

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 coincidentally 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-Husayn was ‘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. ☞

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