘ah Zaydis who are in Yemen at the moment, all or most of whom believe Zayd to the next Imam after Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin). Any way he was a good, righteous and a pious person. According to our narrations, his rebellion was for enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil and not a rebellion to claim the Imamate. Therefore, in our opinion, Zayd was a noble and righteous person.
7. Zuhri is a Sunni. Zuhri and Sha‘bi are two of the later generations of the Prophet’s companions. They are people who apprehended the companions of the Prophet and not the Prophet himself. They are among the erudite and major scholars of their time.
8. The Prophet had a beauty mark on his shoulder which was called the Emblem of Prophethood.
9. أفاطم لو خلت الحسين مجدلاً وقد مات عطشاناً بشط فرات
10. What of course is exclusive to the Shi‘ahs has certain characteristics that are not accepted by the Sunnis, some of them, though, agree with it.
11. کجاست آن صوفی دجال چشم ملحد شکل بگو بسوز که مهدی دین پناه رسید
12. مژده ای دل که مسیحا نفسی می‌آید که ز انفاس خوشش بوی کسی می‌آید
از غم و درد مکن ناله و فریاد که دوش زده‌ام فالی و فریادرسی می‌آید
ز آتش وادی ایمن نه منم خرم و بس موسی اینجا به امید قبسی می‌آید
کس ندانست که منزلگه مقصود کجاست اینقدر هست که بانگ جرسی می‌آید
خبر بلبل این باغ نپرسید که من ناله‌ای می‌شنوم کز قفسی می‌آید
13. Surat al-Anbiya’ 21:105.