

Sayyid Abd al-Azim al-Hasani, One of the Greatest Defenders (.of Ahlul Bayt (A.S

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I used to visit the grave of our master 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani occasionally and whenever good fortune permitted me, for he was one of the descendants of the eldest grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (s), al-Hasan bin 'Ali ('a). He was a scion of that lofty and blessed tree (of Prophethood), whose branches are spread out in Iran , ' Iraq , Syria , Yemen and other places. However, after I had delved thoroughly into his biography and read the words and statements of the biographers in his favour, as well as the descriptions of honour and respect with which Sahib bin 'Abbad described him in a biographical treatise, which he devoted to his life, I was overcome with shame and realised my shortcomings and negligence with respect to him. This is because Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani was one of the defenders of the true beliefs by in matters of the (مرجع) 'his speech and conduct and he was one of the 'sources of reference faith. This is evidenced by the directive of the tenth Imam to his Shi'ites to turn to him (i.e. Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani) in respect of religious matters, which appeared ambiguous .and complex to them. The text of that directive will be presented soon

His Lineage

The Imami scholar and biographer Shaykh al-Najashi (d 450 AH/1058 AD) has recorded his lineage at the beginning of his biography as: 'Abd al-'Azim bin 'Abdullah bin 'Ali bin al-Hasan bin Zayd bin al-Hasan bin 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) and this is his correct lineage. However, he then writes at the end of the biography: 'He (i.e. 'Abd al-'Azim) died and when he was undressed so that the funeral bath could be given to him, a small piece of paper was found in one of his pockets in which was written his lineage, as follows: "I am Abu al-Qasim 'Abd al-'Azim bin 'Abdillah bin 'Ali bin al-Hasan bin Zayd bin 'Ali bin al-Hasan bin 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a)." But the first rendering of his lineage is correct for Imam al-Hasan's progeny continued through the agency of two sons, who were:

- 1) Zayd bin al-Hasan, and
- 2) Al-Hasan al-Muthanna '.

Thus it is apparent that Imam al-Hasan ('a) did not have a son by the name of 'Ali through whom he may have had grandchildren (as the second version of Sayyid 'Abd al- 'Azim's lineage above implies). Therefore on the basis of the above, Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim was separated from

Imam al-Hasan ('a) by four generations only (as implied by the first version of his lineage).

,As a poet says, as if placing these words in the mouth of Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim

ليس ما بيني و بين المجتبي غيرعنين وحاء ثم زاي

and (ع) There is not between myself and al-Mujtaba ' (i.e. Imam al-Hasan ('a)) Save two 'ayns

.((ج and then a zay , (حاء) ' a Ha

Did he meet Imam Reza ('a)?

The Imami jurist, traditionist and biographer Shaykh al-Tusi (d 460 AH/1067 AD) has considered him in his biographical work (Rijal) to be from the companions of the Imams al-Hadi and al-'Askari ('a), whilst Sayyid al-Tafrishi, Mirza ' al-Astarabadi and al-Quhpa 'i have considered him among the companions of Imam al-Jawad ('a).

There is no doubt that he was from the companions of the Imams al-Jawad and al-Hadi ('a), on the basis of the many traditions which he transmits from them, but as for his being from the companions of Imam al-'Askari ('a) during the period of his Imamate, that is a matter that needs careful scrutiny. This is because Imam al-Hadi died in 254 AH/867 AD and Imam al-'Askari undertook the responsibilities of the Imamate after the death of his father in that year in the month of Rajab, whilst Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim died in the year 252 AH/866 AD. Thus he did know the person of the Imam al-'Askari during the Imamate of his father but due to the fact that he died well before the tenth Imam, would negate the possibility of him being from the companions of the eleventh Imam.

The question now is: Did he meet Imam al-Ridha' ('a) or not? Now it may be inferred that he did so, on the basis of the tradition, which he transmits from Hisham bin al-Hakam who died in 199 AH/814 AD (and it is said, perhaps even earlier).

This tradition is as follows: Al-Kulayni reports from Ahmad, who reports from 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani, from Hisham bin al-Hakam, from Abu 'Abdillah al-Sadiq ('a) who said

هذا صراط علي مستقيم

This is the path of 'Ali, which is straight."

Therefore if Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani's age at the time of receiving this report was twenty years, then he would be from those who were born around 180 AH/796 AD, and Imam al-Ridha' ('a) died in 203 AH/818 AD, which may suggest that he did meet the eighth Imam. All this would stand true if this chain were authentic and correct.

However the chain itself provides a clue to our problem, which is: that it is known that Sayyid

'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani narrates a lot from those who died in the second and third decades of the third century hijri, while Hisham died before 200 hijri (815 AD) and so this indicates a missing link between the Sayyid and Hisham. Add to the above, the fact that the Sayyid narrates a lot from Imam al-Ridha' ('a) via intermediaries. All of this would combine to suggest that he did not meet the eighth Imam after all.

Perhaps it may be inferred that he met Imam al-Ridha' ('a) on the basis of a tradition which Shaykh al-Mufid (d 413 AH/1022 AD) records in his Kitab al-Ikhtisas where he writes: 'it is narrated from Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani, from Abu al-Hasan al-Ridha' ('a) that he said: "O 'Abd al-'Azim, convey my greetings to my friends and tell them not to let Satan have recourse to their souls.

Command them to be truthful in their speech and to return faithfully what is entrusted to them. Order them to maintain silence and leave off wrangling and disputations regarding that which does not concern them and to embark upon visiting each other for that is most beloved to me...They must not engage in maligning each other for I have vowed that one who does that and vexes a friend of mine, then I shall call upon Allah to punish him in this world with a severe punishment and he will be from the losers in the hereafter.

And inform them that Allah has forgiven and pardoned the evil deeds of the good-doers from among them except one who associates another with Allah or hurts a friend from my friends or harbours ill-will towards him, for Allah will not forgive him till he desists from it, if he desists. However if he does not, then the spirit of faith will be removed from his heart and he will secede from my friendship. Nor will he have any luck in this world and I seek refuge in Allah from that!"

But there seems to have occurred a mistake in the chain of this tradition, for the Imam identified by the epithet 'Abu al-Hasan' is Abu al-Hasan the third (i.e. the tenth Imam al-Hadi) rather than Abu al-Hasan the second (i.e. the eighth Imam al-Ridha') while al-Mufid erroneously wrote 'al-Ridha' in place of 'al-Hadi' ('a). The evidence for this claim is that Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim would have been a young teenager throughout the life of al-Ridha' ('a) and it would have hardly been fitting for him to have been the carrier of the Imam's message to his Shi'ites and friends, indeed it would not be fitting except for one advanced in age and well-known among men for his love and loyalty

His Teachers and Authorities

A fleeting glance at the traditions transmitted by Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani tells us firstly of his close associations with the two Imams Muhammad bin 'Ali al-Jawad and 'Ali al-Hadi ('a) and secondly, of his close links with the prominent authorities of the Hadith. In what

follows we shall seek to present the names of the authorities from whom he narrated traditions as culled from the four major books of traditions and other books of tradition compilations. His authorities number thirty-three and the following are their names along with the sources where the recorded traditions transmitted by Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani on their authority occur.

- 1) 'Ali bin Asbat (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 118).
- 2) 'Ali bin Ja'far (Masa'il 'Ali bin Ja'far, pg 343).
- 3) Al-Husayn bin Miyah (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 424).
- 4) Bakkar (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 424).
- 5) Ibn Udhayna (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 424).
- 6) Muhammad bin al-Fudhayl (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 423).
- 7) Ibrahim bin Abi Mahmud ('Uyun akhbar al-Ridha' volume: 2, pg 113).
- 8) Yahya bin Salim (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 423).
- 9) Musa bin Muhammad (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 220).
- 10) Muhammad bin Abi 'Umayr (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 218).
- 11) Musa bin Muhammad al-'Ijli (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 207).
- 12) Hisham bin al-Hakam (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 424). His mention has been made previously.
- 13) His father, 'Abdullah bin 'Ali (al-'Amali of Shaykh Tusi, pg 652).
- 14) Al-Hasan bin Mahbub (Ma'ani al-akhbar, pg 339).
- 15) His grandfather, 'Ali bin al-Hasan (Kamal al-Din, pg 312, chapter 28, hadith number 3).
- 16) Malik bin 'Amir (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 377).
- 17) Mahmud bin Abi al-Bilad ('Uyun akhbar al-Ridha' volume: 1, pg 27).
- 18) Al-Hasan bin al-Husayn ('Ilal al-Shara'i volume: 2, pg 599).
- 19) Sulayman bin Ja'far al-Ja'fari (al-'Amali of Shaykh al-Saduq, pg 85).
- 20) Muhammad bin 'Amr bin Yazid ('Ilal al-Shara'i volume: 2, pg 598).
- 21) Harb ('Ilal al-Shara'i volume: 2, pg 599).
- 22) Sulayman bin Sha'ban ('Ilal al-Shara'i volume: 2, pg 598).
- 23) Al-Hasan bin al-Husayn al-'Irni (al-Kafi volume: 2, pg 369, Kamil al-Ziyarat, pg 163 where his name occurs as al-'Umariy, which seems to be an apparent case of corruption).
- 24) Al-Husayn bin 'Ali (al-Kafi volume: 3, pg 563).
- 25) Ibrahim bin Hashim ('Uyun akhbar al-Ridha' volume: 1, pg 286).
- 26) Al-Hasan bin al-Hakam al-Nakha'i (Kamil al-Ziyarat, pg 256).
- 27) Al-Hasan bin 'Abdallah bin Yunus bin Dhibyan ('Ilal al-Shara'i volume: 1, pg 178).
- 28) Sulayman bin Hafs al-Marwazi ('Uyun akhbar al-Ridha' volume: 2, pg 22).
- 29) Safwan bin Yahya (Kamal al-Din wa Tamam al-Ni'ma, pg 319).

- 30) Muhammad bin 'Ali bin Muhammad bin Kathir (al-TaHsin of Ibn O~awus, pg 576).
 - 31) 'Abd al-Salam bin Salih al-Harawi ('Uyun akhbar al-Ridha' volume: 1, pg 188).
 - 32) Ishaq al-Nasih, the client of Ja'far (Bihar al-Anwar volume: 57, pg 214).
 - 33) Ahmad bin 'Isa al-'Alawi (Bihar al-Anwar volume: 75, pg 453).
- .Thus these were his authorities and teachers

Those Who Narrated and Transmitted from him

Among those who narrated from him, are identified a group of great and erstwhile scholars of hadith such as al-Barqi, Ibrahim bin Hisham, Sahl bin Ziyad al-Adami and others, who were well-known for their proficiency in the narration of traditions and for being firmly established in this field. The following are their names and the sources where their narrations, transmitted on Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim's authority occur.

- 1) Sahl bin Ziyad al-Adami who died in 255 AH/869 AD (al-Faqih volume: 3, hadith number 343).
- 2) Ahmad bin Mihran (al-Kafi volume: 1, pg 118).
- 3) Ahmad bin Abi 'Abdillah al-Barqi, the compiler of al-Mahasin, who died in 274 AH/887 AD (Masa'il 'Ali bin Ja'far, pg 343).
- 4) 'Abdullah bin Musa al-Ruyani, Abu Turab (al-'Amali of Shaykh Tusi, pg 589).
- 5) Ibrahim bin 'Ali (Ma'ani al-akhbar, pg 339).
- 6) Muhammad bin Faydh al-'Ijli, Abu Salih (al-'Amali of Shaykh al- Tusi, pg 136).
- 7) Al-Husayn bin Ibrahim al-'Alawi al-Nasibi (Misbahul Mutahajjid, volume: 2 and al-'Amali of Shaykh Tusi, pg 602).
- 8) Sahl bin Sa'd (Fadha'il al-Ash-hur al-Thalatha of Shaykh al-Saduq, pg 63).
- 9) Al-Nawfali (al-Kafi volume: 2, pg 661).
- 10) Sahl bin Jamhur (al-Kafi volume: 3, pg 669).
- 11) Ahmad bin al-Hasan (al-Ikhtisas, pg 96).
- 12) 'Abdullah bin Muhammad al-'Ijli (al-'Amali of Shaykh al-Saduq, pg 388).
- 13) Bakr bin Salih al-Dhabbi (Mukhtasar Basa'ir al-Darajat, pg 94).
- 14) Hamza bin Qasim al-'Alawi (al-'Amali of Shaykh al-Mufid, pg 319).
- 15) Muhammad al-'Alawi al-'Aridhi (Bihar al-Anwar, volume: 75, pg 453).
- 16) 'Abdullah bin al-Husayn al-'Alawi (Bihar al-Anwar, volume: 60, pg 236).

The Term 'Musnad' and What it Means

The term 'musnad' is designated in opposition to the term 'mursal'. Thus if a tradition is transmitted by means of a complete chain which stretches right up to an infallible, then it is

designated 'musnad', and if not, then it is called 'mursal'. Al-Sakkuni reports from Abu 'Abdillah al-Sadiq ('a) who said: 'Amir al-Mu 'minin ('a) said: "When you narrate a report then (be sure to) name the person who reported it to you, for if that (report) was truthful, then it will be (counted) in your favour, and if it was false, then it will be (counted) against him".

The term 'musnad' is also in contrast to the term 'musannaf'. In this case the two terms are designations of two types of tradition compilations. The difference between the two is that the recording of traditions in the latter is according to topical chapters (containing the reported traditions of different narrators); while in the former it is according to the narrator at which the chain terminates. Thus the 'Musnad of 'Abdullah bin 'Abbass' is an expression meaning; a compilation of traditions on different topics and subjects, all the chains of which are connected to him and terminate at him.

Fu 'ad Sezgin in his work *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums* volume: 1, pg 227, writes, 'the traditionists began the recording of the traditions in the style of the 'musnad' at the close of the second century hijri'. This is correct as far as the 'musnad' literature of the Sunnis is concerned. As for the Shi'ites, they preceded them in this field, for the four hundred Usul works were all in the style of the 'musnad'.

Thus the 'Musnad of Zurara' is an expression denoting a hadith compilation of all that Zurara reported in different fields, and the Shi'ites began to compile traditions in this style beginning in the era of Imam al-Baqir ('a) (which would fall in the last quarter of the first century and into the beginning of the second century hijri, which was the duration of his imamate). However, unfortunately time took its toll on the 'musnad' literature of the Shi'ites, especially after the first and second phases of the 'Jami' compilations when the Shi'ites thought them dispensable and stopped taking care of them.

The Number of his Reported Transmissions

Scholars differ with respect to the number of traditions he has transmitted. Thus Shaykh Isma'il al-Kazari (d 1136 AH/1723 AD) has transmitted sixty traditions on his authority in his book 'Jannat al-Na'im', while Shaykh Muhammad Baqir al-Kajuri (d 1313 AH/1895 AD) has transmitted seventy-five traditions on his authority in his book 'Rawhun wa Rayhan'. Muhammad bin Ibrahim al-Kalbasiy (d 1262 AH/1842 AD) has narrated forty traditions on his authority in his book 'Al-Tadhkira al-'Azima' and al-Muhaqqiq al-Shaykh 'Azizullah al-'Ataradi has transmitted seventy eight traditions from him in his book 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani, Hayatuhu wa Musnaduhu'.

Recently, a work by the title of 'Musnad HaA~rat 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani (as)' was published.

This work was prepared by Shaykh al-'Ataradi and 'Ali Ridha' al-Hazari who verified one hundred and twenty traditions from him. This work was published and disseminated by the organizers of the conference held in memory of Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani in the suburb of Ray of the city of Tehran in 2003 AD. This last figure is perhaps the utmost one can verify in these days by the aid of computer assisted software and if anything has missed their attention

then perhaps it is unimportant.

The foregoing information may raise a question, which is: a man as learned as the Sayyid, who met two Imams, who transmitted from thirty-three personalities and from whom sixteen traditionists reported in turn should have had a far greater number of transmitted traditions to his credit than the number mentioned above. Thus what is the reason for the small number of

his transmitted traditions?

Two possible answers may be suggested here:

1) In those times many resources and books of the Shi'ites were lost due to destruction, sabotage, burning and other destructive factors. This is because the Shi'ites were living in an environment of dissimulation and fear, except in certain limited areas where they enjoyed some relative freedom and ease. An apt example would be the jurist Muhammad bin Abi 'Umayr, who

narrates from four hundred and fourteen authorities.

His sister hid his books by burying them so that they may not be confiscated. Shaykh al-Najashi writes: 'His sister buried his books when he was imprisoned for four years and while she was in hiding. As a result his books were destroyed. It is also said that she left them in a room and rainwater destroyed them! So he began to transmit from memory and from what was in the possession of the people of his previously transmitted reports. This is the reason why

Shi'ite scholars accept his 'mursal' transmissions. And he had written many books.'

2) That Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani was a man pursued by the tyrannical authorities, which made him flee and seek refuge in Ray. There he lived in a cellar far from the sight of the people and perhaps this state of his of being a refugee led to so many years of his life being wasted!

Therefore, it was in such a severe environment that he narrated traditions to any seeker interested in traditions and knowledge.

Thus we have al-Najashi relating the following from Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani's student Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Khalid al-Barqi who said: 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani arrived in Ray whilst fleeing from the authorities and there he lived in a cellar in the house of a Shi'ite man whose house was located in a side street known as the 'lane of the Muwali'. He used to

worship Allah in that cellar, fasting during the daytime and remaining awake during the night.

He would come out from his hiding place secretly and visit the grave that is (presently)

opposite his and between the two graves is a road. He maintained that the grave was that of a man from the children of Imam Musa bin Ja'far ('a). He continued to stay in that cellar and gradually news of his whereabouts spread among the Shi'ites till many of them knew of him. Subsequently, one of the Shi'ites saw the Prophet (s) in his dream who told him that a man from his progeny would be borne away from the 'lane of the Muwali' and buried near an apple tree in the garden of (a certain) 'Abd al-Jabbar bin 'Abd al-Wahhab, and the Prophet pointed out the place to him.

The man then purchased the garden from its owner and when the owner asked him as to why he was interested in the place, he replied by narrating the contents of the dream. He then endowed the spot near the tree as well as the entire garden to Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani and the Shi'ites began to bury their dead there too. Later, Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani fell sick and finally passed away. When he was undressed so that he could be given the funeral bath, a piece of paper was found on his body, which mentioned his genealogy as; "I am Abu al-Qasim 'Abd al-Azim bin 'Abdillah bin 'Ali bin al-Hasan bin Zayd (bin 'Ali) bin al-Hasan bin 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a)."

.Some biographers then mention his books after this narration

His Scholarly Heritage

The biographers of Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim mention two books, which are attributed to him. 1) Khutab Amir al-Mu'minin ('a). Al-Najashi mentions this work in his biographical entry for Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim, number 651. 2) Al-Yawm wa al-Layla. Sahib bin 'Abbad has mentioned this work in a special treatise in which he documents Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim's biography. Excerpts from this treatise are presented below. The author of al-Dhari'ah attributes this book to him citing from the Rijal of al-Najashi. However we did not find this attribution there!

His Position near the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt ('a)

His station near the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt ('a) comes to light in the course of their statements in his favor. Thus he was a brilliant traditionist, a source of reference in matters of the faith, trustworthy in matters of religion and here we mention some of their statements. Shaykh al-Saduq (d 381 AH/991 AD) reports from Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim that he said: 'I visited my master 'Ali bin Muhammad bin 'Ali bin Musa bin Ja'far bin Muhammad bin 'Ali bin Husayn bin 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a). When he caught sight of me, he exclaimed: "Welcome O Abu al-Qasim, you are indeed our true friend!"

So I said: "O son of the Messenger (s), I wish to present to you my beliefs. If they are correct then I will affirm and adhere to them till I meet Allah, Great and Exalted". So the Imam said: "Then present them O Abu al-Qasim".

So I said: "I maintain that Allah, Blessed and Exalted is one. There is nothing like Him. He is beyond the two limits, the limit of negation and annulment (of attributes) and the limit of anthropomorphism. And that He has neither a body nor a form, nor dimension nor a material core. Rather He is the One who creates bodies and gives forms, the Creator of dimensions and matter. Lord of everything and its Possessor, Creator and Originator. And (I maintain) that Muhammad was His servant, His Messenger and the Seal of the Prophets. There is no prophet after him till the Day of Judgement. And (I maintain) that the Imam, the Caliph and the Guardian of the affair (of guidance) after him was Amir al-Mu 'minin 'Ali bin Abi Talib, and then al-Hasan, then al-Husayn, then 'Ali bin al-Husayn, then Muhammad bin 'Ali, then Ja'far bin Muhammad, then Musa bin Ja'far, then 'Ali bin Musa, then Muhammad bin 'Ali and thereafter, you my master".

So the Imam said: "And after me will be my son al-Hasan. However, I wonder how the people will react with regards to his successor" I asked: "Why do you say that, O master?" He replied, "Because none will see his person, nor will it be permissible to mention his name till he appears, when he will fill the earth with justice and equity as it was previously filled with oppression and tyranny."

So I responded: "I accept (what you have informed me) and I maintain that their friend is the friend of Allah, their enemy is the enemy of Allah. Obedience to them is obedience to Allah; disobedience to them is disobedience to Allah. I maintain that the (Prophet's) night journey did occur, that questioning in the grave will happen, that heaven and hell exist, that accounting of deeds will occur and that the Hour will undoubtedly arrive when Allah will resurrect those in the graves.

I further maintain that the (religious) obligations after al-Wilaya (i.e. love and adherence to the Ahlul Bayt) are: Prayers, the zakat levy, fasting, pilgrimage to Mecca , striving (in the path of Allah), commanding good and discouraging evil."

On hearing this, 'Ali bin Muhammad ('a) said: "O Abu al-Qasim, what you have mentioned is, by Allah, the religion which Allah has chosen for His servants and one with which he is satisfied. So adhere to it, may Allah cause you to stay steadfast on the established faith, in this world and in the hereafter."

Ibn Qawlawayhi narrates from 'Ali bin al-Husayn bin Musa bin Babwayhi, who narrates from Muhammad bin Yahya al-Attar, who narrates from some of the natives of Ray, (one of whom said): 'I visited Abu al-Hasan al-'Askari ('a). He asked me: "Where were you?" I replied: "I was visiting the grave of al-Husayn bin 'Ali ('a)." He said: "However, if you had visited the grave of 'Abd al-'Azim which is situated near you, then your status would have been similar to the one

who visited al-Husayn ('a)."

Perhaps (the authenticity of) this tradition may be disputed because of the unknown identity of the narrator transmitting the report from the Imam. But a response in its defence may be made by maintaining that Muhammad bin Yahya al-Attar who was the authority of Shaykh al-Kulayni (d 329 AH/940 AD) would not rely in such an important matter on the statement of a person whom he did not know or had any confidence in. Moreover, being a native of Qum himself, he would know the Shi'ites of Ray.

Perhaps another question may be posed here, which is: How can a pilgrimage to the grave of Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim be of equal stature to the pilgrimage to al-Husayn bin 'Ali ('a)? A possible response to this may be that the Imam uttered this statement in harsh circumstances and intended to bring to light the nature of the reign of Mutawakkil and his cohorts who used to tyrannise and murder the Shi'ites on the basis of any pretext.

Mutawakkil reigned from 234 AH/848 AD till the year 247 AH/861 AD when he was murdered by his son. The reign of his son did not last long either as the Caliphate was taken over by one claimant after another such as al-Musta'in (r. 248 AH/862 AD – 252 AH/866 AD) then al-Mu'tazz Billah famously known for his enmity to the Ahlul Bayt (deposed in 255 AH/869 AD), then al-Muhtadi (r. 255 AH/869 AD – 256 AH /870 AD) and then al-Mu'tamad (r. 256 AH/870 AD – 279 AH/892 AD).

The prevailing policy in the ruling court was that of deception, enmity and oppression against the 'Alids and the Shi'ites. Thus in such circumstances, the Imam may have advised the Shi'ites to content themselves by visiting the grave of Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim in order to protect their lives and belongings from destruction and loss. Nevertheless, this does not mean that there is a reduction in the status of al-Husayn ('a) or an exaggeration in the status of Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim.

Further, it is clear from what Sahib bin 'Abbad narrates, that Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim was a 'source of reference' in matters of the faith and an interpreter of Islamic law for the Shi'ites in regard to issues which seemed ambiguous and unclear to them. Thus Abu Turab al-Ruyani says: 'I visited 'Ali bin Muhammad ('a) in Samarra ' and I asked him some questions relating to the permissible and impermissible. He answered all of them. When I was bidding him farewell, he said: "O Hammad, if something regarding religion confuses or confounds you then refer it to 'Abd al-'Azim, and convey to him my regards."

This report expresses his position as a person who possessed the capability of ijtihad similar to Zurara bin A'yan, Muhammad bin Muslim, Yunus bin 'Abd al-Rahman and Zakariyya bin Adam whom Imam al-Ridha' ('a) praised in response to one who asked him (something) by

.saying: 'Refer to Zakariyya bin Adam, (who is) trustworthy in worldly and religious affairs

His Position Near The Scholars

Many biographers have mentioned sterling statements in his favour. We have mentioned some of them and there is no need to repeat them again. And from the various evidences proving his greatness is that the foremost expert in the discipline of the Hadith, Muhammad bin 'Ali bin Babwayhi al-Saduq compiled a special book containing reports of Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim. He mentions this in his list of books where he registers that he has a comprehensive book of reports of Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim bin 'Abdullah al-Hasani.

Perhaps this book discussed his life and various events pertaining to it, however it is unfortunate that this book has not reached us. Indeed, Sahib bin 'Abbad has written a biographical treatise about our master Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim. This treatise was discovered by al-Muhaddith al-Nuri (d 1320 AH/ 1902 AD) who has quoted it in its entirety in the index of his work (Mustadrak Wasa'il al-Shi'ite), in the context of the biography of Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim.

There he writes as follows: 'As for 'Abd al-'Azim, he was one of the great personalities from the progeny of the Prophet. We shall restrict ourselves to mentioning about his life by quoting the treatise of Sahib bin 'Abbad. This treatise has come down to us in the writing of one of the members of the family of Babwayhi.

The date of the treatise is 516 hijri (1122 AD) and it says: Sahib bin 'Abbad said: "I was asked about the genealogy of 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani who is buried near the tree and who is the owner of that place too (may Allah sanctify his soul) and about his state and beliefs and the level of his knowledge and piety. Hence, here I mention all that in brief and with Allah lies success.

He is Abu al-Qasim, 'Abd al-Azim bin 'Abdillah bin 'Ali bin al-Hasan bin Zayd bin al-Hasan bin 'Ali bin Abi Talib (may the blessings of Allah be upon him and his forefathers).

He was a pious and religious man, a devout worshipper; reliable, trustworthy and truthful. He was learned in matters of the faith and a proponent of the belief in the transcendence of God and His Justice as well as prolific in hadith transmission. He narrated from Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin 'Ali bin Musa and from his son Abu al-Hasan, the one who resided in al-'Askar. There are letters from them both addressed to him. He also narrates from a group of the companions of Musa bin Ja'far and 'Ali bin Musa ('a). He had a book by the title "Kitab Yawm wa al-Layla."

As for those who narrated from him are such as; Ahmad bin Abi Abdillah al-Barqi and Abu Turab al-Ruyani. Fearing for his life, he wandered about in the cities and towns till he arrived at Ray. There he stayed in a cellar in the house of a Shi'ite man in a lane known as the 'lane of the

Muwali'. He used to worship Allah in that cellar, fasting during the days and spending the nights standing in prayer. He would come out at night in secret and visit the grave that is now opposite his grave and between the two graves runs a road. He used to say that the grave was of a man from the sons of Imam Musa bin Ja'far ('a). News of his identity soon spread among the Shi'ites till many knew of him. Subsequently a man from the Shi'ites saw the Prophet (s) in his dream who informed him that: "a man from my progeny will be carried away tomorrow from the 'lane of the Muwali' and be buried near an apple tree in the garden of (a certain) 'Abd al-Jabbar bin 'Abd al-Wahhab". Thus this man went to the owner of the garden in order to purchase the tree. The owner of the garden had also seen the dream and so he endowed the place where the tree was located along with the entire garden to the noble people and the Shi'ites began burying their dead there. Sometime later, 'Abd al-Azim fell sick and passed away. He was then carried .to and buried where his grave now lies

What is Narrated from him Regarding Monotheism

'Abdullah bin Musa al-Ruyani narrates from Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim from Ibrahim bin Abi Mahmud who said: 'I asked al-Ridha' ('a), "What is your opinion about the tradition which :people narrate that

إن الله ينزل إلى السماء الدنيا

Allah descends to the lower heaven?"

He replied, "May Allah curse those who displace statements from their correct positions. By :Allah! The Prophet (s) never said that. Rather what he said was

إن الله عز وجل ينزل ملكا إلى السماء الدنيا ليلة الجمعة فينادي هل من سائل فأعطيه ؟

Allah, Glorified and Exalted, sends an angel to the lower heaven on Thursday night who calls' out, "is there anyone who seeks so that I may grant him?" In this manner, the Imam corrected and explained this prophetic tradition. And it is narrated through the same chain that Imam al-:Ridha' ('a) said regarding the (Qur 'anic) verse

وجوه يومئذ ناضرة ، الى ربها ناظرة

On that day (i.e. the Day of Judgement) faces will be radiant, looking towards their Lord. The (Imam said: (It means

*Faces (on that day) will be radiant, expectantly looking forward to the rewards of the Lord"
Mighty and Glorified."*

What is Narrated from him Regarding The Justice Of God 'Ali bin al-Husayn al-Baghdadi narrates from Ahmad bin Abi 'Abdillah al-Barqi from 'Abd al-Azim al-Hasani from 'Ali bin Muhammad al-Naqi ('a) from his father Muhammad bin 'Ali al-Hadi ('a), from his father 'Ali bin Musa al-Ridha' ('a), who said: 'One day as Abu Hanifa (d 150 AH/767 AD) was leaving from a meeting with Imam al-Sadiq ('a) (d 148 AH/765 AD), he met Musa bin Ja'far ('a) and asked him: "O young man, who is responsible for evil acts?"

He (Musa) replied: "There are only three possibilities regarding this issue. Either the evil acts ensue from Allah and not from the human being, in which case it would not behove the Munificent (i.e. Allah) to punish His servant for what he was not responsible. Or that both God and the human being are equally responsible for the evil acts, however then it would not behove a stronger partner to punish the weaker partner.

The third possibility would be that the evil acts ensue solely from the human being and he alone is responsible for it, in which case if Allah was to punish him then that would be due to the human being's fault and if Allah were to forgive him then that would be due to His (Allah's) magnanimity and generosity."

'Abdullah bin Musa narrates from 'Abd al-Azim al-Hasani, from Ibrahim bin Abi Mahmud who said that Imam al-Ridha' ('a) said: 'Eight things never occur save by means of the destiny and decree of Allah. They are: sleep and wakefulness, strength and weakness, health and sickness, life and death. May Allah confirm us with steadfastness and place us among the friends of Muhammad and his progeny, and may the blessings of Allah be upon our Master and His (i.e. 'Allah's) Prophet, Muhammad and his progeny all together

What is Narrated from him Regarding The Great Sins

Sayyid 'Abd al-Azim al-Hasani narrates from the ninth Imam Abu Ja'far ('a), who narrates from his father al-Ridha' ('a) that he said: 'I heard my father Musa bin Ja'far ('a) say that: 'Amr bin 'Ubayd al-Basri visited Abu 'Abdillah al-Sadiq ('a). After he had greeted him, he sat down and recited the following verse of the Qur'an "And those who shun the great sins and indecencies..." He then remained silent. So Abu 'Abdillah al-Sadiq ('a) said 'Why did you become quiet?' He replied 'I would like to know the great sins from the Book of God, the Exalted'. Al-Sadiq ('a) replied 'yes indeed'.

The Imam began to speak: 'the greatest sin is to associate something with Allah. Allah,

Glorified and Exalted says "Surely Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him..." And He also says "Surely whoever associates (others) with Allah, then Allah has forbidden to him the garden, and his abode is the fire; and there shall be no helpers for the unjust." After that is the sin of hopelessness and despair from the mercy of Allah, for Allah says, "Surely none despairs of Allah's mercy except the unbelieving people."

Next in evil consequence is the sin of feeling secure from the punishment and stratagem of Allah, for Allah says "But none feels secure from Allah's plan except the people who shall perish".

Thereafter is the sin of being ungrateful and disobedient to the parents. This is because Allah has described the one who is disobedient to his parents as insolent, oppressive and wretched. Allah reports the following words of Jesus in the Qur'an: "And He has made me dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me insolent, unblessed."

Then comes the sin of murdering a believer, which Allah has prohibited, except that it be in the cause of justice, for Allah says "And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his punishment is hell; he shall abide in it for eternity..." Thereafter is the sin of slandering chaste, believing women for Allah, Glorified and Exalted says: 'Those who slander honourable but unwary believing women are rejected by God, in this life and in the next.'

Then is the sin of usurping the property of orphans, for Allah the Glorified says: 'Those who consume the property of orphans unjustly are actually swallowing fire into their own bellies: they will burn in the blazing fire.' Deserting the battlefield is also a great sin, for Allah, the Glorified, says: 'Believers, when you meet the disbelievers in battle, never turn your backs on them: if anyone does so on such a day – unless manoeuvring to fight or to join a fighting group – he incurs the wrath of God and Hell will be his home, a wretched destination.'

Then is the sin of consuming interest. This is because Allah, the Most High says: 'But those who take usury will rise up on the Day of Judgment like someone tormented by Satan's touch.' And Allah says: 'You who believe, beware of God: give up any outstanding dues from usury, if you are true believers. If you do not, then be warned of war from God and His Messenger.'

Then comes the sin of indulging in magic as Allah, the Mighty the Majestic says: 'They (the disbelievers) taught people witchcraft ... they learned what harmed them, not what benefited them, knowing full well that whoever gained this knowledge would lose any share in the hereafter.' Thereafter there is the sin of committing adultery, for Allah, the Mighty the Majestic says: '... nor commit adultery, for whoever does this will face the penalties; their torment will be doubled on the Day of Judgment and they will remain in torment, disgraced, except those who repent, believe, and do good deeds ...'

Perjury or swearing falsely is also a great sin, for Allah, the Mighty the Majestic says: 'But those who sell out God's covenant and their own oaths for a small price will have no share in the life to come.' Next is the sin of fraud and untrustworthiness. Allah, the Most High says:

'Anyone who fraudulently takes something will carry it with him on the day of Judgment.'

Then is the sin of prohibiting the payment of the obligatory zakat. Allah, the Mighty the Majestic says: 'On the day when it (their wealth) is heated up in hell's fire and used to brand their foreheads, sides and backs, they will be told, "this is what you hoarded up for yourselves!

Now feel the pain of what you hoarded!"

Thereafter is the crime of false testimony and withholding evidence. This is because Allah, the Mighty the Majestic, says: 'Do not conceal evidence: anyone who does so has a sinful heart, and God is fully aware of everything you do.'

Then is the sin of drinking intoxicants, because Allah, the Mighty the Majestic has equated it to the worshipping of idols. Abandoning the ritual prayers purposely or anything that has been made obligatory by Allah is also a great sin, for the Prophet of God (saw) said: 'Whoever purposely abandons the ritual prayer has been released from the protection and security of Allah, the Mighty, the Majestic and that of the Messenger of Allah (saw)'.

Violating promises and cutting off ties of kinship are also great sins, for Allah the Mighty the Majestic says: 'But there will be rejection for those who break their confirmed agreements made in God's name, who break apart what God has commanded to be joined ...theirs is the dreadful home.'

(Here it seems the meeting came to an end for it is reported that): The Imam (Musa bin Ja'far) said: 'Amr bin 'Ubayd left whilst he was shrieking and crying and saying "Indeed anyone who says anything on the basis of his conjecture is destroyed as also one who contends with you ."(all) in (divine) favours and knowledge

The Harsh Circumstances of his Time

Ma 'mun ascended the throne after having defeated and killed his brother Amin. The prevailing atmosphere in the royal court during his reign was that of relative freedom for the Shi'ites and the Mu 'tazilites, who were those who championed the ideas of divine transcendent (اهل التوحيد والعدل). monotheism and divine justice

When Ma 'mun died in the year 218 AH/833 AD, al-Mu 'tasim gained the pledge of allegiance for the caliphate and the royal court became a centre for intellectuals and theologians who would engage in polemical debates with each other. When he died in 227 AH/841 AD, it was Wathiq who took over the reins of the caliphate and he continued with the tradition of intellectual and religious freedom that he had inherited from his predecessors. Thus it was due

to and during the reign of these caliphs that the fortunes of the proponents of divine justice shone luminously and polemical gatherings between adherents of different faiths (اهل العدل) and sects took place.

However, when Wathiq billah died and Mutawakkil assumed the throne from the year 232 AH/846 AD to 247 AH/861 AD, he promulgated a particularly harsh policy against the Shi'ites and the Mu'tazilites but a very favourable one with respect to the Hashawiyya. He encouraged the dissemination of ideas favouring divine anthropomorphism and the doctrine of the physical manifestation of God as well as hatred and enmity towards the Ahlul Bayt to such an extent that the people of Baghdad cursed him, the poets satirised him and the following poem was found written on a wall of the city of Baghdad

بالله إن كانت أمية قد اتت قتل ابن بنت نبيها مظلوما فلقد أتاه بنو أبيه بمثله هذا لعمرى قبره مهدوما أسفوا
على أن لا يكونوا شاركوا في قتله فتتبعوه رميما

By Allah! When the Umayyads came to power, the son of the daughter of their Prophet was murdered treacherously, Then the sons of his (i.e. Mutawakkil's) father came forward with a similar treatment; this, by my life, is his (Husayn's) grave desecrated, (It seems) as if they (i.e. the 'Abbasids) were sorry that they had not been able to participate in his (Husayn's) murder, so they decided to imitate them (the Umayyads) by desecrating his remains.

It is sufficient to cite the following anecdote as an example of his hatred and enmity towards the Ahlul Bayt. He had charged Ya'qub bin al-Sikkit, an authority in the Arabic language, with the responsibility of tutoring his two sons al-Mu'taz and al-Mu'ayyad. One day he was looking at his two sons and suddenly asked Ibn al-Sikkit: 'who is more beloved to you, my (two) sons or al-Hasan and al-Husayn?' Ibn al-Sikkit replied: 'Qambar, the client of 'Ali is better than them both!' Outraged he ordered Ibn al-Sikkit's tongue to be pulled out!

Historical records do not identify the year in which Sayyid 'Abd al-Azim al-Hasani migrated to Ray and sought refuge there, nor do they inform us of the year in which he migrated from the Hijaz or 'Iraq to Ray. However, some have imagined that he may have migrated to Fars with the purpose of visiting Imam 'Ali bin Musa al-Ridha' ('a) and thereafter remained there throughout his remaining life till his death in approximately 252 AH/866 AD. But this supposition is difficult to accept.

This is because Imam al-Ridha' arrived in Tus in the year 199 AH/814 AD due to the persistence of Ma'mun [and passed away in 203 AH/818 AD], thus to suppose that Sayyid

'Abd al-Azim stayed in Fars from approximately that time till the year 252 AH/866 AD is difficult to accept especially when it is known that the prevailing circumstances during the reigns of the three caliphs mentioned above were favourable and positive for the Shi'ites. Therefore I think that Sayyid 'Abd al-Azim fled the Hijaz or 'Iraq during the reign of Mutawakkil when the circumstances had changed and become particularly difficult for the Ahlul Bayt.

This is because Mutawakkil had embarked upon promoting two corrupt ideas.

1) Spreading hatred, rancour and enmity of the Ahlul Bayt and the destruction of the grave of Imam al-Husayn [and related infrastructure] as well as stopping pilgrims from visiting his grave.

2) Spreading the idea of divine anthropomorphism and exploiting the traditions in fabricating and transmitting traditions which gave credence to that idea.

Thus in those difficult and harsh circumstances against the Shi'ites and their scholars, Sayyid

'Abd al-Azim fled to Ray and remained there far from the eyes of the people.

Al-Dhahabi writes: 'Mutawakkil despatched jurists and traditionists, commanding them to sit with the people and to narrate to them traditions which refuted the teachings of the Mu'tazilites and the Jahmiyya and to narrate to them traditions which supported the idea of the physical manifestation of God. Among these jurists and traditionists were Mus'ab Zubayri, Ishaq bin Abi Isra'il, Ibrahim bin 'Abdullah al-Harawi, 'Abdullah and 'Uthman the two sons of Muhammad bin Abi Shayba.

He would distribute rewards and positions among them and bestow them with luxuries and gifts. Thus 'Uthman bin Muhammad bin Abi Shayba would sit in Baghdad, a pulpit would be placed for him and thirty thousand people would gather around to listen to him. And Abu Bakr bin Abi Shayba would sit in the mosque of Rasafa and he used to be even more extreme than his brother 'Uthman. Thirty thousand men would gather to listen to him.

Thus it becomes clear now why Sayyid 'Abd al-Azim emphasised the transcendent attributes of God by his statement; "I maintain that Allah, Blessed and Exalted is one. There is nothing like Him. He is beyond the two limits, the limit of negation and annulment (of attributes) and the limit of anthropomorphism. And that He has neither a body nor a form, nor dimension nor a material core. Rather He is the One who creates bodies and gives forms, the Creator of dimensions and matter."

He did this because some of the traditionists of his time were spreading ideas of anthropomorphism! It is due to this very same reason that he corrected the Prophetic tradition that was being misquoted and explained its meaning to be the descent of an angel and not the .Being of God