(The Age of the Imam Hassan al-Askari (A.S

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The study of the age that Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) lived in is no longer a kind of luxury or decoration to the book, but it is a necessity that the modern scientific research requires. Studying an age has become from the methodical studies that a researcher cannot leave aside, because it reveals the reality of the general life which that certain person lives, and also it sheds lights on the events that takes place during that age which naturally have a great influence on the behavior of that person. Sociologists say that the social life affects and is affected.

Anyhow, we objectively shall offer several sides of the general life of the age that Imam Abu .Muhammad (a.s.) lived in

The Economical Life

Before we shed lights on the economical life of the age of Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.), we would like to show that Islam has paid extreme attention to the developing of the economy of the nation, the growing of the individual income, and the prosperity of the general life. Islam has considered poverty as a destroying disaster which must be removed by all means. Islam has compared between disbelief and poverty, and as disbelief must be removed due to the Islamic Sharia, poverty must be removed from society as well. Islam has ordered Muslim rulers and leaders to spare no effort in order to save Muslims from the dangers of poverty and wretchedness which are the reasons behind the intellectual and moral deviation among people. From the creative methods that the Islamic economy is based on is that the Sharia has limited the authorities of rulers and officials. They are not permitted in any case to play with the treasury of the state, because it is for all Muslims and not for one person. The wealth of Muslims must be spent on Muslims, and neither the ruler no any of his government has the right to extort from the treasury to spend on himself or his kin, for this is treason against Allah and against Muslims.

The Abbasid rule, during all its ages, followed a special economical policy that was odd to the true Islamic system, and it was too far from the laws Islam has legislated to control the wealth of the Islamic state. We shall discuss here in brief the general economical system in the Abbasid age.

Incomes Of The State

The most income of the state was collected from land taxes and zakat which was about millions of dinars. Historians said it was about three hundred and sixty million dirhams a year,[1] and it was about five hundred million dirhams in some years.[2] In that age a dirham had a good value. It equaled the price of a sheep, a jar of honey, or a jar of oil, whereas a dinar equaled the price of a camel.[3]

Unfortunately, these abundant monies were not spent to develop the scientific, medical, and economical life as Islam wanted, but they went to the pockets of rulers who spent them on building high palaces as al-Mutawakkil did, and on singers, dancers, drinking companions, and other fields of debauchery and pleasures.

Violence In Collecting The Land Tax

Violence, oppression, and punishments were common methods in collecting the land taxes during most of the Abbasid ages. People suffered exhausting kinds of oppression from the publicans who had no bit of mercy and kindness in their hearts. They imposed taxes according to their desires and greed, and whoever refused or delay to pay the imposed taxes his fate would be either to grave or to prison.

Al-Jahshiyari said, 'The people of kharaj (who did not or could not pay the land tax) were punished severely with different kinds of torment like being thrown to beasts of prey and bees. Muhammad bin Muslim was a close companion to al-Mehdi (the Abbasid caliph). When al-Mehdi became the caliph and found that the people of kharaj were tortured severely, he consulted with Muhammad bin Muslim who said to him, 'O Ameerul Mo'minin, this is a situation that can be changed. They are debtors of Muslims and must be treated as debtors.' Then the caliph ordered to stop punishing them.'[4]

During the reign of ar-Rashid, people criticized al-Fadhl bin Yahya al-Barmaki who was the wali of Khurasan. They complained at him too much until ar-Rashid deposed him and appointed in place of him Ali bin Eessa who killed many notables from the people of Khurasan and farmed great monies. Once, he sent to ar-Rashid ten million dirhams in a sack made of silk.[5]

The people of Mosul also suffered terrible oppression because of the farming of the kharaj (land tax). The wali, appointed by ar-Rashid, on them was Yahya bin Sa'eed. He ordered them to pay him the kharaj of past years, and he whipped most of them.[6]

Islam has bound walis to be kind to their subjects and to improve their economical conditions. People must not meet any pressure from rulers in farming the kharaj and zakat, but most Abbasid kings paid no attention to that, and rather, they subjected the nation by violence and oppression in collecting the kharaj.

Increasing The Kharaj

The officials of the Abbasid governments often asked people to pay more than the specified taxes and they took the further amounts for themselves. When Abu Ubaydillah bin Yasar became the vizier of al-Mehdi, he made the kharaj on date palms and trees, and it continued so after him.[7]

Egypt suffered different misfortunes and distresses because of the kharaj. Its wali Musa bin Mus'ab doubled the kharaj on every acre, and he imposed taxes on the people of markets and on cattle. He took bribes in judgment.

People revolted against him because of his oppression.[8] Ibn Taghri said, 'He pressed on people in farming the kharaj. He doubled the tax on every acre unlike what had been before him. People met distresses from him. He was bad to people. He took bribes on judgments…soldiers hated him. They caused him troubles and often opposed him because he was an oppressive tyrant.'[9]

These doings were too far from the essence and reality of Islam. Those men were but a gang of thieves and highwaymen who went far into crimes and sins. Umar bin Ubayd said to al-Mansur ad-Dawaniqi, the Abbasid caliph, 'Behind your door there are fires flaming because of oppression. Behind your door it is acted due to neither the Book of Allah nor the Sunna of His messenger.'[10]

Appropriating The Wealth Of The State

The Abbasids appropriated the wealth of the nation and took for themselves and for their kin, as they liked. The income of Muhammad bin Sulayman al-Abbasi a day was about one hundred thousand dirhams.[11] When he died, he left a great inheritance which ar-Rashid took sixty thousand dirhams from. Historians say, 'Great monies came to al-Khayzuran (the mother of Harun ar-Rashid) until her wealth became about one hundred million and sixty thousand dirhams. Some writer says that this amount equaled the half of the revenue of the state at that time and two thirds of the revenue of Rockefeller in this century.

It was found with the wife of al-Mutawakkil (an Abbasid king) one million and eight hundred thousand dinars. The mother of al-Muqtadir (an Abbasid king) was too wealthy.[12] Ibn al-Jawzi said about her, 'She had a great wealth that was beyond counting. She got from her lands one million dinars every year.'[13]

The Abbasid kings gifted their relatives with great monies. Ar-Rashid distributed among his uncles and relatives monies that no caliph before him had ever distributed.[14] Al-Mansur ad-Dawaniqi assigned one million dirhams to each one of his uncles.[15] The Abbasid family grew until they were, at the reign of al-Ma'mun, about thirty-three thousand persons.[16] This family

that had no any preference to the rest of Muslims appropriated the wealth of the nation and enjoyed the great monies, while the rest of Muslim peoples were sunk into poverty, deprivation, and wretchedness.

Great Gifts To Bondmaids

The Abbasid kings were excessive in gifting the bondmaids and songstresses. Once, ar-Rashid gave his bondmaid Dananir, at the night of an eid, a necklace of thirty thousand dinars.[17] Al-Muqtadir gave to one of his concubines the three weights Orphan Pearl.[18] Abul Faraj al-Isfahani said that Hamwayh hired for his bondmaid some jewels from some jeweler for twelve million dinars. When ar-Rashid saw the jewels, he admired them. He bought them and offered them as a present to the bondmaid.[19] Al-Muqtadir played with money. He effaced coins and then gave them to women and bondmaids.[20] Al-Mutawakkil had a bondmaid called Fadhl. She sat on a chair and argued with poets in his presence. He asked her when he bought her, 'Are you a poet?'

She said, 'So claims he who bought and sold me.'

Al-Mutawakkil laughed and asked her to recite him some verses of her poetry. She did, and he admired her poetry and ordered to give her fifty thousand dirhams.[21]

Al-Muqtadir had a village-like statue made of silver. It was very expensive. He donated it to one of his servants just because one of his bondmaids asked him to do that.

These are just few examples on the wasting of the Abbasid caliphs who spent the wealth of the nation on their pleasures paying no attention to the welfare of the society or to the development of the general life.

Abundant Gifts To Poets

Poets were the only media at that age. They supported the Abbasid rule and spread fabricated virtues ascribed to the Abbasid kings. They preferred those kings to the Alawids who were the propagandists of social justice in Islam. The Abbasids endowed poets with abundant monies and made them extremely wealthy.

Once, Abul Shibl al-Barjami al-Kufi praised al-Mutawakkil with a thirty-verse-poem and al-Mutawakkil gave him thirty thousand dirhams for that.[22]

When al-Mutawakkil held a general meeting for people to pay homage to his three sons al-Muntasir, al-Mu'tazz, and al-Mu'ayyad as the heir apparents after him, as-Sawli recited a poem on the occasion and al-Mutawakkil gave him one hundred dirhams, and so did each one of his sons.[23]

Once, Ibrahim bin al-Mudbir recited a poem praising al-Mutawakkil who was pleased with the poem and gave the poet fifty thousand dirhams and asked his vizier Ubaydillah bin Yahya to

find him a good job.

Marwan bin Abul Janub was one of the poets who got abundant monies from al-Mutawakkil. He was very interested in praising al-Mutawakkil. Once, he got from him fifty thousand dirhams after a poem. On the occasion of the homage to his three sons, al-Mutawakkil gave the poet one hundred and twenty thousand dirhams, fifty garments, a mule, a horse, and a donkey.[24] For another poem, al-Mutawakkil gave him one hundred gold dinars. Al-Buhturi, who was the emir of poets at that time, prepared all his talents to praise al-Mutawakkil who gave to him high titles and good epithets besides the great wealth. Al-Mutawakkil gave abundant wealth to Ali bin al-Jahm and approached him to his meetings after praising him and declared his enmity towards the Ahlul Bayt (a.s). He dispraised the Ahlul Bayt (a.s) bitterly and preferred to them the Abbasids who had no virtue save the seizing of the rule and leading the nation towards dark abysses of oppression.

This wasteful spending on poets scattered an important part from the wealth of the nation that had to be spent on the public and to satisfy all needs of the nation.

Palaces

The Abbasids were extensively excessive in building palaces. They spent incredible amounts on building their palaces and decorating them with wonderful decorations that no one had ever seen like throughout history. Al-Mutawakkil built a palace called al-Burj. It was the most beautiful building of al-Mutawakkil. He made in it big statutes of gold and silver and a wide pool with plates of gold and silver. Beside the pool there was a tree of gold with birds that whistled. It was adorned with jewels. A big throne of gold, with two big lions and a drawer having statues of beasts and eagles, was made for him there with other things as the throne of Prophet Solomon (a.s.) had been described. The walls were covered from inside and outside with mosaic and gilded marble. He spent on the building and decorating of this palace about one million and seven hundred thousand dinars. He ordered that no one should enter this palace except in clothes of embroidered silk. He brought dancers, singers, musicians, and drinking companions into the palace. When he sat in this paradise, his vizier Yahya bin Khaqan said to him, ‘O Ameerul Mo'minin, I hope that Allah will thank you for building this palace and reward you with the Paradise.’ Al-Mutawakkil asked, ‘What for?’ Yahya said, ‘You have filled people with desire to the Paradise by this palace, for this will lead them to do good deeds in order to be in Paradise.’ Al-Mutawakkil became delighted at hearing that.[25]

From the other palaces that al-Mutawakkil had built was al-Ja’fari. The cost of building and decorating this palace was more than two million dinars. When the palace was completed, he brought singers, dancers, and clowns and gave each of them two thousand dirhams.[26]

Anyhow, we have mentioned the great expenses that al-Mutawakkil had spent on all his palaces in our book “the Life of Imam al-Hadi” which showed the economical imbalance in that time where the Abbasid family appropriated the revenue of the state and spent it on their pleasures and lusts.

The Luxury Of The Abbasid Women

The greater part of the state revenue was spent on the ladies of the Abbasid palace. They lived in absolute luxury and bliss. Lady Zubayda (Harun ar-Rashid’s wife) was interested in expensive embroidered clothes that one dress of hers cost fifty thousand dinars.[27] This luxury was not limited to the Abbasid ladies only, but it also included the ladies of viziers. Utabah, the mother of Ja’far al-Barmaki had one hundred bondmaids and each one of them put on jewelry and ornaments different from the other.[28]

The Wretchedness Of The Public

It was naturally that the majority of the Muslim peoples suffered poverty and wretchedness after they had been deprived from the state treasury that was spent on the pleasures of the kings, viziers, and the media, whereas poverty spread among most of people.

Once, al-Asma’iy saw a poet cling to the curtains of the Kaaba while reciting,

“O my Lord, I am asking as You see,
wearing two (ragged) clocks as You see,
and my old wife is sitting there as You see,
and my stomach is hungry as You see,
so what do You see about what You see?”[29]

Many other poets described in their poetry the miserable life of sufferings they lived. It was very difficult for them (and for most of people) to find a bit of food and apiece of cloth for their hungry, naked children.

The miserable life that some poets, who had no relation with the Abbasid palace, lived, led them to beg through their poetry viziers, judges and other officials, and made their poetry as a means for gaining. Abu Fir’own as-Sasi was in utmost need, and when he was unable to bear any more, he went to al-Hasan bin Sahl the vizier of al-Ma’mun and praised him in a poem. In the same poem he expressed his bad condition and the wretchedness of his children.

Poverty stung Abu Fir’own severely and this time he went to one of the judges of Basra begging his help. It was shame to those kings who had the treasures of the world in their hands but left their peoples suffering neediness and deprivation.

From the poets, who suffered poverty, was Abush Shamaqmaq who went to the king begging him after he saw his children writhe with hunger and pain.

These poets represented the lives of their peoples and their sufferings of hunger, pain, and loss. The economical life was not sound and right, but it was confused and paralyzed. The Abbasid governments did not achieve ease for people and did not provide a good life for them. The revenue of the state was spent on the Abbasid family, the viziers, and the prominent statesmen, whereas the majority of people lived in poverty and wretchedness and could not obtain even the least necessities of living.

The Imam's Situation

Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s) represented the front of opposition to the Abbasid rule. He often criticized the rulers for appropriating the wealth of the nation and extorting the livelihood of people.

From the notable forms of the opposition that Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) followed was that he prohibited himself from communicating or cooperating with those kings who took the wealth of Allah as theirs and the people of Allah as their slaves. They spared no effort to join the imam (a.s.) to their retinues but they could not, and then they treated him with absolute severity. They fought him in the means of his living and caused him to be in pressing neediness. They prevented monies to come to him from his Shia followers, but one of the Shia sent jars of oil to the imam (a.s.) and he put money inside them[30] which decreased the pressure of that blockade.

Anyhow, Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) sided with the poor and the deprived who were the victims of those kings who robbed the wealth of the nation and left the state in economical .imbalance

The Political Life

The political life in the age of Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) was very bad and unstable. Oppression, injustice, and seditions prevailed everywhere, and many revolts broke out. That, as I think, was because of the domination of the Turks over the reins of government and their absolute control over all affairs of the state though they were expert neither in politics nor in administration. They oppressed people, transgressed in the rule, and spread terrorism. The other reason behind that was the ignorance of the Abbasid kings, their indulging in pleasures and lusts, and their inadvertence to the interests of people which caused many political crises at that time.

Oppressing The Alawids

The Alawids were terribly tried and extremely burdened during most periods of the Abbasid rule. The Abbasid kings officially oppressed the Alawids, chased, and punished them severely.

They imposed on them economical blockade until they were in utmost neediness. Historians say that during the reign of al-Mutawakkil, the Alawids suffered neediness and deprivation so bitter and horrible that could not be described. They had no but one cloak, and whenever an Alawid man or an Alawid woman wanted to go out, he or she put it on. People refrained from associating with them for fear of the tyrannical government. One day, Muhammad bin Salih (bin) al-Husayn asked Ibrahim bin al-Mudbir (to be as a mediator) to ask Eessa bin Musa al-Jarmi's daughter's hand. The father of the girl refused and said to the mediator, 'I just tell you the truth. By Allah, I do not know one nobler or more honorable than him, but I refused him just because I fear from al-Mutawakkil and his sons after him for my life and wealth.'[31]

Muslims refrained from contacting with the Alawids and even from greeting them, because the Abbasid governments punished severely whoever showed any kind of respect and regard towards the Alawids.

The worst period the Alawids underwent was the reign of al-Mutawakkil who poured all his rage and spite on them. They ran away to all towns and villages[32] for fear that the government might arrest and lead them either to graveyards or prisons.

The Imam's Amulet

Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) suffered different kinds of oppression and cruelty during the reign of al-Mutawakkil and other Abbasid kings whom the imam was contemporary with. Therefore, he resorted to Allah to protect him from their plots and save him from their evils. He armed himself with this du'a:

"I have charmed myself with the charm of Allah; the light by which He has hidden from eyes, and taken precaution for my self, family, children, properties, and all that under my charge by the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful, and sought refuge for myself and all that from what I fear and beware of with Allah Who *(there is no god but Him, the Everliving, the Eternal. Slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep; whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His, who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases, His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of them both tires Him not, and He is the Most High, the Great),*[33] *(And who is more unjust than he who is reminded of the signs of his Lord, then he turns away from them and forgets what his two hands have sent before? Surely We have placed veils over their hearts lest they should understand it and a heaviness in their ears; and if you call them to the guidance, they will not ever follow the right course in that case),*[34] *(Have you seen him who*

makes his desire his god, and Allah sends him astray purposely, and seals up his hearing and his heart, and sets on his sight a covering? Then who will lead him after Allah (has condemned him)? Will ye not then heed?),[35] *(These are they on whose hearts and their hearing and their eyes Allah has set a seal, and these are the heedless ones),*[36] *(And when you recite the Qur'an, We place between you and those who do not believe in the hereafter a hidden barrier. And We have placed coverings on their hearts and a heaviness in their ears lest they understand it, and when you mention your Lord alone in the Qur'an they turn their backs in aversion),*[37] and may Allah have blessings on Muhammad and on his pure progeny…"[38]

This du'a shows the extent of the fears the imam (a.s.) felt from the Abbasids, and therefore, he resorted to Allah to save him and his family from their (the Abbasid's) oppression and plotting.

He also charmed himself from the Abbasids by this du'a:

"O You, my means at my distress, O You, my succor at my grief, O You, my relief at my loneliness, guard me by Your eye that does not sleep, and shield me by Your shelter that is unreachable.'[39]

Persecuting The People Of Qum

The Abbasids persecuted the people of Qum and treated them with oppression and terror. They appointed Musa bin Yahya, who was wicked and unjust, as wali over them. He was impolite, immoral, and inhuman that people desisted from him. He treated people in a very bad way and exaggerated in oppressing them until the notables of Qum resorted to Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) complaining to him at what that tyrant did to them.

The imam prayed Allah the Almighty to save them from the evil of that mean, oppressive wali, and taught them this du'a and asked them to recite it in the qunut of their prayers so that Allah might relieve them from this calamity:

"Praise be to Allah as gratefulness to his blessings, calling for His more, imploring His livelihood, being loyal to Him and not to other than Him, and refraining from disbelieving in Him and denying His might and exaltedness, a praise of one who knows that all the blessings he has are from his Lord, and the punishments that afflict him are for the wrongs his hands have committed, and the blessings of Allah be on Muhammad His slave and messenger, and the best of His creation, and the means of believers towards His mercy, and (blessings be) on his pure progeny who are his guardians.

O Allah, You have called (Your people) for Your favor, and ordered (them) to supplicate You, and You have insured response to Your people. You have not disappointed whoever resorted to You with a wish and turned to You with a need. You have not let any asking hand come back

empty from Your gift or desperate of Your donation. Was there any traveler who traveled to You and did not find You near, or a comer who came to You and You put obstacles between You and him?! Was there any insister on asking You that the flow of Your favor did not include him…?

O Allah, I come to You with my wish, the hand of my request knocks at the door of Your favor, my heart invokes You with the reverence of submission, and I found You the best intercessor for me with You. You know my request before it comes to my mind or gets in my imagination.

O Allah, so complete my du'a by Your response to me and meet my request by the satisfying of my wish!

O Allah, the aberration of seditions has included us, the haze of confusion has overcome us, meanness and lowness have fought with us, the untrustworthy on Your religion have ruled over us, the wicked, who have annulled Your rule, have extorted our affairs and tried to damage Your people and corrupt Your land.

O Allah, our wealth is appropriated after it was distributed (among all), and our rule has become domination after it was shura (consultation) and monarchy after it was the nation's option; amusements and musicals have been bought by the shares of orphans and widows, non-Muslims rule over the believers, and sinners have been entrusted with their (people's) affairs, and no protector protected them from a danger, and no guardian looked at them with the eye of mercifulness, and no kind one satisfied the thirsty hearts from a famine, and so they are weak and hungry in a home of loss, captives of wretchedness, inheritors of melancholy, meanness…

O Allah, the plant of falseness has come to harvest, reached its full, its stick has become firm…its branches have gone high and fixed.

O Allah, bring, from the truth, its reaper to reap it, break its stock, smash its branches, cut off its hump, and amputate its extents, so that falseness, with its ugly picture, disappears, and truth, with its beautiful dress, appears.

O Allah, let no pillar of oppression, but You tear it down, no shield, but You expose it, no unity, but You separate it, no heavy force, but You slight it, no high rank, but You make it low, no post of a banner, but You turn it over, and no lively thing, but You perish it.

O Allah, cover his[40] sun, put out his light, efface his mention, hit, by the truth, his head, scatter his armies, and frighten the hearts of his people!

O Allah, do not let a remainder of him, unless it is annihilated, nor a structure unless it is torn down, nor a unity unless it is broken, nor an arm unless it is disabled, nor a boundary unless it is violated, nor a flagpole unless it is overthrown!

O Allah, show us his supporters scattered after affinity, separate after unity, and disgraced after their domination over the nation!

O Allah, bring us the day of justice, and show it to us eternal with no darkness in it, and pure light with no mix with it, and make its goodness fall down on us, and its blessing come down on us, and avenge on his[41] opponent, and support him over his enemy!

O Allah, show the truth,[42] and make it shine in the dusk of darkness, and ambiguity of confusion!

O Allah, enliven by it the dead hearts, unite by it the separate desires and different opinions, establish by it the annulled penalties and neglected rulings, satiate by it the hungry stomachs, relieve by it the weak and tired bodies, as You made us mention it, and put into our mind Your supplicating, made us successful in calling for it, and keeping the people of ignorance away from it, house in our hearts its love, and eagerness to it, and expecting it to establish its ceremonies!

O Allah, give us best certainty on it, O You, the Achiever of good wills, the Attainer of delayed hopes. O Allah, refute the fabricators who fabricate against You in it, and confute the suspicions of the desperate of Your mercy and desperate of it!

O Allah, make us a means of its means, a figure of its figures, a fort of its forts, and brighten our faces with its bright, honor us by its support, and make our intention good…

O Allah, You have made us know our selves, and see our defects that we fear not to be able to respond to You, while You favor those who do not deserve, and bestow on requesters before they request, so give us due to Your generosity and favor, for You do what You like, and determine as You want, and we have resorted to You, and repented of our sins.

O Allah,…and the caller for You, the doer of justice from Your people, the poor to Your mercy, and the needy to Your help on Your obedience…You have given him your blessing, dressed him with the dresses of Your honor, thrown on him the love of Your obedience, fixed his love in the hearts, made him successful to do Your command that the people of his time are indifferent of, made him a resort to the wronged of Your people, and a support to those who do not find a supporter save You, and a restorer of what has been annulled of the verdicts of Your Book, and a builder of what has been ruined of the laws of Your religion, and the rulings of Your Prophet, Your blessing, peace, and mercy be on him and on his progeny. O Allah, make him safe from the plotting of enemies…and take him to the best that You have taken the doers of Your justice from among the successors of prophets. O Allah, degrade by him whoever does not turn back to Your love, and whoever bears enmity against him, and shoot by Your deadly stone whoever incites against Your religion by degrading him and scattering his power…

O Allah, as he has made himself as a target to the far for the sake of You, and sacrificed his soul to defend the believers, and resist the evil of suspicious apostates until he shall remove spread disobediences, and show what ulama have left behind their backs whereas they have covenanted to declare it for people and not to conceal it, and he shall call for the obedience of You alone, without making a partner to You from Your creation that his command may be over Yours…O Allah, assist him by Your victory, enable him in what he is unable in, increase his power from Your assistance…

O Allah, honor him with the doing of Your command to see the standing of Reckoning as it is, delight Your Prophet (Your blessings be on him) by seeing him and whoever follows him in his mission, reward him with the best for doing Your command, take him closer to You in his life, and pity our wretchedness…O Allah, make him safe from what is feared for him, drive away from him the arrows of plotting that the people of grudge throw at him and at the participant in his matter and his assistants on the obedience of Allah Whom You have made as his fort, resort, and comfort and who leave their families and children and country, give up comfortable beds and ease, stop their trades, harm their livings…and rejected the transient pleasures of this world. O Allah, keep them in Your safety and protection, defend them against whoever has enmity against them from Your people, suffice them and provide them with Your help, assistance, and victory, defeat, by their right, the falseness of whoever wants to put out Your light. O Allah, fill by them every horizon and every country with justice, fairness, mercifulness, and virtue, and thank them due to Your generosity and bounty with what You have bestowed on the doers of justice from Your people, and saved for them from Your reward that might raise in degrees, You do whatever You like, and determine whatever You want…'[43]

Oppression And Tyranny Of Viziers

Most viziers of the Abbasid rulers were tyrannical and oppressive. They disdained people and were excessive in subjugating and harming them. One day during the reign of al-Muntasir, his vizier Ahmad bin al-Khasib went out riding on a horse. Some man approached him complaining, and he (the vizier) took his leg out if the stirrup and kicked the man in his chest and killed him.[44]

Muhammad bin Abdul Melik, the vizier of al-Wathiq, made an oven and put nails into it to torture people in it.[45]

In addition to that, the viziers embezzled the wealth of the state. Uthaman bin Imarah, who was the wali of Sajistan during the reign of Harun ar-Rashid, was put into prison for five thousand dirhams.

Those viziers just imitated their masters the Abbasid kings who extorted the wealth of Muslims

and left them in terrible poverty. Historians say, 'Al-Mansur took from people until he left nothing with them. What he had taken from them was about eight hundred million dirhams.'[46]

Internal Revolts

It was natural for the Muslim peoples to struggle and rebel against the Abbasid governments that ruled unjustly and appropriated the wealth and the economical powers of those peoples. Many local revolts took place aiming at getting rid of enslavement, oppression, and persecution. Here we mention some of those revolts to prove our saying that the political life at that age was unstable, confused, and lacking security.

The Revolt Of Yahya

Great martyr Yahya bin Umar at-Talibi rebelled against the Abbasid rule calling for the achievement of social justice and the distribution of Muslims' wealth among the poor and the needy. The deprived and all classes of people joined him because of his real and true aims of improving the general life of the nation. He occupied Kufa and set free all the wronged and oppressed people from its prisons. However, later on, the Abbasid government could overcome and kill him. His head was taken to Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Tahir one of the tyrants of that age who took the head to the tyrant caliph al-Musta'een. The head was hung in Samarra' to be as a lesson for whoever might think to rebel. Opportunists went to Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Tahir congratulating him on that victory!!! Abu Hashim al-Ja'fari as well went to this emir but said to him, 'O emir, you are being congratulated on the killing of a man that if the messenger of Allah (a.s.) was alive, he would be consoled on.'

All present people became silent and no one answered him with anything.[47] He left angrily while reciting the following:

"O Family of Tahir, eat it harmfully,
for the flesh of the Prophet is not edible.
revenge that its seeker is Allah,
Definitely will be taken."

The killing of Yahya was one of the disasters that afflicted Muslims at that age and caused a great loss. Poets composed many poems elegizing this great revolutionary leader.

The Revolt Of The Negroes

From the revolts that dazed the Abbasids in that age was the revolt of the Negroes led by Ali bin Abdurrahim from bani Abdul Qays who claimed that he was Alawid. He claimed that his lineage belonged to the eternal martyr Zayd bin Ali bin al-Husayn, so that the public might join him and support his revolt.

Anyhow, Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) denied the claims of Ali bin Muhammad the leader of this revolt and said, 'The man (leader) of the Negroes is not from us the Ahlul Bayt (a.s).[48] The details of this revolt have mentioned in all books of history.

The Revolt Of Sham[49]

Al-Mutawakkil appointed a wolf from his agents and mercenaries who turned the life of people there into hell, but then the free rebelled against him and drove him away. When al-Mutawakkil knew about that, he sent an army of seven thousand horsemen and three thousand infantry, and authorized the general leader to violate Damascus for three days as Yazeed bin Mo'awiya had done to the town of the Prophet (a.s) Medina before.[50]

The Domination Of The Turks On The Rule

From the prominent factors of the political and administrational corruption in the body of the Abbasid government at the age of Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) was the domination of the Turks over the government and their playing with the destinies of the state. The Abbasid throne was under their will and desire. They appointed and deposed whomever they liked. All constitutional authorities were in their hands, and the king was but in name for he was deprived of all his administrational authorities and all things else except amusement and lusts.

Al-Mu'tamid was disabled by the Turks to a degree that he was prevented from spending any money whereas all the world was under his throne. The Turks had control over everything. Some poet said about al-Musta'een the Abbasid caliph,

"A caliph in a cage,
between Waseef and Bugha.
He says whatever they say to him,
As a parrot does."[51]

When al-Mu'tazz assumed the caliphate, some of his companions sent for a diviner and asked him how long the caliph would sit on the throne and how long he would live. A humorous man from among the attendants said, 'I know that.' They asked him to tell them and he said, 'The matter is in the hands of the Turks. They decide how long he rules and how long he lives.' The [all burst into laughter.[52

The Religious Life

The religious life at the time of Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) was not sound or straight. It was confused and roiled by some deviants who raised spurious arguments about the pure Islamic beliefs. Some non-Muslim jugglers tried to misguide Muslims and corrupt their beliefs. Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) resisted all those attempts and he refuted all those spuriosities and

illusions, and he brought out the pure face of Islam.

There was another phenomenon that appeared in the age of Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.). Some quack fabricated lies against Imam Abu Muhammad and his father (a.s.) before him to corrupt the beliefs of the followers of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s), but the imam cursed him and ordered his followers to curse and disavow him.

Refuting Al-Kindi

Isaaq al-Kindi was the philosopher of Iraq. His thoughts tempted him of some suspicion about the Holy Qur'an, and he spread among scholars that he had written a book called "The Contradiction of the Qur'an". He busied himself with this matter. The news came to Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) who met one of al-Kindi's disciples and said to him, 'Is there no wise man among you to prevent your teacher al-Kindi from that which he has busied himself with in the Qur'an?'

The disciple said, 'We are his disciples. How is it possible for us to object to him whether in this matter or else?'

Imam Abu Muhammad said to him, 'Do you tell him what I shall say to you?'

He said, 'Yes.'

Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) said to him, 'Go to him, be courteous with him, and show him that you will help him in what he is in. when he feels comfortable with you, you say to him, 'If someone recites the Qur'an, is it possible that he means other meanings than what you think you understand?' He shall say that it is possible because he is a man who understands when he listens. If he says that, you say to him, "How do you know? He might mean other than the meanings that you think, and so he fabricates other than its (the Qur'an) meanings…'

The disciple went to his teacher al-Kindi and did as the imam told him. Al-Kindi said to his disciple, 'I adjure you by Allah to tell where you have got this from!'

The disciple said, 'It was something that came to my mind and I mentioned it to you.'

Al-Kindi said, 'No, no one like you can get to this. Would you tell me where you have got this from?'

He said, 'Imam Abu Muhammad asked me to say that…'

Al-Kindi said, 'Now you say the truth. Like this would not come out except from that house (the Ahlul Bayt)…'

After that, al-Kindi burnt his book.[53]

Refuting A Monk

Once, people suffered rainlessness. Al-Mu'tamid, the Abbasid caliph, ordered people to go out in the open air for three days in order to offer the prayer for rain. They did, but no rain fell down.

Christians as well went out with whom there was a monk who whenever stretched his hand towards the sky it rained. He did that many times and some ignorant (Muslims) doubted their religion and some others apostatized. This was hard for al-Mu'tamid. He went to Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) who was in prison then and said to him, 'Attain to the nation of your grandfather before they will perish!'

Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) said to him, 'Let people go out tomorrow and I shall remove their doubts inshallah.'

Al-Mu'tamid set the imam free from prison, but the imam asked him to set free all his companions from prison too, and al-Mu'tamid responded to him. On the following day, people went out to offer the prayer for rain. The monk raised his hand towards the sky and it clouded and rained. Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) asked his men to catch the monks hand and take what there was in it. There was a bone of a human being. The imam took the bone from the monk and asked him to pray for rain again. The monk raised his hands towards the sky, but clouds disappeared and the sun shone. People were astonished.

Al-Mu'tamid asked Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) what that was and the imam said, 'This is a bone of one of the prophets that this monk has got in a way or another from some grave. Whenever a prophet's bone is exposed under the sky, it will rain…'

Al-Mu'tamid checked that and it was as the imam said. Then suspicions and doubts were refuted.[54]

Liars And Fabricators

Liars and fabricators were not few at that time, and this was another plague of that age. It was a result of weak faith. From the most famous fabricators was Urwah bin Yahya ad-Dihqan al-Baghdadi who fabricated lies against Imam Abul Hasan Ali bin Muhammad al-Hadi (a.s.) and Imam Abu Muhammad al-Hasan bin Ali (a.s.) after him. He embezzled the monies that came to Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) from his followers. The imam cursed him and ordered his followers to curse and disavow him lest he would destroy their beliefs.[55]

Amusement And Diversion

Amusement, singing, dancing, and all kinds of diversion were widespread in the age of Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.). Baghdad and Samarra' were full of debauchery and vices. It was the Abbasid kings who led the society to this corruption. They submitted to their lusts and desires, and their red nights were full of all kinds of vices and sins.

Al-Mahdi, the Abbasid king, was the first who opened the door of music, singing, dancing, and drinking for the other Abbasid kings. He was fond of a songstress called Jawhar.[56]

As for Harun ar-Rashid, he was famous for his indulging in amusement and singing. His nights

were full of all kinds of music, singing, dancing, and drinking. He was fond of a bondmaid called Thatul Khal. Once, he swore for her that he would carry out everything she asked him for. She asked him to appoint some man in charge of war and kharaj in Persia for seven years. He did that and wrote a covenant and made a condition for the heir apparent to carry out that after him if it could not be done in his life.[57]

Al-Ma'mun, who was said to be moderate in conduct, spent many of his nights in singing and playing. He was fond of a bondmaid called Urayb, and he often composed poetry on her.

Al-Mutawakkil, who was contemporary with Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.), was boyish following after his lusts and desires. He was the most dissolute king among the Abbasids. We shall talk about this and other things when we shall talk about his life in a coming articles.

References

[1] Tareekh at-Tamaddun al-Islami (the history of the Islamic civilization), vol.5 p.79.

[2] Al-Wuzara' wel Kuttab (viziers and clerks), p.288.

[3] The life of Imam Musa bin Ja'far.

[4] Al-Wuzara' wel Kuttab, p.142.

[5] Ibid., p.268.

[6] Al-Kamil fit-Tareekh, vol.6 p.268.

[7] Al-Fakhri, p.164.

[8] Al-Wulat wel Qudhat (walis and judges), p.125-126.

[9] An-Nujoom az-Zahirah, vol.2 p.54, al-Khutat by al-Maqrizi, vol.2 p.94.

[10] Al-Akhbar at-Tuwal, p.384.

[11] Al-Wuzara' wel Kuttab, p.250.

[12] Nashwar al-Muhadharah, vol.1 p.293.

[13] Al-Muntadham, vol.6 p.253.

[14] An-Nujoom az-Zahira, vol.2 p.65.

[5] Al-Kamil fit-Tareekh, vol.6 p.319.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Al-Mustadhraf min Akhbar al-Jawari by Salahuddeen, p.28.

[18] Tareekh al-Khulafa' by as-Sayouti, p.384.

[19] Al-Aghani, vol.16 p.226.

[20] Samt an-Nujoom al-Awali, vol.3 p.354.

[21] Nisa' al-Khulafa' (the caliph's women) by ibn as-Sa'iy, p.86.

[22] Al-Aghani, vol.14 p.193.

[23] Al-Aghani, vol.14 p.193.

[24] Al-aghani.

[25] Uyoon at-Tawareekh, vol.6 p.170.

[26] Mir'at az-Zaman, vol.6 p.158.

[27] Murooj ath-Thahab, vol.2 p.366.

[28] Al-Wuzara' wel Kuttab, p.192.

[29] Al-Mahasin wel Masawi', p.585.

[30] Safeenat al-Bihar, vol.2 p.158.

[31] Maqatil at-Talibiyeen, p.604.

[32] Ibid., p.615.

[33] Qur'an, 2:255.

[34] Qur'an, 18:57.

[35] Qur'an, 54:23.

[36] Qur'an, 16:108.

[37] Qur'an, 17:45-46.

[38] Muhaj ad-Da'awat, p.44-45.

[39] Muhaj ad-Da'awat, p.45.

[40] The unjust ruler.

[41] The awaited savior.

[42] He meant by "the truth" the savior who would rule with justice, and remove all kinds of oppression.

[43] Muhaj ad-Da'awat, p.63-67.

[44] Lectures on the History of the Islamic nations, p.270.

[45] Al-Mahasin wel Masawi', p.531, al-Fakhri, p.214.

[46] Tareekh al-Ya'qubi, vol.3 p.125.

[47] Maqatil at-Talibiyeen, p.164.

[48] Hamish (footnote or margin) al-Kuna wel Alqab, vol.2 p.402.

[49] Nowadays Damascus, but then, Sham encompassed the present Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine.

[50] Mir'at az-Zaman, vol.6 p.169.

[51] Murooj ath-Thahab, vol.4 p.61.

[52] Al-Fakhri, p.181.

[53] Al-Manaqib, vol. 4 p.424.

[54] Jawharat al-Kalam, p.154, Akhbar ad-Duwal, p.117.

[55] Rijal al-Kashshi, p.353.

[56] Al-Bayan wet-Tebyeen, vol.3 p.370-371.

.[57] Al-Aghani, vol.19 p.116