Imam Ali (A.S.), the Ka'ba of Faith

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Most surely the first House to be set up for mankind is the one at Bekka (Mecca), blessed and" a guidance for all nations." (Holy Qur'an 3:96).

This is how God Almighty describes the holy Ka'ba that the Father of the human race, Adam, was ordered to build in Mecca at the dawn of mankind's creation.

It was built as the Symbolic House of the Unseen but Omnipresent Creator, Who encompasses all and everything in this infinite universe, and is far too Glorious to have any form or shape, and is neither bound by time nor by place.

It was too sacred an edifice for Adam and Eve to live there, or to give birth to children inside it. The purpose of its erection, and its later renovation by Abraham and his firstborn son, Ishmael, on God's orders, was to establish it as the centre of monotheistic worship and the focal point of the annual Hajj pilgrimage – a ritual that was formalized for all time by the Last and Greatest of Divine Messengers, Prophet Muhammad (SAWA).

No structure could thus be compared to its centrality and sanctity, let alone to any creature. Yet we find an interesting hadith from the person regarding whom God says in Surah Najm of the holy Qur'an he "does not err, nor goes astray, neither does he speak out of desire, and it is naught but revelation has been revealed by the Lord of Mighty Power that has taught him."

As attested by narrators of the various denominations of Islam, Prophet Muhammad (SAWA) said in unambiguous words regarding his dearest cousin, ward, and defender of his mission:

"O Ali! Your position is like that of the Ka'ba."

This statement is thus not a casual remark. It is indicative of the pivotal position of Imam Ali (AS), whose merits even his adversaries have grudgingly admitted.

In other words, this hadith needs to be meticulously pondered upon, especially on the occasion of the auspicious 13th of Rajab, the birthday of the Prophet's vicegerent, who was chosen by the Almighty as a Guide and a Discerner between truth and falsehood for the Ummah after the Prophet.

It means his role in Islam is as central to the faith of Muslims as that of the holy Ka'ba, no matter if some try to belittle it, in the same manner as they desist from bowing towards the Ka'ba by neglecting to perform the daily obligatory ritual prayers.

But where in Mecca was Imam Ali born?

The answer is obvious. The holy Ka'ba – as testified by both Shi'ite and Sunni narrators. Most

surely, he was, and remains to this day, the only person ever born in that sancta sanctorum, and in whose honour an Arabic poet has composed the following distich:

"He (Ali) is the one for whom the House of Allah was turned into a maternity home;
"And he is the one who threw the idols out of that House;
"Ali was the first and the last child ever to be born in the Ka'ba."

The undeniable fact of the Imam's birth inside the Ka'ba has also been recorded in early authentic compilations of hadith by our Sunni brothers, such as Hakem an-Nisabouri in Mustadrik as-Sahihayn, Sibt ibn al-Jauzi in Tadhkerat al-Khawas il-Ummah, Muhammad ibn Talha ash-Shafei in Matalib as-Saool, and Nuru'd-din bin Sabbagh Maliki in Fusoul al-Muhimma.

The last named author writes: "No one before Ali was born in the Ka'ba. This was a distinction given to Ali in order to enhance his honor, rank, and dignity."

Among the modern historians, Abbas Mahmood al-Akkad of Egypt writes in his book Al-'Abqarriyet al-Imam Ali, (Cairo, 1970), that Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS) was born inside the holy Ka'ba.

In view of these undeniable facts, Rajab 13 is the day on which the holiest edifice on earth saw a sudden parting of its wall, exactly 1455 lunar years ago, to allow a venerable lady to step inside its sacred premises. The wall then miraculously closed behind her to the utter bewilderment of the flabbergasted Arab infidels, while the locks of the door of the Ka'ba held fast, no matter what force and crowbars the Meccans used to try to break them.

The rest is history as Fatema bint Asad, wife of the monotheistic Ishmaelite patriarch, Abu Taleb, gave birth to a radiant boy. He was none other than Imam Ali (AS), the cousin, ward, son-in-law, and divinely decreed vicegerent of the Almighty's Last and Greatest Messenger to mankind, Prophet Muhammad (SAWA).

What a unique measure by the All-Wise God's to re-establish His authority on the First-ever House built on the Planet by the Father of the human race, Adam!

It was indeed a novel way to purify the cubic structure that Abraham had rebuilt for the worship of the One and Only Creator – of the idols that the polytheists had installed and of the images of Jesus, Mary, and the Holy Ghost the equally misled Trinitarians had sketched on its walls.

No wonder, 63 years later, when struck by the assassin's poisoned sword in the Grand Mosque of Kufa (also a House of God), while bowing during the morning prayer in the direction of his birthplace, Imam Ali (AS) said: "I have succeeded by the Lord of the Ka'ba".