



Redemption after Tribulation

A Brief Account of the Life of Ḥaḍrat
Imam ‘Alī al-Naqī al-Hādī (A.S.), Ḥaḍrat
Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.), and
Ḥaḍrat Ḥujjat b. al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī Imam
al-Mahdī (A.S.)

Ahmad Ahmadi Birjandi

Translated by
Ahmad Rezwani

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Publisher's Note

Studying the life and *sīra* of the Infallible ones (A.S.) is incumbent upon every Muslim, as their life is a full-length mirror reflecting the Islamic thought and they are considered as the symbols of the purified Prophetic Sunna. First of all, it is to be noted that both the Prophet Muḥammad (S.A.W.A.) and the Imams (A.S.) have all enjoyed Divine and human virtues and excellences. From this perspective, there is no difference between them; and if a virtue is more saliently symbolized in one of them, it is due to the circumstances and conditions that the Imam has been situated in.

In *Sūrat al-Shūrā*, (Q: 42/23), Allah

(S.W.T.) says to His Apostle, ﷺ Say, “I do not ask you any reward for it except love of [my] relatives.” Whoever performs a good deed, We shall enhance for him its goodness. Indeed Allah is All-forgiving, All-appreciative. ﴿﴾

The Islamic Research Foundation of Astan Quds Razavi is honored to undertake the promotion of the thoughts and words of the Infallible Imams (A.S.), which represent the pure Islamic intellectual thought. Accordingly, with the translation of *Chahārdah Akhtar-i Tābnāk* into English (*The Fourteen Luminaries of Islam*) and publishing it in a single volume as well as fourteen separate volumes, this Foundation has tried to take a step, however small, toward the introduction of these luminary figures and the dissemination of Islamic and human values.

Chahārdah Akhtar-i Tābnāk, originally

written by the late eminent researcher Aḥmad Aḥmadī Bīrjandī (a member of the Islamic Research Foundation), is such a valuable and concise work that has managed to address a great number of seekers after perfection and has been published several times. Being decided to be published in English, however, the Persian version was assigned to the IRF Department of History of Islam to be revised and then handed over to the Translation Department to be rendered into English.

It is hoped that as a part of the above-mentioned translation, this volume may pave the way for further familiarization of the interested readers with the profound and prominent Islamic culture.

**Islamic Research
Foundation
of Astan Quds Razavi**

The Twelfth Infallible
Ḥaḍrat Imam ‘Alī al-Naqī, al-Hādī
(A.S.)

The Tenth Imam

Imam ‘Alī al-Naqī (A.S.), the tenth Imam of the Shī‘ites, has reportedly been born on mid-Dhu’l Hijja, 212/March 6, 828. His father was Imam Muḥammad al-Taḳī, Jawād al-A’imma (A.S.) and his mother was Samāna, a righteous and chaste woman who had been divinely commissioned to bring up and train him for the sublime position of *Wilāyat* and Imamate; a mission she carried out most diligently and with the highest

efficiency. His name was ‘Alī, his patronymic was Abū al-Ḥasan, and his popular nicknames were Hādī and Naqī. Upon his noble father’s martyrdom, Imam al-Hādī (A.S.) attained the position of Imamate which lasted 33 years. During this time, Imam ‘Alī al-Naqī (A.S.) took high steps in disseminating the Islamic precepts and teachings, and introducing the Ja‘farī school as well as training honorable disciples and companions.

Not only was the tenth Imam (A.S.) 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 Allāh 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 (A.S.). This was all because the charisma of the Holy Imam (A.S.) and his *Wilāyat*, 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 (A.S.)'s spiritual splendor. “The historians and scholars of *ḥadīth* 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 'Alī b. Muḥammad (Hādī) 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 Hādī (A.S.) had in the strong opposition to the tyrannical Abbasid ruling system.

Since the time of Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir (A.S.) and Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (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'farī jurisprudence and different knowledge fields of that time, thus guarding generation by generation the foundations of Ja'farī academy and the Islamic culture

1 *Imām dar 'Ayniyat-i Jāmi'a*, p. 82.

position. Since the era of Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.), the Shī'ite Muslims have somehow enjoyed peace of mind concerning the promulgation of Ja'farī Islamic knowledge (Ma'ārif). However, if this invaluable opportunity had not come up in the era of Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (A.S.), it would be unknown where this Ja'farī Ma'ārif would wind up. Particularly that, since the time of Imam Mūsā b. Ja'far (A.S.)'s imprisonment, such widespread chances for teaching and dissemination of Islamic knowledge did not come up as they should have for our noble Imams (A.S.) 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 (A.S.) would go to see their dignified Imams (A.S.) 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.¹ Thus the tyrannical ruling system and their functionaries were constantly scared of the Imam (A.S.)'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 (A.S.) and rebel against the caliph of the time. Therefore, a series of letters started to be written and sent to Mutawakkil Abbāsī until he ordered Imam al-Hādī (A.S.) to be transferred from Medina to

1 *Imām dar ‘Ayniyat-i Jāmi‘a*, pp. 84-85 (summarized and slightly changed).

Sāmarrā, the seat of the caliphate. Mutawakkil commanded his special chamberlain to incarcerate Imam al-Hādī (A.S.) 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-Hādī (A.S.) arrived in Sāmarrā accompanied by Yaḥyā b. Harthama, who had been commissioned by Mutawakkil to carry out this mission, the governor of Baghdad, Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm Ṭāhirī, learned about the Imam (A.S.)'s coming to Baghdad and told Harthama, “Man! This Imam al-Hādī is the son of the Apostle of Allah (S.A.W.A.) and you know that Mutawakkil has no liking for him, so if he kills him, the Prophet (S.A.W.A.) will call you to

account.” Yaḥyā replied, “I swear to Allah that Mutawakkil does not have a bad attitude toward him”. Similarly, in Sāmarrā, Mutawakkil had a Turk functionary called Waṣīf Turkī, who also advised Yaḥyā to be tolerant and merciful to the Imam (A.S.). It was this Waṣīf who informed Mutawakkil of the arrival of Imam al-Hādī (A.S.). He trembled at the news of Imam al-Hādī (A.S.)'s arrival and was overwhelmed by an inexplicable fear. This event, narrated by Yaḥyā b. Harthama, who was commissioned to arrest Imam al-Hādī (A.S.) clearly illustrates the spiritual magnificence and influence of the Imam (A.S.) on Mutawakkil and his courtiers; and it also shows deep apprehension that the tyrannical regime of Baghdad and Sāmarrā felt of the Imam (A.S.)'s situation and his specific position among his adherents and Shī‘ites. Anyway when the Imam (A.S.) entered the house

that had already been allotted to him, Mutawakkil asked Yaḥyā, “How was ‘Alī b. Muhammad living in Medina?” Yaḥyā 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’ān and scholarly books.” Mutawakkil became happy to hear this and felt relieved.

Although Mutawakkil was an obstinate enemy of Imam ‘Alī (A.S.)’s household, who had the resplendent tomb of Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) inundated, banned the pilgrims from performing pilgrimage at his holy shrine, and revived the enmity of Yazīd and his followers against the household of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.), he was always fearful and humble before Imam al-Hādī

(A.S.)'s majesty.

Chroniclers have reported as follows:

Mutawakkil's mother heartily believed in Imam 'Alī al-Naqī (A.S.). 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-Hādī (A.S.) as gift. Then, she ordered Faḥ b. Khāqān, one of the courtiers of Mutawakkil, to send someone to 'Alī b. Muḥammad (A.S.) to ask for her son's remedy. Faḥ dispatched someone to his Holiness. Imam al-Hādī (A.S.) 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 *dīnārs* to Imam al-Hādī (A.S.). A few days after this event, one of the adversaries of the

Imam (A.S.) informed Mutawakkil that a considerable amount of *dīnārs* had been found in the house of ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Naqī (A.S.). Mutawakkil sent Sa‘īd Ḥājib to his Holiness' house to see into the matter. This man climbed onto the roof of the Imam's (A.S.) 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-Hādī (A.S.) was sitting on his prayer rug engaged in saying midnight prayers.” The Imam (A.S.) 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 *dīnārs* sent to the Imam (A.S.) by Mutawakkil's mother and another sealed bag, which had her seal on it. The Imam (A.S.) 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 (A.S.) would always wear woolen clothes and a headgear and sit on a mat spread on sands, in a similar manner to his honorable ancestor ‘Alī (A.S.), and like him would give away whatever he had in Allah's way.

However, Mutawakkil was always apprehensive of Imam al-Hādī (A.S.)'s revolt against him and thus of losing his caliphate and superficial chairmanship. This was further instigated by talebearers and opponents of the Imam (A.S.). One day Mutawakkil was informed that, “Alī b. Muḥammad 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'īd Ḥājib, who was one of his close relatives, to enter the Imam (A.S.)'s house without prior notice to verify the news. Such intrusions and keeping close watches were common during the twenty years of Imam al-Hādī (A.S.)'s stay in Sāmarrā.

It is also reported that, “Mutawakkil commanded his troops, consisting of 90 thousand Turks residing in Sāmarrā, 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 Makhālī (i.e., nosebags). Then the caliph climbed up the mound and asked Imam 'Alī al-Naqī (A.S.) 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

(A.S.) or one of his Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.) would revolt against him.”¹

In the twenty years of the Imam (A.S.)'s stay in Sāmarrā, 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 (A.S.) son, Ḥaḍrat Sayyid Muḥammad, whose burial place is near Sāmarrā 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 (A.S.)'s house.”²

The Tenth Imam (A.S.)'s Companions

Among the tenth Imam (A.S.)'s

1 *Imām dar ‘Ayniyat-i Jāmi‘a*, p. 95.

2 *Ibid*, p. 88.

companions, we see figures like ‘Alī b. Ja‘far Mīnāwī who was imprisoned by Mutawakkil with the intention to kill him. Another of his companions was the famous literary scholar, Ibn al-Sikkīt 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 Sikkīt was an advocate of Imam ‘Alī (A.S.) and his progeny (A.S.). Being an adamant enemy of ‘Alī's household (A.S.), Mutawakkil once summoned Ibn Sikkīt to his court and asked him, “Who are more honorable and superior, my children or ‘Alī's sons, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn?”

Being a Shi'ite and a loyal lover of ‘Alī's household (A.S.), Ibn Sikkīt fearlessly replied, “Your children are not comparable to Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) and Imam al-

Ḥusayn (A.S.) who are two newly blossomed flowers of Allah's Garden of Eternity. How can your kids be compared with the beloved sons of Muṣṭafā (S.A.W.A.)? They cannot be compared even with Qanbar, the retainer of Imam 'Alī (A.S.).”

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

Ḥaḍrat 'Abd al-'Azīm Ḥasanī is among other companions of Imam al-Hādī (A.S.). As Muḥaddith Qummī has stated in *Muntahī al-Āmāl*, “His noble lineage is traced through four generations back to Imam al-Ḥasan al-Mujtabā (A.S.). He was among the great transmitters of *ḥadīth* and the most pious scholar of his time. He was also a companion and comrade of Imam

Jawād (A.S.) and Imam al-Hādī (A.S.).
Ṣāhib b. ‘Ibād has written a short treatise on
his noble life.”

It has been written that, Ḥaḍrat ‘Abd al-
‘Azīm 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 Shī‘ite
man's house.”¹

“Ḥaḍrat ‘Abd al-‘Azīm enjoyed an ardent
belief in Imamate. It is implicated that the
fear this great scholar of *ḥadīth* and ascetic
had of the authority of the time was not due
to his being an ascetic or a transmitter of
ḥadīth, rather it was because of his political
culture and outlook. Like other great
propagators and *mujāhids* of truth and
justice, he made attempts in dissemination
of genuine political culture and rectification

1 *Muntahī al-Āmāl*, (with a slight change).

of leadership principles in the Islamic community; probably being sent on such missions by the Imam (A.S.), 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 (A.S.) to be verified and reassured – to have had social and positional actions contrary to the Imam (A.S.)'s ideas, and without his consent. This has been the case, whether the consent has been asserted, or Ḥaḍrat ‘Abd al-‘Azīm had himself attained it by religious culture and political jurisprudence”.¹

Imam al-Hādī (A.S.)'s Countenance and Conduct

The 10th Imam (A.S.) was neither short nor lanky and his cheeks were slightly chubby and whitish pink. He had large eyes

1 *Imām dar ‘Ayniyat-i Jāmi‘a*.

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-Hādī (A.S.) were: Mu‘taṣim, Wāthiq, Mutawakkil, Muntaṣir, Musta‘īn, Mu‘tazz, and Mu‘tamid, who were all old enemies of the ‘Alawī family and Imam al-Hādī (A.S.) 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 (A.S.). 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 (A.S.), in debates and argument sessions. At nights, his time was mostly spent in prayers, supplication, reading the Qur'ān 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-Hādī (A.S.)'s Martyrdom

Imam al-Hādī (A.S.) was martyred with poison by the Abbasid Mu'tamid in Sāmarrā in 254/868, in a house where only his son Imam al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī (A.S.) was at his bedside. From this year on Imam al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī rightfully attained leadership and shouldered the trusted responsibility of Imamate. Imam al-Hādī (A.S.) was finally

buried in the same house where he had been under home arrest for twenty years.

Imam al-Hādī (A.S.)'s Wife and Children

Imam al-Hādī (A.S.) had married a woman named Sūsan or Salīl, and had five children:

1. Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan (A.S.) (Imam al-‘Askarī, the eleventh Infallible Imam).

2. Ḥusayn.

3. Sayyid Muḥammad, 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 Shī‘ites, his sanctified grave is near Sāmarrā

4. Ja‘far.

5. ‘Ā’isha, or as quoted by Shaykh ‘Abbas al-Qummī, ‘Alīyya.

Some Sayings of His Holiness Imam al-Hādī (A.S.)

1. 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 (A.S.)'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.

**The Thirteenth Infallible
Ḥaḍrat Imam al-Ḥasan
al-‘Askarī (A.S.)
The Eleventh Imam**

Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.) was born in Medina in 232/846. His dignified mother, Sūsan or Salīl, was a competent and virtuous woman who took extreme care to rear her son, the Ḥujja (proof) of Ḥaqq as he really deserved. This pious lady accompanied Imam al-‘Askarī (A.S.) to Sāmarrā and passed away there.

The patronymic of Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.) was Abū Muḥammad.

Countenance and Conduct of Imam al-Ḥasan ‘Askarī (A.S)

The eleventh Imam had a swarthy face and a moderate stature. He also had black curved eyebrows, large eyes and a broad forehead, as well as large and bright white teeth. He had a mole on his right cheek. Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.) was attractively eloquent and of a divine and dignified personality, and was a matchless interpreter of the Holy Qur’ān. In his short life, he clarified the straight path of the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.) and the appropriate way of interpreting the Qur’ān to the people and particularly to his noble companions.

The Period of His Imamate

In general, the 29 year life-span of Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.) is divided into three periods: The first period consisted of

13 years which was spent in Medina.

The second period included 10 years in Sāmarrā before Imamate.

The third period covered the six years of the Imamate of his Holiness.

The Imamate period of his Holiness was contemporary with the superficial authority of the Abbasids, who imitated Hārūn in their ambitions to acquire and wield power.

During his six years of Imamate, Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.) spent three years in prison. His jailor, Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf, assigned two tyrannical retainers over him so that he could further persecute him. The two retainers, however, closely observing the state and the manners of the holy Imam (A.S.), were impressed by that noble Imam (A.S.) and treated him in a peaceful and decent manner. When asked about the Imam (A.S.)'s state, these retainers said the prisoner fasted during the day and was

engaged in prayers and supplications to his Beloved Allah all night long till dawn, not speaking to others.

‘Ubayd Allāh Khāqān, vizier to the Abbasid Mu‘tamid, with all his arrogance, would always rise to his feet whenever he met Imam al-‘Askarī (A.S.) and would offer him his own seat to sit on. He would always say, “I never saw anybody like him in Sāmarrā, he is the most pious and knowledgeable man of the time.”

‘Ubayd Allāh Khāqān's son said, “I always asked people about the state of the Imam. I would find people humble toward him and noticed them admitted to his nobility and would love him.”

Although the Holy Imam (A.S.) would not associate with others except his devoted Shī‘as, the Abbasid ruling regime had him most of the time imprisoned and banned him from contact with others in order to

maintain the caliphate in peace and quiet.

“One of the problems in the time of Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.) was that the property and endowments belonging to the Shi‘as were trusted by the caliphate to the enemy of the Prophet's progeny so as to prevent the Shi‘ite movements would not be financially strengthened. It is reported, for example, that Aḥmad b. ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Khāqān was assigned by the caliph as the custodian of the endowments and alms in Qum. He inflicted the severest atrocities on the household of the Prophet (S.A.W.A.).

Also, Imam ‘Askarī (A.S.)'s companions were dispersed and it was impossible to gather in one place. Some like Abū ‘Alī Aḥmad b. Ishāq Ash‘arī lived in Qum and others like Abū Sahl Ismā‘īl Nowbakhtī lived in Baghdad. The pressure and surveillance exerted by the Abbasid caliphate following the martyrdom of Imam

‘Alī al-Riḍā (A.S.) was so extensive that it had driven the opposite front into the most extreme challenges. Believing in the truth and calling to comprehensive principles of justice, the latter tolerated all the atrocities and hardships and never neglected to guard and defend their position.”¹

That we said Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.) was under intense control by the caliphate and not allowed to meet with people, and that all our noble Imams (A.S.) would rarely associate with anyone except their devoted companions or those who referred to them to consult their financial and religious problems, was because the occultation of Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) was drawing near and people had to gradually get used to it and receive their political directions and solution to their problems

1 *Imām dar ‘Ayniyat-i Jāmi‘a*, p. 91.

from the devoted companions who were the flag-bearers of the religious frontiers, and not to find the occultation period astonishing. Anyhow, Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.) lived only 29 years, but during his six years of Imamate and the spiritual leadership, he left behind significant works of the Qur’ān interpretation, legal rulings, and clarification of jurisprudential issues, and directed the revolutionary movements of Shī‘as who came to him from far distances to enjoy his favors and presence.

In the time of the eleventh Imam's leadership, the sublime Qur’ānic teachings, dissemination of Divine ordinances, and theological disputes revived a particular scholarly movement. Similarly, the Shī‘ite culture – which was already well known – in other fields such as philosophy and theology presented such great men as

Ya'qūb b. Ishāq Kindī, who was a contemporary and disciple of Imam al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī (A.S.).

Many things have been related on the Imam (A.S.)'s scholarly authority, which had been originated from the splendor of the Infallible Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.)'s Divine knowledge. For example, the above-mentioned Ya'qūb b. Ishāq al-Kindī the great Arab philosopher – to whom Abū Naṣr Fārābī, the well-known Iranian scholar, was a disciple – became helpless in a debate with the Holy Imam (A.S.) and burnt up the book he had written against the Qur'ān, and later on joined the lovers and followers of his Holiness (A.S.).

The Martyrdom of Imam al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī (A.S.)

The martyrdom of Imam al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī (A.S.) is reported to be on Friday,

Rabī al-Awwal 8, 260/January 1, 874. The way that noble Imam (A.S.) was martyred is related as follows, ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Khāqān's son said, “One day my father (who was the vizier to the ‘Abbasid Mu‘tamid) was informed that Ibn al-Riḍā, i.e., Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.) had fallen sick. Upon hearing this, my father rushed to the caliph to tell him the news. The caliph sent five of his trustees and courtiers along with him. One of them, called Naḥrīr the retainer who was one of the special trustees to the caliph, ordered the rest to keep a constant watch over the house of that Holy Imam, and to keep him posted on the things happening to the Imam. He also assigned a physician to visit and check him every morning and evening. After two days my father was informed that the Imam's illness had been deteriorated and weakness had overwhelmed him. So, early in the

morning, he personally went to the Imam (A.S.) and ordered the physicians – mostly Christian and Jewish – not to leave the Imam (A.S.) and summoned the supreme judge and ordered him to bring ten well-known scholars to remain constantly in his company. He did all this in order to conceal from people the poison he had given him and to pretend to the people that his Holiness (A.S.) had died a natural death. They were continually in and around the Imam (A.S.)'s house until a few days after the beginning of Rabī al-Awwal, 260/January, 874, when the tyrannized Holy Imam (A.S.) gave up his carnal body and joined the Eternal Abode of Allah at the age of 29. Thereupon, the caliph launched a thorough search for the Imam (A.S.)'s son, having heard that his son would one day dominate the entire world and overthrow the wrongdoers and false-minded. This

search continued for two years.¹

The inquiry and searching was the outcome of the fear nested in the heart of the Abbasid Mu'tasim and the caliphs before and after him regarding the advent of Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.). They had heard through traditions related from the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.) that a pure-natured child would be born to Imam al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī (A.S.) and Nargis Khātūn by the name of al-Mahdī of the End of the Time, who has the same appellation of the Holy Apostle (S.A.W.A.), and would overthrow the despotic rule of the tyrannical powers and put an end to their domination and sovereignty. On this ground, they frequented the Holy Imam (A.S.)'s house by various pretexts, looking around to find any

1 *Imām dar 'Ayniyat-i Jāmi'a*, p. 92 (related from *Muntahī al-Āmāl*).

possible sign of that noble baby in order to kill him.

Verily the story of Nimrūd and Pharaoh in the advent of the Prophets Abraham (A.S.) and Moses (A.S.) was repeated. Even midwives were assigned to look into this crucial matter. But as you will read in the next chapter, Allah Almighty has secured His Ḥujja (proof) from receiving any harm by the enemies and any detriment from the inflictions of time; and He will keep doing so until he gets his Divine mission accomplished.

Anyway, the martyrdom of the Holy Imam (A.S.) has been reported to be due to the poison Mu'tamid had fed him in his meal; later on, however, he repented for this sordid action. Perforce, he called for Christian and Jewish physicians who were practicing medicine then in Baghdad and Sāmarrā, especially for the purposes like

plotting the murder of such a noble Imam (A.S.) as Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.). Nevertheless, he had other intentions by this ostentatious compassion, and that was pleasing people and keeping them unaware of the true event.

When the Shi‘as were informed of the heart-rending demise of Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.), the whole city of Sāmarrā was overshadowed with deep sorrow and lamentation being heard from every corner. People prepared to carry out the funeral and mourning processions.

The Rightful Successor to Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.)

Abū al-Adyān said, “I was at the service of Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.). I used to deliver his letters to various cities. One day, on his deathbed, he called me and gave me several letters to be delivered to

Madā'in. Then he said, "You will return to Sāmarrā only to hear wails and laments from my house; at that time my body will be given *ghusl* (major ablution)."

Abū al-Adyān said to the Imam (A.S.), "O my master, whenever this tragic event occurs, to whom shall the Imamate be handed over?"

"Whoever demands from you the reply to my letter." The Imam answered.

Abū al-Adyān asked again, "Present me with another sign."

The Imam (A.S.) said, "The one who performs funeral prayer for me."

Abū al-Adyān further requested, "Let me know one more sign."

The Imam (A.S.) responded, "The one who can tell what is in the satchel will be your Imam."

Abū al-Adyān goes on to say, "The bravery and dignity of the Imam (A.S.) was

so awe-inspiring that I could not ask further questions. I set off to deliver the letters and returned in fifteen days. When I reached the door of the Holy Imam (A.S.)'s house, a loud wailing and crying was heard from the house. Once inside, I saw Ja'far Kadhdhāb, the Imam (A.S.)'s brother, sitting down and the Shī'as who were expressing their condolences to him and congratulating him on his Imamate. I was so surprised at this. I approached him and expressed my condolences and congratulations. He did not say anything and asked nothing.

When the sacred body of the Imam (A.S.) was shrouded and prepared for funeral prayer, a retainer came in and called on Ja'far Kadhdhāb to perform the prayer for his brother's body. When Ja'far stood up to say the funeral prayer, a very handsome child, with curly hair, wide apart teeth and swarthy face went toward him, held on the

Ja'far's robe, and said , "O uncle step aside, for I am more deserved to perform the prayer."

Ja'far's face paled at the sight of his nephew. He stepped back, then the boy came to the front, said prayer for his father's body and then had the sacred body buried next to the grave of Imam 'Alī al-Naqī (A.S.). He then faced me and told me to hand him the answers to the letter that were with me. I gave the answers to that child. After a while, Hājiz Washshā' asked Ja'far who that child was. Ja'far said, "By Allah I do not know him and I have never seen him."

At this time, a group of Shī'as arrived in from the city of Qum. When they found out about the Holy Imam (A.S.)'s death, the people present there beckoned them to ask Ja'far. Several of them went to Ja'far and inquired, "Tell us who the letters we are

holding are from and how much the money is.” Ja‘far said, “Look people! They are asking me the knowledge of the hidden things! Thereupon a retainer of the Imam of the age (A.S.) came along and quoted the Imam (A.S.) as saying:

“O people of Qum! There are letters with you from so and so as well as a satchel in which there are a thousand gold coins and among them there are ten coins coated with gold.”

The Shī‘as who had come from Qum said, “Whoever has sent you is the Imam of the age (A.S.). Hand in these letters and the satchel to him.”

Ja‘far Kadhdhāb went to caliph, Mu‘tamid, and related the event. The latter told his agents to search into the house of Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.) to find the child. They did so but of no avail. Perforce they arrested Ṣayqal, the woman

retainer to Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.) and kept her under arrest for a long time imagining that she was pregnant. But the more they searched the less they found. Allah Almighty preserved that blessed and auspicious child who has been under His protection up to the present time and is apparently hidden from views.¹ May the praise of Allah keep showering upon him.

Some Sayings of His Holiness Imam al-‘Askarī (A.S.)

I. There are two attributes that have no superior: Believing in the Lord of the world and helping out brothers in faith.

2. No powerful authority gives up the Truth unless they fall into baseness and misery; and no miserable one sticks to the Truth unless they turned into powerful

¹ *Muntahī al-Āmāl*, (with a slight change).

authorities.

3. How evil is the one who is double-faced and is double-tongued toward his brothers in faith; the one who praises them in their presence and reproaches and slanders them in their absence. If the same brother in faith is generous to him, he will envy him, and if he falls into trouble, he will betray him.

4. Anger is the key to all kinds of vices.

5. The most pious and most God-fearing people are those who abstain from the unlawful.

6. People attributing partners to Allah is more unnoticed than the movement of an ant on a black rock at a dark night.

7. Constantly remember Allah and death and attend to reciting the Qur'ān and sending greetings to the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.).

8. Acts of devotion are not merely

restricted to fasting and saying prayers, but it also includes deliberating on the signs of the magnificence of God and the world of creation.¹

1 *Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl 'an Āl al-Rasūl*, p. 516.

**The Fourteenth Infallible
Ḥaḍrat Ḥujjat b. al-Ḥasan
al-‘Askarī (A.S.)
The Twelfth Imam**

Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.), the Lord of the Time, was born on Thursday eve, Sha‘bān 15, 255 or 256/July 29, 869 or 870.

When about two centuries had elapsed since the Ḥijra of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.) and after the Imamate had been handed over to the tenth and eleventh Imams, i.e., Imam al-Hādī (A.S.) and Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.), little by little the rulers and tyrannical ruling establishments

began to be stirred by worries and apprehensions. And that was due to the traditions and reports quoting that, “A boy would be born to Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askari (A.S.) who would overthrow the rules of the despots and tyrants and would spread justice and equity on the ruins of oppression and dictatorship.” This has been frequently stated in traditions, especially from the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.), and heard by the office-holders.

At this time, i.e. the birth of Imam al-Mahdī (A.S), the Abbasid Mu‘taṣim, the eight Abbasid caliph, whose reign had started in 218/833, chose the newly built Sāmarrā as his capital.

This idea – that the advent of a savior would tremble the pillars of the ruling power of tyrants and therefore the birth of infants is to be prevented, and even the innocent mothers must be killed, and

midwives should be secretly sent to houses to identify the pregnant women – has some parallels in history. In the time of the Prophet Abraham (A.S.), Nimrūd did so. In the time of Moses (A.S.), Pharaoh followed the same path. But in each case, Allah's will worked against their plots. The tyrants always seek to put out Allah's Light, not knowing that Allah completes and accomplishes His Light, although the infidels and tyrants wish it otherwise.

As for Imam al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī (A.S.)'s newly born blessed baby, the historic story was amazingly and miraculously repeated, too.

The tenth Imam was under home arrest in Sāmarrā for twenty years, and after him, the eleventh Imam was also under control and constant watch by the ruling system there.

“When the time of the birth of this

bright star, Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.), drew near and his threat to the despots thus intensified, they sought to prevent the birth of the infant, or if he would have been born, to put an end to his life. That was why everything about al-Mahdī (A.S.)'s whereabouts, the time before and after his birth, were all hidden from people. Nobody would see him except some of the relatives, disciples, and close companions of Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.), who only saw him once in a while.”¹

Devoted Shī‘as Saw Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.)

In the early four or five years of al-Mahdī (A.S.)'s life, during which his noble father was still alive, the devoted Shī‘as had audience with him. Of these, forty had audience with the eleventh Imam (A.S.) and

1 *Khurshīd Maghrib*, pp.21-22.

requested him to show them the Ḥujjah and the next Imam after him, so that they would get to know him. The Imam did so, and they managed to see the boy, elegant and handsome as his father. Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.) said, “After me, this boy will be your Imam and my vicegerent among you. Obey him, and do not disperse from around his leadership, lest you perish and your religion be demolished. Also, let it be known that you will not see him from today on, until the lapse of a long time. Thus, obey his deputy, Uthmān b. Sa‘īd.”¹ And this way, the eleventh Imam, asserting explicitly the event of major occultation, introduced Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) to the group of Shī‘as, and proclaimed the continuation of the chain of Imamate.

One of the thinkers and philosophers of

1 Ibid, p. 24.

the third/ninth century, who has had audience with the Imam, is Abū Sahl Nowbakhtī.

Anyway, Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) lived in hiding until his noble father Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (A.S.) passed away on Rabi‘ al-Awwal 8, 260/January 1, 874. According to the Islamic tradition, on this day Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) was supposed to say funeral prayers for the sacred body of his father, so that the tyrannical Abbasid caliphs could not declare the Imamate as terminated, or the malevolent divert it from its main path; and to delegate the spiritual heritage, Islamic mission, and religious authority to others. Thus, people saw a boy like a shining moon, so elegantly came out of the Imam (A.S.)'s house, set back his uncle, Ja‘far Kadhdhāb, who was preparing to say prayers, and himself said prayers over the sacred body of his father.

Necessity of the Last Imam's Occultation

The appearing of Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) and his saying funeral prayers was widely spread around. Abbasid Mu'tamid's functionaries and agents assaulted Imam al-'Askarī (A.S.)'s house, but the more they searched the less they found. It was in such a situation that for the purpose of preserving the life of Ḥujja of the Almighty Allah, the occultation of the twelfth Imam (A.S.) took place, which was the only practical way left to preserve the life of "Allah's caliph on earth." That was because his presence among people would leave him open to being assassinated. Thus, divine decree destined his Holiness to be hidden from sight so that the enemies' hands would be away from him and the intermediary of Divine blessings for the people of the whole world would remain safe and sound. In this

way, although not being present, the guiding light of Allah's Ḥujja is directing his lovers and friends from behind the curtain of occultation. Meanwhile, this was a punishment for the Muslim community who had not only deviated from the straight path of *Wilāyat* and obedience to Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (A.S.) and his Infallible progeny, but also committed persecution and murder to them, which all in all led to the necessity of living a hidden life for the last Imam (A.S.).

There is much to be said in this respect, but due to being pressed by time and in order to make the reader briefly acquainted with the importance of the hidden Imam in the Shī'a worldview, we here relate what was stated by professor Henry Corbin in his meeting with 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī:

“To my opinion Shī'ism is the only school which has constantly maintained a

relation of Divine guidance between Allah and mankind and is continuously keeping *Wilāyat* revived and firmly rooted.... It is only the Shī‘ism that considers prophethood as sealed with the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (S.A.W.A.), but regards *Wilāyat*, i.e. the relation between guidance and completion, after his Holiness as existing forever. That is a relation emerged out of connection of human world to Divine world, due to religious missions before Moses (A.S.), in his era and the eras of Jesus (A.S.) and Muḥammad (S.A.W.A.), and after him through the *Wilāyat* of his successors (according to the Shī‘as), which has been and will be a living reality that can never be called superstitious and eliminated from the list of realities by scientific theories... Anyway, it is Shī‘ism which has actualized the continuation and permanence of this reality, and contends that this reality

will remain eternal and everlasting – between human world and Divine world.”¹ That is of course based on believing in the living Hidden Imam.

Countenance and Conduct of al-Mahdī (A.S.)

Shī‘a and Sunnī narrators have described al-Mahdī (A.S.)'s countenance and appearance as follows, “He has a swarthy complexion, arched eyebrows, attractive black large eyes, broad shoulders, slightly apart shining teeth, beautifully elongated nose, and high, bright forehead. His bone structure is firmly set and hard as a rock, and his fingers are large. His cheeks are not plump and his face is a little pale – due to

1 *Maktab-i Tashayyu’*; Almanac No. 2 (Ordibehesht 1339 Sh/1960), interview of Ustad ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī with Professor Henry Corbin about Shī‘ism, pp. 2021.

nocturnal vigilance – and there is a beauty spot on his right cheek. His muscles are twisted and firm; his hair hanging over his ears; he has a moderate, good-looking, and charming stature, and a face haloed in a dignified and glorified prudence. His countenance radiates with grandeur and magnificence of leadership, his look is penetrating, his uproar like an ocean and his outcry overwhelming.”¹

Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) possesses vast knowledge and wisdom and is endowed with the legacy of the prophets. He is the ninth Imam from among the progeny of Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) and is now hidden from people's eyes. He is the absolute *Walī*, the last of Saints, the legatee of the legatees, the universal Riser and the greatest

1 *Khurshīd Maghrib*, pp. 32, 34 (summarized and slightly changed).

revolutionary man. When he appears, he will lean against the Ka'ba and, holding the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.)'s standard in hand, will revive the faith in Allah and spread His ordinances all over the world. He is the one who will fill the world with justice and affection.

Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) is humble before Allah Almighty and His Majesty. Allah with His Grandeur is manifested in him and has permeated all through his being. Al-Mahdī (A.S.) is just, blessed, and purified. He will not neglect even one iota of truth. Allah will strengthen and glorify Islam at his hands. In his sovereignty no one will be troubled except in cases the Divine punishment needs to be executed.

Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) will restore the right of every rightful person and will give it back to him. Even if someone's right is between the clenched teeth of any invader

and usurper, he will pull it out and give it back to the possessor of the right. In his rule, the rule of the despots and the arrogant and political dominion of hypocrites and traitors will be abolished. Mecca – the *Qibla* of the Muslims – will become al-Mahdī (A.S.)'s revolutionary ruling center. His First comrades will gather there to join him. Some people will join him and others will fight him. And there will remain no possessors of power or holders of high office; there will run no more politics or governments worldwide, except the rightful rule and the just politics of the Holy Qur'ān. When al-Mahdī (A.S.) rises, no land will be left but reverberating the muezzins' call to prayer, “*I bear witness that there is no god but Allah*”, and, “*I bear witness that Muḥammad [S.A.W.] is Allah's Apostle.*”

In the time of al-Mahdī (A.S.)'s rule all

people will be taught wisdom and knowledge, to the extent that women at homes will judge with the Book of Allah and the tradition of the Prophet (S.A.W.A.). In that time the rational power of the masses will be concentrated. With Divine confirmation, al-Mahdī (A.S.) will perfect people's wisdom and generate sagacity in all.

Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) is a savior designated by Allah to defend people of the world. In his time all people will attain matchless abundance, welfare, and peace of mind. Even animals will multiply and will live in peace with other beasts. There will flow plenty of water in the rivers and a great deal of plants and grass will grow. Buried treasures and other minerals will be uncovered. In the time of al-Mahdī (A.S.) the fire of intrigues and riots will be extinguished; oppression, onslaught, and

plundering will be abandoned; and wars will be abolished.

There will remain no ruins in the world, except that al-Mahdī (A.S.) will reconstruct them. In his judgments, verdicts, and rule not a bit of injustice and oppression will be inflicted on anyone and no one will be offended by any means.¹ Al-Mahdī (A.S.) will bring justice into homes just as heat and cold enter homes. His righteousness will pervade the whole world.

Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.)'s Sword

Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.)'s sword is the “Sword of Allah” (*Sayfullāh*) and the “Sword of Allah, the Avenger.” It is a Divine Sword for avenging the tyrants and the arrogant. His sword will be revenging all criminals throughout the history. He will

¹ *Khurshīd Maghrib.*

kill the civilized murderer beasts, while showering the weak and the oppressed with mercy and blessing.

In his time, there will be no more room for preaching and delivering sermons. Prophets, Imams, and saints have already given people whatever advice they needed. Many of the people did not hear it and took their own false path and even killed the saints of Allah with poison. In the time of Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) however, they will all be taken revenge on.

Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) will allegedly kill such a great number of the oppressors that some will say: this man does not belong to the family of Muḥammad (S.A.W.A.). But he is in fact a descendant of Muḥammad (S.A.W.A.), that is, a descendant of righteousness, of justice, of infallibility, and of humanity.

One of the astonishing traditions

narrated about Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) is quoted from Imam al-Bāqir (A.S.) as saying, “Riding in roaring vehicles in which fire and light are devised, al-Mahdī (A.S.) will travel through skies, all skies.”

Also Imam al-Bāqir (A.S.) is quoted as saying that most skies are inhabitable. This Islamic astronomy which is adopted from the Infallible Imams (A.S.), however, has nothing to do with the Greek astronomy and Ptolemaic system of astronomy. In Greek astronomy more emphasis is placed on the limitedness of constellations, skies, and stars. In the Islamic astronomy, however, the great expanse and dimensions of the universe and innumerable stars, satellites and galaxies are talked about. Talking about such issues by the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.) and Imam al-Bāqir (A.S.) has not been possible except through relation with the Unseen World and

through Divine knowledge.¹

Short-time or Minor Occultation

Minor occultation lasted no longer than seventy years (from 260/873 to 329/940), during which special deputies used to take audience with Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) and deliver his replies to the letters and questions sent through them to the Holy Imam (A.S.). There have been four deputies who had the honor to take audience with Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.). They are known as “special deputies”:

1. The first special deputy of al-Mahdī (A.S.) is ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd al-Asadī. He is said to have died apparently after 260/873, and been buried in Baghdad. He was a trusted companion and disciple of the tenth and eleventh Imams (A.S.), and was

¹ See: *Khurshīd Maghrib*, p. 46 onward.

personally trained in the school of Imamate.

2. Muhammad b. 'Uthmān b. Sa'īd was Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.)'s second deputy and representative who died in 305/917 and was buried in Baghdad. His deputyship lasted about forty years.

3. Ḥusayn b. Rūḥ al-Nowbakhtī was the third representative who died in 326/937.

4. 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Samarī was the fourth and the last deputy of Imam Ḥujjat b. al-Ḥasan (A.S.) who died in 329/940 and was buried in Baghdad. His burial place is near the tomb of the great scholar and traditionist Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb Kulaynī.

These prominent, pious, and knowledgeable nobles, scholars, and clergymen were the mediators between the people and the occulted Imam (A.S.) and helped in solving their problems through Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) during his minor occultation.

The Long-term or Major Occultation and the General Deputyship

This period began after the minor occultation and is still going on. This time is for testing and measuring people's faith and their deeds.

For the time of general deputyship, the holy Imam (A.S.) has provided codes and rules, so that in each era a prominent person who is fully qualified in those codes and rules can be a deputy of the Imam (A.S.) and represent him in the community both in worldly and religious affairs.

Therefore, in no periods has there been dissociation between Imam (A.S.) and the people. Similarly, now, that is the period of general deputyship, a great scholar who is fully qualified in jurisprudence and knowledge of religion as well as in leadership is at the head of society and is

referred to by people as the possessor of legal guardianship (*wilāyat al-shar‘iyya*) and as a deputy of Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.). Thus, if in this period the Imam (A.S.)'s deputy does not view a ruling system as righteous, that system is tyrannical, for it has no relation with Allah, His religion, Imamate, and the Islamic legal supervision. As enjoined by the Lord of Time (may Allah hasten his reappearance), in order to preserve and lead Shī‘ism and the religion of Allah, there must always be a righteous scholar and a competent jurist at the head of the Shī‘a community. And when such a knowledgeable and superior scholar is placed at the head of the religious and Islamic community, he should be respected by other *mujtahids* and scholars, and be assisted by them to preserve Islamic unity and the integrity of religious power. In this way, the corrupt powers fail to topple it

down or to weaken it.

Although our separation from the savior of the oppressed and the deprived and the earnest seekers – i.e. Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) – is very painful, yet our belief is that Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) is alive by the power and under the protection of Allah, living hidden from the eyes of the people of the world. He will reappear once it is “fully expedient” and through an all-out revolution; a bloody and pervasive uprising will release the oppressed humanity from the claws of tyrants, and will bring back glory and power to monotheism and the Islamic doctrines.

Belief in Mahdism in the Past Periods

Belief in the End of Time and expecting the reappearance of a savior has been accepted as an undeniable principle by other religions such as Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and the claimants of

prophethood in general and the Holy Faith of Islam in particular.

**Belief in Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) is not
Confined to Shī'ism**

Belief in the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdī does not belong only to the Shī'as and Shī'ism, but many of the Sunnī schools (e.g., the Mālikite, the Hanafite, the Shāfi'ite, and the Ḥanbalite) believe in this principle and their scholars have mentioned it in their numerous books, knowing the traditions of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.) about al-Mahdī (A.S.) as among the widely transmitted and sound traditions.¹

The Holy Qur'ān and Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.)

There exist some verses in the Holy Qur'ān about Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) and the

¹ See: *Khurshīd Maghrib*, p. 76 onward.

advent of a savior as well as the ruling of the righteous and the triumph of the good-doers over the evil-doers. Following are some of such verses:

﴿Certainly We wrote in the Psalms, after the Torah, “Indeed My righteous servants shall inherit the earth.”﴾ (22:105)

Imam Muhammad al-Bāqir (A.S.) has stated that the “righteous servants” are meant to be the companions of Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) in the End of Time.

Also, ﴿And We desired to show favor to those who were abased in the land, and to make them imams, and to make them the heirs.﴾ (28:5)

﴿Indeed We sent it down on the Night of Ordainment. What will show you what is the Night of Ordainment? The Night of Ordainment is better than a thousand months. In it the angels and the Spirit descend, by the leave of their Lord, with

every command. It is peaceful until the rising of the dawn. ﴿97:1-5﴾

As clearly understood by the verses of *Sūrat al-Qadr*, there is a night in every year which is better than a thousand months in value and in excellence. What is also understood from the traditions in interpretation of this *Sūra* and of the opening verses of *Sūrat al-Dukhān* is that on the night of *al-Qadr* the angels present the Divine decrees (*muqaddarāt*) to the Absolute Guardian of time and surrender them to him. In the time of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.) the descent place of the angels at *al-Qadr* night was the threshold of Holy Prophet Muṣṭafā (S.A.W.A.).

As we conclude, through the Qur'ānic knowledge, that *al-Qadr* night does exist in every year, we should therefore notice that the "Lord of *al-Qadr* night" must also exist, otherwise on whom should the angels

descend? So, as the Holy Qur'ān will exist until the Resurrection Day and is the Ḥujja of Allah, so will the Lord of *al-Qadr* night who is the Ḥujja of Allah. The Ḥujja of Allah at this time is none but his Holiness the Lord of the Age (*Walī al-Aṣr*) (A.S.).

As Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) has stated, “The Imam is Allah's trustee on earth, Allah's Ḥujja among people, and Allah's Vicegerent in towns and lands...”

Khawāja Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, the well-known philosopher, theologian, and mathematician said:

“To the wise people it is clear that Divine grace is exclusive in the appointment of the Imam (A.S.), and the existence of the Imam (A.S.) is by itself a Divine Grace, and his domination over everything is another Grace. His occultation, however, is

dependent on us.”¹

The length of Imam (A.S.)'s Life

The Imam (A.S.)'s long life is by no means something impossible, comparing the long lives mentioned by the Qur'ān as well as the numerous long-aged people pointed out in history books. Rather, by reason and through scientific deliberation, it is by no means impossible to happen. Besides, in view of Divine power, this is by no means impossible. By the power of Allah, which prevails over everything, long age, like that of the Prophet Noah (A.S) and those longer or shorter than his are entirely feasible. To the All-Powerful and the All-Wise Allah all and everything, whether small or big, little or much, are equal. Thus, His perfect and mature wisdom will preserve his devotee in

1 *Khurshīd Maghrib*, p. 195.

perfect health for as long as He deems fit.

So, according to Divine wisdom, the twelfth Imam, the Awaited Imam al-Mahdī (A.S.) must be hidden from view, living a long life, keeping the secrets of the world, and be a mediator of Divine blessings for the world peoples, waiting to reappear whenever Allah wills. He will spread justice all over the world after it is filled with injustice and cruelty.

Awaiting the Reappearance of the Qā'im (A.S.)

It is totally false to suppose that awaiting the reappearance of the Hidden Imam (A.S.) means doing nothing, withdrawing from social reforming movements, only getting over one's own difficulties, and remaining indifferent to the trends in social and religious issues. On the contrary, awaiting means making attempt in search of

justice, broad-mindedness, and freedom; and rejecting injustice, falsehood, slavery, and vulgarity; as well as standing out against any untruthfulness, tyranny, and despotism.

The tireless struggles and bloody insurgencies by the Shī'as throughout the history bear witness to the fact that there is no place for compromise or laxity in this school. In relation to "awaiting", i.e., awaiting the prevalence of truth over falsehood, justice over injustice, knowledge over ignorance, and piety over sinfulness, the Shī'as are constantly prepared to participate in the puritan and sacred movements, carrying the blood stained torch of great struggles high above their heads in remembrance of the devoted Shī'a combatants throughout their bloody and epic history.

That the Shī'as as the awaiting ones are enjoined to constantly keep their weapons

prepared and to rise to their feet as they hear the name of the Qā'im of the household of Muḥammad (S.A.W.A.), reflects the preparedness and movement as mentioned above.

We wind up our discussion here with a part of writing by the well-known struggling Muslim scholar, Ayatollah Ṭāliqānī:

“... Drawing people's attention to the bright future and the rule of Ḥaqq and to promise them the full implementation of social justice, the establishment of the Islamic rule (*ḥukūma*), and the appearance of an eminent Godly Figure who is the founder and leader of that rule and government is among the doctrines of the founders of religions, and it is considered as a part of the creed in Shī'ism, which is the true school of Islam and the principal preserver of its spiritualities.... It has encouraged its followers to await such a day, and has even considered “awaiting the

reappearance” as a part of Divine worship just to keep true Muslims encouraged and help them not to lose heart and hope due to the oppression and injustice by egotistic office holders and rulers, domination of false rules, social vicissitudes and the rule of materialistic states, both eastern and western, and to keep the community always alert.

And it is this idea which still keeps the Muslims hopeful and active. Such pressures and plights from the beginning of the abject and mean dynasty of Umayyads, to the Crusades and Mongol invasion, as well as the stranglehold and wrongdoings by the colonizing states would have totally killed off any nation. However, such a religion whose true leaders enjoin you to rise to your feet whenever the very name Qā'im, the founder of the true Islamic state, is uttered, and to display your power and preparedness to obey all ordinances, will

never die out....”¹

1 *Khurshīd Maghrib*, p. 338.