

The Minor and the Major Occultation

I am certain that the readers would be eager to gain information on the minor and major occultation of His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.), as this belief is not fully supported by all the sects of Muslims. Therefore, we present the following discussion for the benefit of our respected readers.

The Imam of the Time (a.s.) under the Shade of his Respected Father

As His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) is that divine reformer whom the Almighty Allah (SwT) has kept especially for the reformation of the world and the establishment of religious rule on the Earth therefore, His Eminence, Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) also accorded the best of respects and honors to his son who would be the “Remnant of Allah on His Earth” (Baqiatullah Fil Arzih).

He kept his affair concealed very meticulously from the oppressive Abbasids who were in severe pursuit of him. In spite of this Imam Askari (a.s.) informed many great trusted personalities of the Shias regarding this matter and introduced His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) to them in special audiences. These people saw His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) in some gatherings of Imam Askari (a.s.).

These gentlemen in turn conveyed this information to the other Shias who were considered trustworthy and sincere with regard to the Wilayat (love and guardianship) of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) till the existence of His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) became a certain fact to all of them and no doubts remained in this regard.

The subject of the Awaited Imam (a.s.) is the foremost of the accepted and clear beliefs of the Shias. He is the last of the successors of the Messenger of Allah (S) who were certified by him as the leaders of his community. Therefore, it was but natural for the Shias to pose many detailed questions about him to the Prophet (S) and other Imams (a.s.) in order to recognize him perfectly and to gain as much information in this subject as possible. We have hinted about this in the previous discussions.

Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) goes Towards the Eternal Abode

The Abbasid tyrants used to wreak the worst kind of tortures and pressures on His Eminence, Imam Askari (a.s.). They transferred him from one prison to another so that a major part of his limited and brief life passed away in dark and horrible prisons. Similarly they did not permit that Shias should meet His Eminence (a.s.) and that the scholars and narrators of tradition should benefit from the company of the Imam (a.s.).

Also, with absolute strictness and mercilessness they imposed economic embargo on His Eminence (a.s.) and all this was as a result of malice and jealousy that these evil people had harbored against the Holy Imam (a.s.) for the following reasons:

Firstly: His Eminence, Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) was the most eminent personality of his times, as a big portion of the Muslim community regarded him as their Imam and leader. And it did not support the tyrannical rule of the Abbasides and were not in favor of it. Rather they were in the forefront of opposition to the oppressive Abbaside regime and their view was exactly opposed to the Abbasides to the extent of even criticizing and denouncing them. Therefore, the Abbasides behaved with utmost severity and force with His Eminence (a.s.).

Secondly: The Abbaside rulers were absolutely terrified of the son of His Eminence (a.s.) and the Awaited Imam whom the Messenger of Allah (S) had prophesied that he would be his last vicegerent and the unique reformist who would establish the system of absolute justice and equity and wipe off all oppressions and injustice, because they were certain that their oppressive rule would be destroyed at his hands.

That's why they tried to murder Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) time and again so that his progeny is cut off just as some letters of His Eminence (a.s.) state. In letters that he wrote to some of his Shia followers it is mentioned:

“They thought that they could plan to murder so that my progeny may be cut off. And the Almighty Allah (SwT) rendered their word and their plots ineffective and thanks and gratitude is to the Allah, the High.”

The above letter was written after the birth of His Eminence, the Awaited Imam (a.s.).

Thirdly: The Alawite Sadats raised standards of revolts in various areas against the tyrannical and despotic rule of the Abbasides in order to establish justice and restore the rights of humanity that had been trampled by the Abbasides. These uprisings were supported in sections of the society and Muslim community. Naturally this was a matter of great consternation for the Abbasides who became deadly foes of anyone who was even suspected to be an Alawite and they wreaked upon them the worst of the tortures and atrocities.

At that time Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) was a pivot and a great personality and obeyed by everyone.

Therefore he was the target of the wrath and enmity of the Abbaside tyrants. Thus they subjected him to the worst of the tortures, atrocities and pressures. All these are examples of the causes for the enmity and malice of the Abbasides against the Holy Imam (a.s.).

Clarification of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) on the Imamate of the Awaited Imam (a.s.)

When Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) became cognizant that his death and martyrdom was near he clearly announced the Imamate of His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) and he introduced him to his close confidants and reliable followers. Ahmad bin Ishaq Ashari, a trustworthy, pious and god fearing man was one of these persons. It has come in narrations that he said: I went to Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) and wanted to inquire about his successor. His Eminence (a.s.), preceded me in the matter and said as follows:

“O Ahmad bin Ishaq! The Almighty Allah (SwT) has not left the earth without a Divine Proof since the creation of Adam (a.s.) and would not leave it without a Divine Proof till the hour shall be established (Day of Judgment). Through the Divine Proof, calamities are repelled from the inhabitants of the Earth, rain falls and the bounties of the earth come out.”

After hearing these words Ahmad asked His Eminence (a.s.): “Who is the Imam and Caliph after you?” Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) arose from his seat and hurried inside his house and returned after a short while in such a way that upon his neck on his shoulders sat a boy, whose face seemed to be like the full moon and it seemed that he was three years old. After that, His Eminence, Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) said:

“O Ahmad! If you were not having a special and exalted position before Allah (SwT) and the Proof of Allah, I would not have shown this son of mine to you. His name and patronymic is the same as that of the Messenger of Allah (S). He would fill the earth with justice and equity, as it would be fraught with injustice and oppressions. O Ahmad! In this community his example is like that of Khizr and Dhulqarnain. By Allah! He will have an occultation and none shall be safe from destruction but one whom Allah (SwT) has kept steadfast in the belief of his Imam and given the divine opportunity (Tawfeeq) to pray for his reappearance.”

Ahmad immediately asked, “Is there any sign or symbol so that it may satisfy my heart?”

Just then the boy, who looked like a full moon, began to speak and he said:

“I am the remnant of Allah (SwT) on His earth and the revenge taker from His enemies and do not demand proof after what is before you...”

After hearing these words of the Proof of Allah (SwT), Ahmad went out of the house of Imam Hasan

Askari (a.s.) in such a condition that his complete being was surrounded by joy. When again he came to Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) after that he said: "O son of Allah's Messenger! I was very much pleased with the favor you bestowed me that day. Thus what is the continuing practice of Khizr and Dhulqarnain?"

His Eminence, Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) said in reply, "Prolonged occultation."

Ahmad at once said, "O son of Allah's Messenger (S), would the occultation of the Promised Imam (a.s.) be also prolonged?"

His Eminence, Imam (a.s.) replied, "By my Lord! Yes, so much so, that even those who had accepted him, would turn away from their belief and none shall remain except one from whom Allah (SwT) has taken the covenant of our guardianship and in whose hearts is rooted our love and those who support it with their hearts.

O Ahmad! This is the command of Allah (SwT) and one of the divine secrets and one of the Unseen matters of Allah (SwT). So remember what I am telling you and keep it confidential and be of the thankful ones so that you may reside in the position of Illyeen¹ with us."²

This tradition contains some very important points as follows:

Firstly: Since the Almighty Allah (SwT) created man on the earth, He considered it necessary for their needs to establish His proof on them. So He sent prophets and successors towards them that they may convey the message of their Lord and complete the proof upon them. And this is due to the kindness of the Lord. And divine grace is having a logical base which the scholars and experts of scholastic theology in their discussions present their arguments through it.

And they say that it is incumbent on Allah (SwT) according to rational arguments to establish and complete His argument on the people so that one who intends to awaken himself, his awakening should be on the basis of proof and logical arguments. And one who desires to destroy himself, it should also be on the basis of proof and argument.

And apart from this, the existence of the Proof of Allah (SwT) is itself a cause of His innumerable fruits and blessings. Some of them are repelling of calamities from the creatures of the earth and the coming down of rain etc.

Secondly: When the Almighty Allah (SwT) favors His creatures with the reappearance and advent of His great reformer, His Eminence, the Awaited Imam (a.s.), they would establish the loftiest values, chief of whom is the establishment of political and social justice in the world and destroy the various forms of oppressions that shall be present there.

Thirdly: The Almighty Allah (SwT) shall prolong the age of the Awaited Imam (a.s.) like the age of Khizr (a.s.) and Dhulqarnain. And this is not difficult for the All-powerful and All-wise Lord. It is the same way as the Almighty has made the stars and the planets fixed in their orbits and which continue to exist on

the face of the earth. Thus for such a wise Lord it is not difficult to prolong the age of His reformer saint in view of those hidden wisdoms that only He is aware of.

Fourthly: The Almighty Allah (SwT) tests His servants through the prolonged occultation of His Saint and helper, the Awaited Imam (a.s.). And only those shall remain steadfast on his Imamate who are firm in their belief about him. These were some important points mentioned in the blessed tradition.

One of the traditions that Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) has stated to explain the Imamate of his great son, His Eminence, the awaited Imam (a.s.) is the one quoted by the eminent and trustworthy personality, Muhammad Ibn Uthman Amri from his father.

He said: I was present in the service of Abu Muhammad Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) when His Eminence was asked about the traditions, 'Indeed the earth shall never be devoid of the Proof of Allah (SwT) upon His creatures till the Day of Qiyamat and if he dies without recognizing the Imam of his time he dies the death of ignorance...' that had been narrated by the forefathers of His Eminence (a.s.). His Eminence (a.s.) in reply to the question emphasized on the authenticity of this tradition and said: "This tradition is true and correct, just as the day and the sun is true and correct..."

At that time a person in the gathering stood up and asked: "O son of Allah's Messenger (S)! Who is the Divine Proof and Imam after you?"

His Eminence, Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) guided him to the Imam after him and said, "My son, Muhammad, is the Imam and the Proof of Allah (SwT) after me. Whosoever dies without recognizing him shall die the death of ignorance. He has an occultation when the foolish and misguided people would be perplexed and destroyed. And those who fix the time of his reappearance are liars. Then he shall reappear."

This tradition also contains the same points as the previous one we had discussed before.

Assassination of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.)

Since His Eminence, Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) was famous among all and worthy of respect and honor of the Muslims and all the Alawites, it was hard upon the tyrant Abbaside, Mutamid. And they were not able to bear this honor and respect of Imam (a.s.), therefore they decided to poison the Imam (a.s.).³

And they proceeded with the plan. And when His Eminence (a.s.) was poisoned, he fell down on the earth due to the severe effect of pain and discomfort of the poison. In spite of this the Imam (a.s.) bore the pain and discomfort patiently.

Vigilance of the Abbaside Rule

The Abbaside rule became severely vigilant and they were horrified. Therefore Mutamid Abbaside ordered five of his confidants and one of his servants instructed Nahrir not to leave the house of His Eminence (a.s.) and observe all the information connected with the Imam (a.s.) closely and to pass on the information to him.

On the other hand he formed a medical committee and ordered them to visit His Eminence (a.s.) every morning and late afternoon. Two days after the poison was administered to His Eminence (a.s.) his condition worsened and he became weak. Mutamid commanded the physicians they must not leave the side of Imam (a.s.) and not leave him alone.⁴

In the same way he instructed the chief Qazi who was that day appointed as a minister. He in turn provided ten people to further subject the Imam to surveillance with clear orders not to be away from the side of Imam (a.s.).

Towards Paradise

Due to the effect of the terrible poison, the condition of His Eminence (a.s.) became more and more serious and the physicians became hopeless to save him. Therefore, the Imam (a.s.) turned to Qibla and immersed himself in the remembrance of Allah (SwT) and recitation of the Holy Quran.

And with complete entreaty and weeping sought the proximity of Allah (SwT) and supplicated and pleaded till his purified soul flew away towards the high heavens and towards the Lord and was welcomed by the angels and the pure souls of the Prophets and saints.

The death and martyrdom of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) at that time was great loss and a severe calamity for the whole world of Islam while the Muslim community had been deprived of the great religious guide and protector of human rights. Therefore plaintive cries and mournful chorus arose from the house of Imam (a.s.).

The Last Rites of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.)

At last the purified body of Imam (a.s.) was given the funeral bath, anointed, shrouded and readied for the funeral prayers. Abu Isa Ibn Mutawakkil was appointed by Mutamid, the Abbaside to recite the funeral prayer. It has come in narrations that Jafar, the uncle of Imam al-Zaman (a.s.) stepped forward to recite the prayer but Imam al-Zaman (a.s.) pulled him back and said, "I am more deserving to pray over my father than you."

After that he recited the prayer over the holy corpse of his father. At that time Jafar's face became red in shame. Those who were present there asked him regarding the Awaited Imam (a.s.), who had prayed

on his father. He said he did not know him. After the funeral prayers were over the regime ordered to keep the face of the Imam (a.s.) open so that Bani Hashim, Abbasides and defense officials, civil servants, chiefs of organizations and government magistrates may see His Eminence (a.s.) for the last time.

At that moment he said in this way: This is Hasan Ibn Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn Reza, who has died a natural death, while such and such employees of the caliph and so and so officials of the chief Judge were at his bedside.⁵ After that he covered the face of the Holy Imam (a.s.). They did thus so that the Abbaside regime may not be held responsible for having poisoned the Imam (a.s.) like they had poisoned his grandfather, Imam Musa Ibn Jafar (a.s.).

Elaborate Arrangements of the Funeral Procession of Imam

Hasan Askari (a.s.)

People from all walks of life of Samarrah converged on the residence of the Imam (a.s.) in aggrieved condition to participate in the funeral. All the official organizations, courts and markets closed down and Samarrah resembled a scene of apocalypse.⁶

Till that day Samarrah had not seen such a huge gathering in a funeral. People came in groups and in crowds and participated in the funeral of the Holy Imam (a.s.). They paid condolence to each other and comforted each other for the gigantic loss suffered by the community. They reminded each other of the virtues and merits of the Holy Imam (a.s.).

Burial Place of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.)

The holy body of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) was buried in his own house besides the grave of his respected father, Imam Ali al Hadi (a.s.). Yes! The beloved of the Holy Prophet of Allah (SwT) and the illuminated leaf and a luminary of the Holy Progeny (a.s.) was at last buried.⁷

The Alawite Sadat and Abbasides stood besides the grave. People came in groups and paid condolence to them and the funeral program came to an end. People departed for their homes in aggrieved condition with heavy hearts.⁸

Raid on the House of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.)

The Abbaside regime was so much terrified and concerned regarding the Awaited Imam (a.s.) that they immediately surrounded the house of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) and the neighboring houses also in case a lady of the Imam (a.s.) may be hiding there. The house of Imam (a.s.) was thoroughly searched and then sealed and locked and it was instructed to some woman to keep strict vigilance on the ladies of the Imam's household.

And if anyone of them were to be pregnant she was to be arrested. Till the time they were informed that a lady was pregnant. She was immediately taken into custody and put under the charge of Nahrir and some lady officers. The oppressive Abbaside rulers took such severe measures so that the Awaited Imam (a.s.) may not come and destroy their rule. However, divine will is not that it could be prevented by such raids and searches, etc.

Delegation from Qom

A group of Iranians from Qom departed for Samarra carrying some monies as trusts and religious payments of the Shias of Qom to visit His Eminence, Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) and to deliver him the monies. But when they reached Samarra they learnt that Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) had passed away.

Some servants of Jafar told them that after him the Imam was Jafar. At that same time Jafar has gone out with his singers and musicians to entertain himself on the banks of Tigris River. That is why the delegation of Qom did not believe that Jafar could be the Imam because they knew that an Imam and a Divine Proof is aloof from sinful acts and disobedience.

Thus they decided to see him and learn the truth about him. So they arrived when Jafar returned home and met him saying: We are a group of Shias from Qom and we bring some monies for our master, Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.). Jafar did not let them complete the sentence and asked in haste: Where are the monies? "With us", they replied but they requested Jafar to tell them about the amount of money they had brought and who had given it to them. Because previously whenever they came to Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) he used to inform them all these things.

Jafar was dumbfounded and did not know what to do. Jafar protested that they were lying and the knowledge of the unseen was only for Allah (SwT) and his brother was not having such knowledge. The delegation of Qom was further perplexed and they looked at each other. But Jafar told them in an angry and harsh tone to hand him the money.

The group said that they were representatives of the people of Qom and that they would hand him the monies only if he could furnish some signs like Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) used to do. Therefore if he were their Imam he should prove that he is the Imam otherwise they would return the monies to their respective owners.

On hearing this reply Jafar hurried to the Abbaside Caliph and informed him about the matter concerning the group from Qom. Jafar sought his help in taking hold of the monies from the Qummi group. The Caliph also pressured the Qummi and said to them, "Give this money to Jafar."

The Qom delegation said that they were representatives and agents of people of Qom. "They have requested us not to give these monies to anyone without getting a proof of Imamate. And this same procedure was prevalent during the time of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.)."

“What was that sign that Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) presented?”

The group said, “Without us saying anything, His Eminence (a.s.) used to inform us the details of whatever we had brought. And when we used to be reassured that the Imam is perfectly knowing those things we used to hand them over to him. Now if this man is the owner of Guardianship (Wilayat) like his brother he should inform us about these things and explain their quantity and condition so that we can hand it over to him. Otherwise we would convey it back to the owners.”

Jafar was infuriated and he turned to the Caliph and said, “O Master of believers! These people attribute falsehood to my brother because this is knowledge of the unseen and my brother had no such knowledge.”

The Caliph paid no attention to the statement of Jafar but said, “They are agents and they are not the owners so they could not be held responsible for their decision.”

The delegation implored the Caliph to help them leave the city in safety and security. The Caliph ordered they be taken out of the city under police protection and none should obstruct their passage.

The Qom delegation left the boundaries of the city and all of a sudden they decried a handsome young man who mentioned each of their names and said, “Accept your Master!” The group said, “Are you the master of Guardianship?” The youth replied, “Refuge of Allah (No)! Rather I am the slave and the obedient one of your Master, so come with me to be in the presence of our Master (a.s.).”

The Qom group happily followed the young man. When they reached the house of Imam (a.s.) they saw that the Imam (a.s.) was sitting on a platform wearing a green dress. His face shone like a full moon. They saluted the Holy Imam (a.s.) and after they had made themselves comfortable the Imam (a.s.) informed them about the amount of monies with them and the details of other items as well.

The Qom group fell into prostration of thanks for Almighty Allah (SwT) for having given them the recognition of their Imam and the Divine Proof. After that they posed some religious queries to His Eminence (a.s.) and His Eminence (a.s.) provided the replies. Then they handed over the monies and goods to the Imam (a.s.).

His Eminence instructed them that in future they must not bring anything to Samarra but that it should be handed over to the Imam’s representative in Baghdad. The Imam’s written communications must also be taken from this representative. In that same gathering Imam (a.s.) gave a shroud and camphor to Abu Abbas Muhammad Ibn Jafar Qummi Himyari and said, “May Allah (SwT) magnify your rewards...”

After having received these favors the group bid farewell to His Eminence (a.s.) and departed for Iran and Qom and during the journey when they reached between Uqbah and the area of Hamadan, the above mentioned gentleman, Abu Abbas died.[9](#)

Jafar and the Abbaside Caliph

After the passing away of the Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.), Jafar sent 20000 Dinars to the Abbaside Caliph and requested him to bestow Jafar the status and position the eleventh Imam (a.s.) was having. The Abbasides replied to him that the position and elevated status of the previous Imam (a.s.) was not bestowed by them but it was from the Almighty Allah (SwT).

He further confessed that they had applied all their resources to destroy all that but the Almighty Allah (SwT) continued to elevate the position of the Holy Imam (a.s.). That's why His Eminence (a.s.) was having perfections of knowledge, merit and virtues.

So if Jafar was having the same elevated status in the view of the Shias and followers of the Holy Imam (a.s.) he did not need anything else. But if the Shias of Imam Askari (a.s.) do not recognize the merits it is evident that he did not possess what his late brother was having. In such circumstances any assistance from the Abbasides would be useless for Jafar. [10](#)

In fact the statement of the Abbaside Caliph was true, that the position and status of Imam (a.s.) was not in the control of the Abbasides, that they may bestow it to anyone they pleased. Rather the personality of the Imam (a.s.) and his honorable post was from the Almighty Allah (SwT).

And it is He alone who selects the best of His servants for Imamate and guardianship (Wilayat). The Abbaside regime had concentrated all their efforts to bring down the elevated position and status that was possessed by Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) and the other Imams (a.s.).

And they considered every type of atrocity and tyranny permissible on the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) and their followers. In spite of this their position and success increased day by day. And trust and satisfaction of the people with regard to His Eminence (a.s.) continued to increase. However, Jafar with his false claim of Imamate and Wilayat continued to suffer loss and his request to the Abbaside Caliph was of no avail and he did not succeed in achieving this position and honor.

- [1.](#) The highest place in Hereafter
- [2.](#) Kamaluddin, Saduq, Pg 216
- [3.](#) Life of al-Imam Al-Hasan al-Askari
- [4.](#) Al-Irshad, Pg. 283
- [5.](#) Al-Irshad, Pg 383
- [6.](#) Al-Irshad, Pg. 383, Dairatul Marif, Bustani, 7/45
- [7.](#) Life of al-Imam al-Hasan al-Askari
- [8.](#) Ibid
- [9.](#) Kamaluddin
- [10.](#) Muntakhabul Athar, Pg. 370

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