

Introduction

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace

We are before an Imam of the Ahlul Bayt (peace be upon them) who filled the world with their virtues and sciences, devoted their lives to Allah, and were loyal to the truth in the full sense of loyalty. He is the tenth Imam; ‘Ali al-Hadi (a.s.) whose name is the same as his grandfather’s: Amir ul-Mu’mineen (a.s.), the pioneer of wisdom and social justice in the earth. Imam al-Hadi (a.s.) was similar to his grandfather in asceticism and in renouncing material pleasures.

It was never said about him that he had followed any fancy or submitted to any desire that was away from the truth. He had preferred the obedience of Allah to everything else. He was so fond of his Lord that he spent his nights worshipping, supplicating, and invoking Allah the Almighty.

His faith in Allah permeated his innermost essence until it was one of his most prominent qualities and constituents. Many exalted supplications, wise invocations, and wonderful maxims of monotheism were related from him, showing that he was one of the first leaders who raised the torch of guidance and faith on Earth.

Allah had endowed the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) with knowledge, wisdom, and virtues to an extent which He never endowed anyone else of His creation. The great knowledge and sciences that were transmitted from them are a source of pride. The young and old of the infallible Imams (a.s.) have been distinguished with this phenomenon.

Imam al-Jawad (a.s.) assumed the religious leadership and the general authority of the nation since his early years. He was just seven years and some months old. He was asked about the most complicated philosophical, theological, and jurisprudential questions and he answered them all as if he was an expert scholar though he was a child yet.

Of course, there is no explanation for this except that which the Twelver Shi'a believe, that Allah has endowed the infallible Imams (a.s.) with extraordinary powers of knowledge and sciences, just as He had endowed His Arch-Prophets.

As Imam al-Jawad (a.s.) was the wonder of the world with his talents and intellectual abilities, and so was his son Imam 'Ali al-Hadi (a.s.). Imam al-Hadi (a.s.) was yet too young when he was afflicted with the death of his father. The ulama' (scholars) and jurisprudents of the Shi'a, who were so cautious in the matter of Imamate, referred to him and researched as far as they could and with utmost accuracy on the matter of Imamate.

When they found the definite proofs on his Imamate, they believed in him. They did not let themselves be carried away by passions or fancies in that, but they saw that they were responsible for that before Allah since Imamate for them is one of the foundations (or "usul") of religion.

Anyhow, the ulama' and jurisprudents of the Shi'a asked Imam al-Hadi (a.s.), while he was yet very young, about different branches of knowledge and he answered them with answers of an expert, which made them believe in his Imamate. This made them more faithful and certain of what they believed that an Imam must be the most knowledgeable one of his time regardless of whether he is young or old.

The knowledge, virtue, and delving into the sciences of the Qur'an and the Sunna of Imam al-Hadi (a.s.) astonished the minds and sparked meetings and gatherings in all parts of the Muslim world as they were busy discussing his unlimited scientific treasures.

A great number of Muslims believed in the Imamate of Imam al-Hadi (a.s.) and found it obligatory on them to follow and obey him. Great monies of legal dues that must be given to the Imam were carried to him, besides the presents and donations which Muslims offered to him. Investigators and policemen reported this influx in detail to al-Mutawakkil, the Abbasid caliph, who was the most bitter enemy of the Alawis and their followers—the Shi'a. The caliph became very angry at this special respect and begrudging it. He ordered Imam al-Hadi (a.s.) to be relocated to "Surra Man Ra'a".¹

He imposed house-arrest on him there to monitor all his activities, pinpoint his followers, and prevent monies from coming to him. He prevented scholars and narrators from associating with him. Imam al-Hadi (a.s.) suffered a lot during the reign of al-Mutawakkil who ordered his men from time to time to search the house of Imam al-Hadi (a.s.) and bring the Imam (a.s.) to him, however he may be.

Once, Imam al-Hadi (a.s.) was brought to the meeting of al-Mutawakkil while glasses of wine were scattered about, songsters and songstresses sang with their musical instruments and al-Mutawakkil, the caliph, was drunken and surrounded by groups of singers and dalliers. Imam al-Hadi (a.s.) neither respected him nor feared his authority but began advising and reminding him of the afterlife and criticizing the state of dalliance, amusement, and pleasure he was in. We shall discuss this in detail later on, insha'Allah.

Imam al-Hadi (a.s.) was the only representative of the front of opposition to the Abbasid rule, and one of the prominent leaders of the nation who struggled against tyranny and oppression. He took a brave and unwavering position against the kings of his age. He did not associate with any one of them; rather he preferred to stay away from them. Therefore, they held grudges and enmity against him and inflicted him with severity and violence.

If Imam al-Hadi (a.s.) had humored or flattered the kings of his age, they would not have imposed house-arrest on him in Surra Men Ra'a, or the economical blockade that had led him to critical insolvency, or prevented him from meeting his followers. Imam al-Hadi (a.s.) preferred the content (Ridha) of Allah and the best interest of the nation to everything else; therefore he turned away from those kings who imposed their authorities by force and oppression.

In this book, we shall draw a clear picture on their policies and lives, as quoted by the most reliable sources of history. Not only was Imam al-Hadi (a.s.) afflicted with the Abbasid kings of his time, in fact *all* Muslims were afflicted with them. The Abbasids played with the principles of religion to the point that not even a shadow of Islam remained as it used to be during their reigns.

They exploited the economy of the nation to satisfy their pleasures. They spent the wealth of Muslims wastefully on singers and dalliers. Their red nights in Baghdad and Samarra' were full of all that which Allah had prohibited. They absolutely turned their backs to the Islamic principles and indulged in pleasures and lusts.

The study of an age is one of the systematic researches in studying the life of one who lives in that age, because it uncovers the important sides of the intellectual, social, and political life of that age. In light of this fact, we have to study the age and time of Imam al-Hadi (a.s.) and cover all its aspects because it had influence on the life of Imam al-Hadi (a.s.).

The age of Imam al-Hadi (a.s.) was rife with terrible events, the most prominent one of which was the dominance of the Turks over all the affairs of the state and their possession of the general economy to a degree that the Abbasid kings had no influence and were away from all the interior and foreign affairs of the state.

When the Turks were pleased with the Abbasid caliph, they kept him in his position and when they were not, they deposed or killed him. Because of that, the nation faced dangerous crisis as the Turks were not well-qualified to rule and run the political affairs of the state since they were nomads with no civilization or administration.

The book mentions the companions of Imam al-Hadi (a.s.), his disciples, and the narrators of his traditions. I think I am the only one who has studied the lives of the infallible Imams (a.s.) in this way, because the modern studies have paid no attention to this aspect at all or simply ignored it. I believe that studying this aspect completes the study of the life of the Imam because it shows the aspects of his intellectual and cultural life and the extent of his relation with people and the people's relationship with

him.

At the same time, there is important information about the Imam that has not been mentioned in the books of biographies that have analyzed his life, but is mentioned in the biographies of his companions. This book is not the first that has been written on the life of Imam al-Hadi (a.s.). Allama Sheikh Dhabeehullah has written about him in detail. He has assigned the third volume of his encyclopedia “Ma’athir al-Kubara” on Imam al-Hadi (a.s.) when talking about the city of Samarra¹.

Also Professor Abdurrazak Shakir al-Badri ash-Shafi’iy has written a book called “The life of the tenth Imam ‘Ali al-Hadi”. I think that so far what has been written on this great Imam, including this book, does not cover all his virtues, works, and concerns, but it sheds lights upon the aspects of his great personality, which was the continuity of the lives of his fathers who possessed all the virtues and nobilities of the world.

I find it my duty, at the end of this introduction, to acknowledge the favor and record my great appreciation to His Eminence, my brother, grand Allama Sheikh Hadi Sharif al-Qurashi (may Allah bless him) for his sincere help in writing this book. He reviewed many sources including some encyclopedias such as “Wassa’il ash-Shi’a” and others, and offered me much information on the life of Imam Abul Hasan al-Hadi az-Zakiy (a.s.). I pray Allah to reward him with the best as a sincere prayer from a brother for his brother.

Holy Najaf

Baqir Sharif al-Qurashi

1. Samarra’, the capital of the Abbasid State at that time

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