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The Twelfth Infallible, Hadhrat Imam ‘Ali al-Naqi, al-Hadi, The Tenth Imam

Imam ‘Ali al-Naqi (as), the tenth Imam of the Shi‘ites, has reportedly been born on mid-Dhu’l Hijja, 212/March 6, 828. His father was Imam Muhammad al-Taqi, Jawad al-A‘imma (as) and his mother was Samana, a righteous and chaste woman who had been divinely commissioned to bring up and train him for the sublime position of *Wilayat* and Imamate; a mission she carried out most diligently and with the highest efficiency.

His name was ‘Ali, his patronymic was Abu al-Hasan, and his popular nicknames were Hadi and Naqi. Upon his noble father’s martyrdom, Imam al-Hadi (as) attained the position of Imamate which lasted 33 years. During this time, Imam ‘Ali al-Naqi (as) took high steps in disseminating the Islamic precepts and teachings, and introducing the Ja‘fari school as well as training honorable disciples and companions.

Not only was the tenth Imam (as) involved in teaching and guarding the Islamic culture in Medina and never retreated from familiarization of people with religious truths, but he was untiringly engaged in encouraging the good and prohibiting the evil and in secret and open struggled with the tyrannical caliph of his time, i.e., the Abbasid Mutawakkil.

That was why ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Umar, the governor of Medina wrote a letter to Mutawakkil, the caliph of the time, replete with animosity due to his chronic enmity and innate malevolence, maligning and abusing the Holy Imam and accusing him of conspiracy and even tyranny; the accusations being more fit to Mutawakkil, which were unjustly and tyrannically made against the Infallible Imam (as).

This was all because the charisma of the Holy Imam (as) and his *Wilayat*, erudition, and piety brought people from all over the world of Islam to Medina; however the narrow-minded and debased world-lovers who were seeking physical rule and worldly-oriented governance, were unable to see the Imam (as)’s spiritual splendor. “The historians and scholars of *hadith* are quoted as saying that the prayer leaders of the two Holy Mosques (of Mecca and Medina), installed by the caliphate, wrote to the Abbasid Mutawakkil: If you still need Mecca and Medina, expel ‘Ali b. Muhammad (Hadi) from this land, which

has mostly been dominated and subdued by him.”^{[1](#)}

This letter and the one written by the ruler of Medina indicate the spiritual influence that Imam Hadi (as) had in the strong opposition to the tyrannical Abbasid ruling system.

Since the time of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as) and Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq (a.s.) and the formation of the four-thousand-seat seminary of that fruitful era, many disciples have been trained in the field of Islam, of whom each had been a torch-bearer of Ja‘fari jurisprudence and different knowledge fields of that time, thus guarding generation by generation the foundations of Ja‘fari academy and the Islamic culture position.

Since the era of Imam al-Ridha (as), the Shi‘ite Muslims have somehow enjoyed peace of mind concerning the promulgation of Ja‘fari Islamic knowledge (Ma‘arif). However, if this invaluable opportunity had not come up in the era of Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq (as), it would be unknown where this Ja‘fari Ma‘arif would wind up.

Particularly that, since the time of Imam Musa b. Ja‘far (as)’s imprisonment, such widespread chances for teaching and dissemination of Islamic knowledge did not come up as they should have for our noble Imams (as) who were under restrictions and control of the tyrannical rulers.

In these years, however, lovers of this school and companions and adherents of the pure Imams (as) would go to see their dignified Imams (as) by any means possible in order to solve their religious problems, to receive instructions and take measures, to strengthen the opposition and to achieve their goal, to break through the caliphate's superficial power, and would benefit from the fountainhead of their knowledge and insight.^{[2](#)}

Thus the tyrannical ruling system and their functionaries were constantly scared of the Imam (as)'s cultural and revolutionary position. This endless fear is reflected in the letter written by the governor of Medina and the like.

The ruling system found out little by little that the two holy sanctuaries (Mecca and Medina) might fall under the obedience of Imam (as) and rebel against the caliph of the time. Therefore, a series of letters started to be written and sent to Mutawakkil Abbasi until he ordered Imam al-Hadi (as) to be transferred from Medina to Samarra, the seat of the caliphate.

Mutawakkil commanded his special chamberlain to incarcerate Imam al-Hadi (as) near himself and then to detain him in the quarter of ‘Askar for several years so that his life could remain under surveillance of the caliphate.

Some noble scholars have reported the length of this imprisonment and surveillance to be twenty years. When Imam al-Hadi (as) arrived in Samarra accompanied by Yahya b. Harthama, who had been commissioned by Mutawakkil to carry out this mission, the governor of Baghdad, Ishaq b. Ibrahim Tahiri,

learned about the Imam (as)'s coming to Baghdad and told Harthama: "Man! This Imam al-Hadi is the son of the Apostle of Allah (S) and you know that Mutawakkil has no liking for him, so if he kills him, the Prophet (S) will call you to account." Yahya replied, "I swear to Allah that Mutawakkil does not have a bad attitude toward him". Similarly, in Samarra, Mutawakkil had a Turk functionary called Wasif Turki, who also advised Yahya to be tolerant and merciful to the Imam (as).

It was this Wasif who informed Mutawakkil of the arrival of Imam al-Hadi (as). He trembled at the news of Imam al-Hadi (as)'s arrival and was overwhelmed by an inexplicable fear.

This event, narrated by Yahya b. Harthama, who was commissioned to arrest Imam al-Hadi (as) clearly illustrates the spiritual magnificence and influence of the Imam (as) on Mutawakkil and his courtiers; and it also shows deep apprehension that the tyrannical regime of Baghdad and Samarra felt of the Imam (as)'s situation and his specific position among his adherents and Shi'ites.

Anyway when the Imam (as) entered the house that had already been allotted to him, Mutawakkil asked Yahya: "How was 'Ali b. Muhammad living in Medina?" Yahya replied: "I saw nothing in him but good character, healthy personality, pious manners, virtuousness, indifference to the world, and perseverance in going to the mosque and performing prayers and fasting. And when I inspected his house, as you had instructed, I found nothing but the Holy Qur'an and scholarly books." Mutawakkil became happy to hear this and felt relieved.

Although Mutawakkil was an obstinate enemy of Imam 'Ali (as)'s household, who had the resplendent tomb of Imam al-Husayn (as) inundated, banned the pilgrims from performing pilgrimage at his holy shrine, and revived the enmity of Yazid and his followers against the household of the Holy Prophet (S), he was always fearful and humble before Imam al-Hadi (as)'s majesty.

Chroniclers have reported: Mutawakkil's mother heartily believed in Imam 'Ali al-Naqi (as). Once Mutawakkil fell sick with an injury and the physicians were unable to cure him. His mother made a vow that if the caliph recovered; she would send plenty of property to Imam al-Hadi (as) as gift.

Then, she ordered Fath b. Khaqan, one of the courtiers of Mutawakkil, to send someone to 'Ali b. Muhammad (as) to ask for her son's remedy. Fath dispatched someone to his Holiness. Imam al-Hadi (as) said: "Put such and such drug on his wound, he will get well with the consent of Allah. They did so, and the wound got healed.

Mutawakkil's mother sent a sealed leather bag containing one thousand *dinars* to Imam al-Hadi (as). A few days after this event, one of the adversaries of the Imam (as) informed Mutawakkil that a considerable amount of *dinars* had been found in the house of 'Ali b. Muhammad al-Naqi (as). Mutawakkil sent Sa'id Hajib to his Holiness' house to see into the matter.

This man climbed onto the roof of the Imam's (as) house. Upon seeing him, his Holiness ordered him to halt where he was until a lantern was brought, lest he would be injured. The man said: "When the

lantern was brought I noticed that Imam al-Hadi (as) was sitting on his prayer rug engaged in saying midnight prayers.” The Imam (as) then told the man that the house was at his disposal.

At this moment he ransacked the house and found nothing but the bag of *dinars* sent to the Imam (as) by Mutawakkil's mother and another sealed bag, which had her seal on it. The Imam (as) said to the man: “There is a sword under the mat, take it together with these two bags to Mutawakkil.” This made Mutawakkil and the malevolent agent extremely abashed.

Being unwilling and indifferent to the world and the worldly gains, the Imam (as) would always wear woolen clothes and a headgear and sit on a mat spread on sands, in a similar manner to his honorable ancestor ‘Ali (as), and like him would give away whatever he had in Allah's way.

However, Mutawakkil was always apprehensive of Imam al-Hadi (as)'s revolt against him and thus of losing his caliphate and superficial chairmanship. This was further instigated by talebearers and opponents of the Imam (as).

One day Mutawakkil was informed that: “‘Ali b. Muhammad had gathered a large quantity of arms and wealth and there are lots of letters sent to him by his followers from Qum.” Being shocked by this news, Mutawakkil ordered Sa‘id Hajib, who was one of his close relatives, to enter the Imam (as)'s house without prior notice to verify the news. Such intrusions and keeping close watches were common during the twenty years of Imam al-Hadi (as)'s stay in Samarra.

It is also reported that: “Mutawakkil commanded his troops, consisting of 90 thousand Turks residing in Samarra, to fill up their horses' nosebags with roses and pile up on one spot in a vast desert. They did so, making a mound as high as a hill, which they called Makhali (i.e., nosebags).

Then the caliph climbed up the mound and asked Imam ‘Ali al-Naqi (as) to join him up there, stating: “I called you here to witness my troops.” He had already ordered his troops to appear in complete military array and fully armed, planning to show off his power and glory lest the holy Imam (as) or one of his Ahl al-Bayt (as) would revolt against him.”^{[3](#)}

In the twenty years of the Imam (as)'s stay in Samarra, his life events and the people who frequented his house were, directly or indirectly, watched over by the functionaries of the Abbasid rule. For instance, the presence of a group of Abbasids in the funeral procession of Imam's (as) son, Hadhrat Sayyid Muhammad, whose burial place is near Samarra renowned as Balad is just one of many examples. This also implies that some relatives and agents of the caliph would frequently call on Imam (as)'s house.”^{[4](#)}

The Tenth Imam (as)'s Companions

Among the tenth Imam (as)'s companions, we see figures like ‘Ali b. Ja‘far Minawi who was imprisoned by Mutawakkil with the intention to kill him. Another of his companions was the famous literary scholar, Ibn al-Sikkit who was martyred by Mutawakkil.

The reason for his martyrdom is reported to be as follows: When Mutawakkil's two children were studying with him, Mutawakkil found out through his children that Ibn Sikkit was an advocate of Imam 'Ali (as) and his progeny (as). Being an adamant enemy of 'Ali's household (as), Mutawakkil once summoned Ibn Sikkit to his court and asked him: "Who are more honorable and superior, my children or 'Ali's sons, Hasan and Husayn?"

Being a Shi'ite and a loyal lover of 'Ali's household (as), Ibn Sikkit fearlessly replied: "Your children are not comparable to Imam al-Hasan (as) and Imam al-Husayn (as) who are two newly blossomed flowers of Allah's Garden of Eternity. How can your kids be compared with the beloved sons of Mustafa (S)? They cannot be compared even with Qanbar, the retainer of Imam 'Ali (as)."

Extremely disturbed by this reply, Mutawakkil immediately ordered to cut off Ibn Sikkit's tongue, thus killing as martyr the pure Shi'a and the genuine companion of the tenth Imam (as).

Hadhrat 'Abd al-'Azim Hasani is among other companions of Imam al-Hadi (as). As Muhaddith Qummi has stated in *Muntahi al-Amal*, "His noble lineage is traced through four generations back to Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba (as). He was among the great transmitters of *hadith* and the most pious scholar of his time. He was also a companion and comrade of Imam Jawad (as) and Imam al-Hadi (as). Sahib b. 'Ibad has written a short treatise on his noble life."

It has been written that, Hadhrat 'Abd al-'Azim was scared by the caliph of his time and was forced to wander from town to town as a courier and messenger until he arrived in Rey and took shelter in a Shi'ite man's house."⁵

"Hadhrat 'Abd al-'Azim enjoyed an ardent belief in Imamate. It is implicated that the fear this great scholar of *hadith* and ascetic had of the authority of the time was not due to his being an ascetic or a transmitter of *hadith*, rather it was because of his political culture and outlook.

Like other great propagators and *mujahids* of truth and justice, he made attempts in dissemination of genuine political culture and rectification of leadership principles in the Islamic community; probably being sent on such missions by the Imam (as), because it is not likely that a man of such status, religiosity, and piety – the one who used to present his ideas to the Imam (as) to be verified and reassured – to have had social and positional actions contrary to the Imam (as)'s ideas, and without his consent. This has been the case, whether the consent has been asserted, or Hadhrat 'Abd al-'Azim had himself attained it by religious culture and political jurisprudence".⁶

Imam al-Hadi (as)'s Countenance and Conduct

The 10th Imam (as) was neither short nor lanky and his cheeks were slightly chubby and whitish pink. He had large eyes and bushy eyebrows. He was very generous. He was so awe-inspiring that whenever he entered the court of Muttawakkil the tyrannical caliph of the Abbasids, the latter and his courtiers

would immediately rise to their feet as a sign of respect and reverence.

The caliphs contemporary to Imam al-Hadi (as) were: Mu'tasim, Wathiq, Mutawakkil, Muntasir, Musta'in, Mu'tazz, and Mu'tamid, who were all old enemies of the 'Alawi family and Imam al-Hadi (as) out of their infatuation with temporal power and the worldly pleasures.

Although they somehow openly displayed their enmity, yet they admitted the competent features and the high piety and erudition of the Holy Imam (as). They had also tested and observed by experience his virtues, scholarly insight, and mastery over Islamic and jurisprudential issues and had witnessed his vast field of knowledge, like that of his honorable ancestors (as), in debates and argument sessions.

At nights, his time was mostly spent in prayers, supplication, reading the Qur'an and communion with the Beloved Allah. He used to wear a rough robe and sit on a straw mattress. Any gloomy person who glanced at him would get delighted. He was loved by all. There was always a smile on his lips, though it was his awe-inspiring character that greatly captured people's hearts.

Imam al-Hadi (as)'s Martyrdom

Imam al-Hadi (as) was martyred with poison by the Abbasid Mu'tamid in Samarra in 254/868, in a house where only his son Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as) was at his bedside. From this year on Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari rightfully attained leadership and shouldered the trusted responsibility of Imamate. Imam al-Hadi (as) was finally buried in the same house where he had been under home arrest for twenty years.

Imam al-Hadi (as)'s Wife and Children

Imam al-Hadi (as) had married a woman named Susan or Salil, and had five children:

1. Abu Muhammad al-Hasan (as) (Imam al-'Askari, the eleventh Infallible Imam).
2. Husayn.
3. Sayyid Muhammad, who died a year before his father's Martyrdom. He was a refined and virtuous young man who was thought by many to be appointed as the next Imam. Frequently visited by Shi'ites, his sanctified grave is near Samarra
4. Ja'far.
5. 'A'isha, or as quoted by Shaykh 'Abbas al-Qummi, 'Aliyya.

Some Sayings of His Holiness Imam al-Hadi (as):

- I. Whoever is selfish and self-satisfied, people will soon be infuriated at them.

2. The grievance for the person who is patient is single, but for the one who laments and wails is double.
3. Idle talking and joking is a character of the unwise and the feature of the ignorant.
4. Staying awake for long makes sleeping enjoyable and bearing much hunger increases the joy and delight of eating.
5. Divine decrees will show you things which have never struck your mind.
6. Wisdom will not have any impact on corrupt natures.
7. To Allah belongs shrines in which He likes to be prayed and to answer to prayers. Imam al-Husayn (as)'s burial place is one of them.
8. He who takes heed of Allah, people will take heed of him. He who obeys Allah, will be obeyed by people. The one who is obedient to Allah does not fear the created ones, and anyone who enrages Allah, would certainly be enraged by people.
9. Verily, it is not possible to describe Allah, except through what He has described Himself. How could He be described, whereas senses fail to perceive and imaginations cannot reach Him.

[1.](#) Imam dar 'Ayniyat-i Jami'a, p. 82.

[2.](#) Imam dar 'Ayniyat-i Jami'a, pp. 84-85 (summarized and slightly changed).

[3.](#) Imam dar 'Ayniyat-i Jami'a, p. 95.

[4.](#) Ibid, p. 88.

[5.](#) Muntahi al-Amal, (with a slight change).

[6.](#) Imam dar 'Ayniyyat-i Jami'a.

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