Imam Hasan al-askari (A.S.)'s Political, Social and Knowledge Aspect

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Short Biography.1

Name: Hasan

Title: Al-askari

Kunyat:Abu Muhammad

Born:Medina on Monday, 8th Rabi-ul-Thani232 A.H.

Father's name:Imam Ali un-Naqi al-Hadi(A.S.)

Mother's Name:Saleel

Martyred:at the age of 28 years at Samarra (Iraq), on Friday, 8th Rabi-ul-Awwal 260 A.H.

poisoned by:Mo'tamad, the Abbasid caliph.

Buried:At Samarra(Iraq).

Imam Hassan al-askari was born in Madina,on 8th day of the month of Rabi' Thani, in the year 232 A.H. He was called 'al-askari' in connection with the district of Askar in the city of Samarra' in which he (the Imam) and his father, Imam Ali un-Naqi al-Hadi (A.S.) were imprisoned by the Abbasid caliphs.

The holy Imam(A.S.) was born and brought up under the care of his father, Imam Ali al-Hadi (A.S.), who was well-known for his divinely inspired knowledge, holy striving (Jihad) and good acts and from him he learned the best of morals, the abundance of knowledge, the spirit of belief and the good merits of Ahlul-Bayt (A.S.).

Imam Hasan askari

Indeed, he (the Holy Imam) (A.S..) accompanied his holy father and lived with him more that twenty three years, during which time he comprehended the sciences of the descendants of Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and learned the inheritance of the divine leadership. He looked like his fathers in the fields of knowledge, good deeds, jihad, and calling to reform in the community of his holy grandfather,Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.).

Various narrations are given concerning the leadership of Imam al-askari (a.s.) and the isuue of his leadership appeared during the period of his holy father, Imam Ali al-Hadi (A.S.).

Sheikh Mufid narrated the following:

"On the authority of Abu Bakr Fahfaki, who said: 'Abul-Hasan (al-Hadi), peace be on him, wrote

me (i.e. Abu Bakr Fahfaki): 'Abu Muhammad, my son, is the soundest of the family of Muhammad(S.A.W.) in excellence and the firmest of them in proof. He is the eldest of my (surviving) sons. He is the successor. To him, end, the bonds of leadership (Imamate) and our laws. Whatever you used to ask me about ask him. With him, you find what you are in need of."

After his reverend father, the Holy Imam (A.S.) undertook the task of leadership "Imamtate'. His succession lasted about six years, and, in which, he practised different kinds of political and scholarly responsibilities as his divinely appointed forefathers accurately and efficiently did.

2. The Noble Character of Imam al-askari (A.S.)

Indeed, Imam al-askari(a.s.), like his noble fathers, was a prominent scholar and an Imam whom no one could ignore. He (A.S.) was the chief of religious scholars, an ideal of worshippers, a leader of politics and opposition, and towards whom the hearts of people were adhered with love and respect.

Inspite of the existence of the brutal terrorism of the Abbasid rule, and their political hostility towards Ahlul-Bayt (A.S.), and the continuous pursuit of authorities for him and his followers, and throwing them in prisons and jails, the caliphs of his time could not hide his personality or weaken his scientific and political role and his social status. Thus, the spiritual authority of the Holy Imam(A.S.) was imposed upon the rulers and the opponents of his time.

Ahmad bin Abdulla bin Khaqan, being an opponent of Imam al-askari (A.S.), narrated a full description about his social and political status and position:

Ibn Shahr Ashub said:

"Hussein bin Muhammad Ash'ari and Muhammad bin Ali said: During his assembly one day the Shias and their beliefs were mentioned. Ahmad bin Abdulla bin Khaqan was in charge of estates and the land tax in Qom. He was the severe enemy of the descendants of Ali bin Abi-Talib(A.S.), who said: 'I had not seen a man from the Sayyids like al-Hassan bin Ali bin Muhammad bin Ali al-Reza(A.S.). Once, the Imam's servant visited my father and said: Abu Muhammad bin al-Rida is standing at the door. Therefore, he permitted them to enter, and welcomed him (the Imam). Then, the Caliph made him sit down in his oratory (place of Prayer) and started to talk with him and asked for sacrifice of himself for the Imam.

When the Imam wanted to leave, he (my father) bid farewell to him. Then, I asked my father about him (the Imam) and he replied: 'I my son! This is the Imam (leader) of Shias and if the office of leadership was to be taken from our caliphs i.e. the family of al-Abbas, no one among the family of Bani Hashim would be more entitled to it than him (the Imam) becase of his great

merit, his self restraint, his modesty, his fasting, his prayer, his asceticism, his devotion (to Allah), and all of his high morals and his righteousness.' "Indeed, I always asked about him, they glorified him and mentioned his charismas. He added saying: 'I have never seen anyone who is more plentiful in knowledge and manner, nor sweet in tongue than Hassan al-askari(A.S.).

Because of the Holy Imam's great status, political position and his standing at the top of political opposition at that time, the, then, authorities not only imposed a house arrest on him, but also forced him to attend the office of the caliphate on Mondays and Thursdays every week in the city of Samarrah, the military garrison capital city of Abbasid administration.

In this regard, one of the companions of the Holy Imam (A.S.) said:

"We held a meeting in the district of "al-Askar", then, we waited for the day of Abu Muhammad's (the Holy Imam) going by, instead, he (a.s.) sent a letter in which he wrote the following: 'No one should greet me, nor refer to me with his hand nor gestures, because you would not secure yourselves."

The great position of the Imam (a.s.) can be shown by the following historical document in which he describes the people's conditions during the Holy Imam's martyrdom:

"When the news of his (the HolyImam) martyrdom was spread, Samarra' became on uproar. The markets were empty. Bani (the family) Hashim, the military leaders, the secretaries, the judges, the attestators and the rest of the people rode to his funeral. On that day, Samarra' looked like the (day of) Resurrection.."

3. Imam's Worship

History is replete with news and narrations which talk about the Holy Imam's worship and piety. Among them are:

1. Muhammad Shakiri said:

He[Holy Imam (A.S.)] used to sit in his prayer niche (mihrab) and start prostrating, then, I slept. When I woke up, I saw him still prostrating(Sajdah)."

2. Kulaini, quoting another narration which talked about the Holy Imam's worshipand piety and how he spent his time in Abbasid prison in Samarra praising, worshipping and devoting himself to Allah, the Almighty, to the extent that he[Holy Imam (A.S.)] even had an impact on his own jailer, said:

"The Abbasids went to Salih bin Wasif when Abu Muhammad (Imam Hassan al-askari(A.S.)), peace be on him, was imprisoned. They told him: "Be hard on him. Don't give him any ease.' "What can I do with him?" Salih asked them. 'I entrusted two of the most evil men I found (to

guard the Imam). These two men became (men) of worship, prayer and fasting to an amazing extent.' Then, he ordered these two men who were in charge of Imam Hasan al-askari(A.S.)) to be present. He told them: 'Shame on you! What is your involvement in the affairs of this man (i.e. the Holy Imam)?' They answered: "What can we say about a man who fasts at day and stands (in prayer) at night, who does not speak, and occupies himself with nothing except worship? When he (the Imam) looks at us, our limbs shake and within us in (a feeling) which we have never had. When the Abbasids heard this, they all left in despair."

The deterioration of the adminstrative, moral and political conditions of the Abbasid authorities. The life of extravagance and entertainment dominated the Abbasid palace in Samarra. In return, poverty, hungry, sickness and terrorism prevailed everywhere. All these circumstances caused the Holy Imam (A.S.) to oppose and confront them with the help of the descendants of Ali bin Abi-Talib (A.S.) by a revolution in order to save the Ummah from such disturbance and unrest.

Therefore, the Abbasid authorities, especially the authority of Mu'taz and Muhtadi, Mu'tamid endeavoured to confront the Holy Imam(A.S.) through confinement, terrorism, prison, and siege.

4. Imam al-askari(A.S.) and Political Conditions

We have mentioned in previous chapters about the Abbasid rulers and their oppression, corruption, dispersion and weakness. The Holy Imam (A.S.) lived during the caliphate of Mutawakkil, and his two sons, Muntasir and Musta'in. He (A.H.) undertook the task of divine leadership after his holy father's martyrdom in 253 A.H. During the reign of the Abbasid caliph, Mu'taz. The Abbasid caliph Mu'taz who was dismissed from the office in the year 255 A.H. by his collaterals and, then, they put him in prison until he died.

After him, the caliph Muhtadi Abbasi took the office of the caliphate. This man, also, faced the same destiny. They attacked him, wounded him and called him to be deposed, but, he refused and after two days, he died in the year of 256 A.H.

Regarding the conditions of the people, historian quoted that an epidemic spread about in Iraq in the year of 258 A.H. and during which more that ten thousand people died of starvation. Poverty and high costs spread severely in different lands. For example, the high cost in Mecca caused people to leave for areas surrounding Madina and other lands... in Baghdad, the prices of essential commodities, also, increased..."

Ya'qoobi quoted another narration:

"The prices were so expensive in Baghdad and Samarra' that ever hasp (fastener) cost one

hundred dirhams. Wars continued and during which, provisions were cut off wealth decreased..."

As the society suffered poverty, hunger, and sickness, the unrest caused by the autority, and mismanagement, the palaces of the caliphs filled with slave girls, the playing with jewels, extavagance, lavish gifts and dissolute entertainment. This gives us clues about the life of the Abbasid palace which contained such playing and vanities to the extent that some caliphs mocked each other, thus, disclosing various scenes of vanity and extravagance and playing with the treasury, the situation was so deteriorated that the personal possessions of some of their women and their yearly expenditures were millions of dirhams.

5. The Holy Imam(A.S.) Face to Face with the Oppressors

The Abbasid authorities persecuted Imam Hasan al-askari(A.S.) and put him under their control in order to paralyze his political and ideological activities and also restrain him from practising his leading role among the Ummah. Therefore, the Holy Imam (A.S.) was obliged to act secretly and built an organization of his followers, and representatives and strengthened its base. By studying historical documents, available at hands, one can clearly detect the following procedures:

1. Abu Hashim al-Ja'fari, on the authority of Dawood bin Aswad, the stoker of Abu Muhammad (a.s.), is quoted to have said:

"One day, my lord, Abu Muhammad, [i.e. Imam al-askari(A.S.)], called me and handed to me a threshold, which seemed very heavy. He (a.s.) told me to take it to Amri. Therefore, I started out, but on the way a water carrier with a mule advanced towards me. His mule approached me on my way and the water carrier called to me to shout it back to him. Instead, I hit it with the threshold and started beating it. As a result, the board split and I looked at it and found books inside it. So, I hastened to the thereshold and held it under my sleeve. The water carrier started crying, and cursing me and my owner. When I approached the house of my Lord, upon returning, the Imam's servant, Isa received me at the door and said: "My master has asked you: Why did you beat the mule and break the threshold?" I answered him: "O my master! I did not know what was in it. He (A.S..), then, said: "Why did you do an action and then apologize for it. Be careful not to repeat it, again, from now on, When you hear someone cursing us, go on your way on which you are ordered. And be aware not to answer someone who curses us or introduce yourself. Because we are in an evil land, go on your way. Your news and conditions reach us, so be aware of that."

2.On the authority of Muhammad bin Abdul-Aziz Balkhi, who said:

"One day in the morning, I sat on a street called "Ghanam", and it happened that Abu Muhammad (A.S.), (the Holy Imam), was coming from his house, on the way to a public inn. I said to myself: "Consider O people! This is Allah's proof on you; therefore, acknowledge him. ' When he[the Holy Imam (A.S.)] passed beside me, he gestured with his forefinger towards me to keep silent. On that night I saw him saying: 'Surely, it is either to keep silent or be killed, therefore be aware of Allah against yourself.'"

6. Images of Political Struggle

Imam Hasan al-askari (A.S.), like his respected holy forefathers (peace be upon them all), engaged in political struggle to confront oppression, terrorism, safeguard the holy Islamic message, values and principles as essential tasks of leadership and the Ummah whose task they undertook according to Allah's wishes.

For fulfilling this great mission they exprienced torture,imprisonment and long sufferings. They bore prisons, pursuit, killings, accusations and oppression against them as mentioned in the following narrations:

1. Abu Hashim Ja'fari was imprisoned together with Abu Muhammad (A.S.). The caliph, Mu'taz imprisoned both of them with other "Talibiyyin' [the followers of Imam Ali(A.S.)].

2. Abu Hashim Dawood bin Qasim is Quoted to have said:

"I was in the prison known as the prison of Salih bin Wasif Ahmar, together with Hassan bin Muhammad Aqiqi, Muhammad bin Ibrahim Amari, and others... It happened that both Abu Muhammad al-Hassa (A.S.), together with his brother, Ja'far were brought into prison. Thus, we started to be in the service of him (the Holy Imam). Salih bin Wasif was resonsible for the imprisonment of the Holy Imam (A.S.). In prison, with us, there was a man from the tribe of Jumhi who pretended to be a follower of Imam Ali(A.S.), who said: Abu Muhammad (A.S.) turned around and said: "Were it not that among you is the one who is not from you, I would let you know when you would be set free. Then, he gestured to Jumhi to go out and thus he went away. Then, Abu Muhammad (A.S.) said: This man (i.e. Jumhi) is not from you, therefore, be careful of him. Because, in his clothes, there is a letter which he wrote for the caliph telling him what you say about him (the caliph). Therefore, some of the prisoners stood up and checked his clothes and found the same letter written therein."

3. In his book "A'lam Wara" Tabarsi, an historian, mentioned on the authority of a chain of narrators:

"On the authority of Ahmad bin Muhammad, who said: "I wrote a letter to Abu Muhammad (A.S.) when the caliph, Muhtadi, started killing the supporters of (Imam Ali bin Abi-Talib(A.S.))

and said: O my Lord, praise be to Allah who kept him away from you. Indeed, I had been informed that the caliph threatened you, saying: "By Allah, I would drive them away from the surface of the earth'. Abu Muhammad(A.S.) wrote a letter saying: "That causes the caliph's age to be shorted, therefore, start counting from today five days and on the sixth, he (i.e. the caliph) will be assassinated after being humiliated and disdained, and, thus, it took place as the Holy Imam(A.S.) prophesied."

The caliph, Mu'taz, like Muhtadi, thought deeply about killing the Holy Imam (A.S.) and plotted a conspiracy against him. In this respect, Ibn Sharh Ashub is quoted to have said:

"The caliph, Mu'taz asked Sa'id, the chamberlain, to take Abu Muhammad(A.S.) to Kufa and behead him on the way. His (the Imam's) letter reached us, saying: 'Whatever you heard would be safe with you. Thus, after three days, Mu'taz was deposed and killed."'

4. Sheikh Mufid is, also, quoted to have said:

"Abu Muhammad (Hassan al-askari), peace be on him, was handed over to Nahrir. He was hard on him and did harm to him. His wife said to him: "Fear Allah, you do not know who is in your house. She mentioned to him his [Imam Hasan al-askari's] righteousness and devotion (to Allah) and said: I fear for you as a result of him."

5. Sheikh Mufid, on the authority of Ismael Alawi, said:

"Abu Muhammad (Hassan al-askari(A.S.)), was detained by Ali bin Awtash. The latter was violent in his hostility to the holy family of Muhammad, (S.A.W.) and severe on the family of Abu-Talib (A.S.). He was told to treat him (badly) and he did so. Yet, [Imam Hassa al-askari(A.S.)] was only with him for a day and he bagan to treat him with humility. He did not raise his eyes to him out of respect and honour. He would take leave from him and had become the most perceptive of men in repect to him and the best of them in his words about him.

7. Imam Hasan al-askari's(A.S.) Divine Knowledge

The Holy Imam's main task was to safeguard the Message of Islam, to defend its originality, to call people towards it and to convey its principles and values.

During the reign of Imam al-askari(A.S.), the school of Ahlul-Bayt (A.S..) was filled with knowledge, calling to Islam and defending it and spreading its ideas, the chief element of this act was done through the academic way.

Indeed, the Holy Imam (A.S.) had students, companions and narrators, some of whom had continued their task since the reign of his father and grandfather, while others joined in during the period of his divine leadership. All these students and narrators had studied under the Holy

Imam(A.S.) and quoted him in narrating Islamic sciences and culture.
Sheikh Tusi mentioned the names of the narrators of Imam al-askari (A.S.). Their number was about 99 narrators on different levels of knowledge and culture.
Indeed, the religious scholars who either narrated from Imam al'askari (A.S.), or who studied under his school, or who were educated in the school of the Holy Imam(A.S.) and his forefathers, participated in developing the scholarly offering in the fields of jurisprudence, interpretation, narration, faith, literature, geography, and other sciences.
All these evidences indicated the greatness of this school and also refer to the scholarly status of the Holy Imam(A.S.) and his high rank among people.

8. Holy Imams' Martyrdom

Imam al-askari (A.S.) lived during the times of the Abbasid caliphs, Mu'taz, Muhtadi and Mu'tamid. The Holy Imam (A.S.) suffered more afflictions, confinement, terrorism and pursuit by the three above mentioned brutal and cruel caliphs and was, also, exposed to imprisonment at different times before them.
The last caliph, whom the Holy Imam (A.S..) lived with, Mu'tamid, was dissoulte, disposed to entertainment and pleasures, singing, and committing the forbidden. All these caused people to hate him,
The Holy Imam (A.S.) suffered different kinds of troubles and torments in the hands of the caliph, Mu'tamid, who surrounded him with intensive security forces to keep an eye on him and pursue those who wanted to contact him.
The reason that caused the Abbasids to be more envious against the high position of the Holy Imam (A.S.), among the Ummah, was their being afraid of his son, the Awaited Imam Mahdi(A.S.). They knew that Imam would be the son of Imam askari(A.S.) whom he referred to in one of his letters:
"They thought that they could kill me in order to cut off my offspring, but Allah denied their sayings and praise be to Allah."
The anger of the caliph, Mu'tamid, increased more when he saw that the whole ummah glorified, and showed great respect and superiority to the Holy Imam (A.S.); and the Shias more thant the Abbasids. On the other side, the caliph, Mu'tamid was greatly hated by the whole ummah. Therefore, he decided to annihilate the Holy Imam (a.s.) and assassinate him.
Imam Abu Muhammad Hassan al-askari(A.S.) was poisoned by the caliph, Mu'tamad, and, thus, suffered severely and was martyred on 8th of the month of Rabi' Awwal in the year 260 (A.H.). At the time of his death, he was twenty-eight years old. He was buried in the house in

which his father was buried in Samarra'. He left behind his son - Living Holy Awaited Saviour Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi(A.S.) the one who is awaited to bring about the heavenly rule of truth in the whole world.