

The Nature of the Imams' Struggles

The nature of the Imams' struggles differed from that of the theological debates and armed struggles. Those who are acquainted with the history of the second century hijra, and those who have studied the activities of the Abbasside Dynasty (Bani Abbas) before the first century hijra until 132 hijra when they came to power, may well appreciate that the fierce political struggle of the Imams can be compared to those of the Abbasside during this period.

Of course, this comparison will not be clear and impressive for those who have not studied the Abbasside struggles and the methods of their call. Similar features are found in the struggle of our Imams, but with essential differences in their goals, objectives, methods and personalities. Nevertheless, the plans and form of their activities are almost similar. Hence, we observe that sometime these two currents are intermingled, that is, due to the similarity of their methods, propagation and call, the Abbasside in the far away places like Hijaz and Iraq pretended to be the followers of the path of the Family of Imam Ali (as).

Following the style of "Musawwadah", who used to wear "black" shirt in the beginning of the call of the Abbasside in Khurassan and Rai', the Abbasside used to wear black shirts. But they used to tell the people: our black shirt marks our mourning for the martyrs of Karbala, Zaid, and Yahya.¹ Some of their leaders even imagined that they are working for the Family of Imam Ali (as).

The Imams launched such a movement, but with marked differences in three areas: their objectives, methods, and personalities. This is the nature and meaning of the political struggle in the lives of the infallible Imams.

The Broad Outlines of the Struggles of the Infallible Imams

I deem it pertinent here to draw a broad outline of the struggles of the infallible Imams and then discuss some features of their struggles during their lifetime.

At this stage, I am not touching the outlines of the struggle during the time of the first three Imams, that is, the Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali (as), Imam Mujtaba (as), and the Master of the Martyrs Imam

Husayn (as). There are ample materials on their struggles and no one doubts that their movement had a political orientation.

1. Bihar-ul-Anwar, Vol. 42, P. 61

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