

Introduction

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent The Merciful

(1)

Imam Abu Muhammad al-Hasan bin Ali al-Askari (a.s.) is the eleventh imam of the infallible imams of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). The blessed and pious Imams carried the banner of Islam, undertook the goals of the religion, sacrificed their lives into its way, and accustomed themselves to face disasters, difficulties, and hardship to spread the high values and goals of this religion. Indeed, just how many favors have they bestowed upon Muslims!

This great imam had intellectual, scientific talents, and abilities that made him without dispute an intellectual genius among men. He was one of the heroes of history by his resisting the various challenges and standing up against the deviate and oppressive Abbasid rule. He rebelled against the corruptive regimes and spared no effort in achieving truth and justice among people.

(2)

Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) was like his fathers in his tendencies and aims. Indeed, they all were like each other in reaching the highest ranks of virtue and perfection.

Historians have claimed he was the most knowledgeable one in the religious verdicts and affairs and that all scholars and '*Ulama*' (scholars) of his age were in need of him to ladle from the fount of his knowledge and sciences.

He was the most devoted, pious worshipper of all people of his time. He preferred the obedience of Allah to everything. He was the most patient and forbearing one. He suppressed his anger and pardoned whoever wronged him. He was the most generous, the kindest to the poor, and the most charitable to the needy. He appointed agents in many countries of the Islamic world entrusting them with the distributing of the legal dues, which came to him, among the poor and the weak of Muslims to get them out of their poverty and deprivation, whereas he himself lived like the poor. He paid no attention to the pleasures and desires of this life, like his fathers who turned their backs to this world and turned completely towards Allah and the after-world.

(3)

Historians mention that all people glorified and honored Imam al-Askari (a.s.), and acknowledged his virtue and preference to all of the Alawids and the Abbasids at his time. When the imam (a.s.) came to the Abbasid royal palace, every one of the attendants stood up and bowed glorifying him. Viziers, clerks, army leaders, and all statesmen regarded him so highly. Al-Fatah bin Khaqan, the prime minister of al-Mutawakkil, preferred Imam al-Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) to all eminent scholars and '*Ulama*', and acknowledged that no one had the virtues and qualities that the imam (a.s.) had at that time.

(4)

It was natural that the nation, with all classes, regarded and glorified Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) for they saw his guidance, piety, righteousness, asceticism, loyalty to the truth, and devotedness to Allah. They were certain that he was the caliph of Allah on Earth, and the only representative of his grandfather the great Prophet (s.a.w.w.). In addition to that, Imam al-Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) undertook the fatal issues of the Islamic nation, and defended the rights of Muslims. He criticized the rulers of his time for wronging people and disregarding their rights. Therefore, the nation glorified him and acknowledged his necessary leadership.

(5)

The Abbasid kings became displeased when they saw and heard that the masses glorified Imam al-Hasan al-Askari (a.s.), and that great numbers of Muslims believed in his Imamate and thought that he was worthier of the caliphate than the Abbasids who had no quality that might make them fit for the Islamic caliphate. Spite against the Imam (a.s.) filled the hearts of the Abbasid rulers who took severe procedures against him.

They imposed an economic blockade against him, and put him under house arrest in Samarra'. They surrounded him with policemen and detectives to watch his every breath. They subjected every one who contacted him to severe penalties. This was – as I think – the reason for why only a few narrators narrate traditions from him, and so not many maxims, literatures, and religious rulings were transmitted from him.

(6)

There was another very sensitive reason that led the Abbasids to watch Imam al-Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) strictly. It was that Imam al-Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) was the father of Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (a.s.), the awaited savior and reformer who would fill the world with justice, and would destroy oppressors and oppression.

The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and his guardians gave good tidings about him, and told the nation that this savior would spread political and social justice on Earth, and all Muslims of different traditions believed

this.

Therefore, the Abbasids were afraid of this savior, and thought that he would remove their rule and authority. They released spies on Imam al-Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) to know of the birth of this son. They sent female spies to see which of his wives would give birth to a male baby, so that he may be taken away. But Allah the Almighty made the pregnancy and the birth of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) an unknown matter, just as He had made the birth of Prophet Moses (a.s.) unknown to the Pharaoh.

(7)

This book studies the age of Imam al-Askari (a.s.) and all its events. The study of the age is necessary because it sheds lights on the intellectual, social, economical, political life of that age. Naturally, it has direct influence on the life of one who lives in that very age. Besides that, it uncovers the dimensions of his life and personality, and the extent of the influence of the events of that age on him.

(8)

The book features the economic life of that age which was neither sound nor stable but confused and paralyzed. The Abbasid governments at the age of Imam al-Askari (a.s.) did not create ease for people, nor did their rule result in the creation of the noble life that Islam wanted for the nation. Excessive wealth was accumulated in the possession of the members of the Abbasid family, statesmen, and their agents. They spent lavishly. They appropriated the treasures of the earth while the majority of the Muslim peoples suffered poverty and deprivation, besides the pains, sufferings, and subjugation they faced from the government officials in collecting the land tax and other taxes.

(9)

We have also presented a study on the kings of the age of Imam al-Askari (a.s.). Most of those kings were insignificant and ineffective. They submitted to their lusts and desires and were fond of maids and songstresses. Their red nights were full of sin. They were indifferent to what Allah had ordered the guardians of Muslims to do in order to better the general life of the nation, to offer the necessary services for people, and to find equivalent opportunities for all citizens.

Most of the Abbasid kings did nothing of that sort – rather they appropriated the wealth of Allah for themselves and took the people of Allah as their own slaves. They ran the nation violently and oppressively. They entrusted the Turks, who were harsh, ignorant, and unaware of administration and politics, with absolute authority over the nation, and they sank the nation into seditions and disasters.

(10)

Many historical facts and events were mixed together, distorted, or fabricated because some historians intended to overlook the clear errors of some kings and rulers. They tried to praise them with noble epithets and good qualities that they did not possess, whereas, in reality, those kings and rulers were the

worst of tyrants who threw the nation into an abyss of oppression and corruption, and exploited the economy of the state for their own pleasures and fancies, and afflicted the public with poverty and wretchedness.

It is neither fidelity nor truth to regard those tyrants with the eye of holiness and sacredness and to trust in them as ideal personalities. It is very necessary to study Islamic history thoughtfully, impartially, and aloof from any fanaticism. Authors must write just for the truth and the good of the nation.

(11)

Also, in this book, we have mentioned a group of jurists, scholars, and narrators who narrated traditions from Imam Abu Muhammad al-Askari (a.s.) and took from his knowledge and sciences. This is necessary – as I think – because it completes the research on the noble personality of the imam (a.s.) for it shows the extent of his association with the men of knowledge and their association with him at that critical period where the Abbasid government put the imam under severe watch, and punished whoever associated with him.

This confinement affected the imam (a.s.) and caused him much pain, because nothing would be more painful to an intellectual powerhouse than preventing them from expressing their knowledge and sciences and transmitting their opinions and ideas to others.

(12)

And here, I find it from gratefulness and loyalty to the great efforts of the grand scholar my brother, Sheikh Hadi Sharif al-Qurashi, who went through some reference books concerning the subject of this book, as well as his useful directions and valuable instructions. I pray for Allah to reward him with the best of His rewards that He rewards His loyal people with.

Holy city of Najaf

Baqir Sharif al-Qurashi

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