



Biographies Of Leaders Of Islam

Author

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Preface

The sixth century of the Christian era was a period during which the flood of atheism rose to its apex. Worldwide, all countries were engulfed by the deluge of paganism surging in four directions. In china, the teachings, of Confucius were forgotten; India became the cradle of idolatry; Persia was exulted in fire-worship; Europe lay wrapped in the black shroud of the Dark Ages. Arabia was, likewise, in the grip of a number of idols which were worshipped by different tribes. All immoral practices and shameful sins prevailed in that peninsula, destroying social structures and wiping out moral values.

At long last, according to the laws of reaction, the darkness of atheism was shattered by the light of divine guidance. The sun of Monotheism shone again in all its brightness, discarding the clouds of apostasy, star-worship and other pagan doctrines. In Mecca, savior of humanity started a dramatic change in the history of man.

Endowed with his God-gifted power, he brought radical changes to the decadent society.

Through the medium of wise preaching, he succeeded in convincing his people, and later the world at large, that image-worship was a senseless practice, and that they ought to believe in  One Supreme Being Who is the Creator, Lord and Sustainer. Rising to the zenith of political power and prowess, this reformer later commanded the ignorant folks to abandon idolatry and gambling, give up usury, and abstain from wine-drinking.

As the greatest law-giver of all times, he set for mankind an everlasting code of ethics that ensured moral excellence. He released the poor from the grip of capitalist exploitation, relieved the oppressed from the clutches of the profiteers, and set such basic rules as would ensure the emancipation of slaves through the employment of terse and well calculated measures.

Muhammad was the name of this sage and reformer to whom all the moralists of the East and the West ought to pay homage. With incessant labor, and with the sacrifice of house and hearth, Muhammad revolutionized the moral and mental attitude of his wild-tempered, rough and unruly nation within the short span of twenty years. When he was finally called to God's mercy, he left this world satisfied and contented, having successfully and fruitfully fulfilled his mission.

He had also left behind him capable successors, from his own holy Progeny, who never ceased conveying his sacred teachings in the light of the holy QUR'AN and the exemplary SUNNAH.

He had clearly and unambiguously declared that both the holy QUR'AN and his revered

Progeny would survive in close connection with each other till the Day of Judgment. Indeed all moralists, rationalists, and historians of the East and the West ought to pay homage to that sublime reformer.

We feel it is our moral obligation to form an idea about the biographies of the holy Prophet and his revered descendants. This book is a humble effort to achieve this objective. We are morally bound to know as much about these sacred sages as can be by reviewing authentic and reliable sources. It is indeed a sad fact that the young generations of schoolboys and schoolgirls, as well as college students, are by far more familiar with other philosophers and reformers than with the holy Prophet and his true followers. It is a great intellectual gap the filling of which is badly needed now more than ever before.

The biographies of the Prophet and his sacred Progeny set a perfect standard of moral excellence for all humanity. In our daily life, we are doomed to encounter numerous odds. The theme of morality is to remember our duty in all circumstances, pleasant and unpleasant, however intolerable the latter may be. In order to attain this goal, it is incumbent upon us to study the biographies of individuals who exercised a complete control over their desires. These were especially blessed and guided by the Almighty. They were not ruled by sentiment; rather, they were always of their duties and moral obligations. They set the best examples in piety, perseverance, fortitude and sacrifice.

The biography of Muhammad and his sacred Progeny is a comprehensive book of morality each page of which narrates either feats of bravery and courage, or deeds of generosity, sacrifice, and self-denial. If one studies such biographies, he will come across some jewels of wisdom and knowledge. He will find in them storehouses of knowledge and theology. The pages of their biographies bring to his view sanguine scenes of battles fought against tyranny and oppression.

Those noble sages did not live their lives under the same circumstances. The bitter odds of life forced them to face various situations and fortunes, and they had to cope through various means and methods, each according to what best suited his own individual capacity and caliber. In order to learn the best methods to apply in various circumstances, we must read these biographies, one by one, so that we may go through all events and come to know of the best possible way to deal with them.

It is equally important to appreciate the lofty status they enjoy in numerous verses of the holy QUR'AN which refer to their sublime ethics and exemplary deeds. I would like here to quote only a few of them which is but a drop in the ocean:

On p. 244 of GHAYAT AL-MARAM, 'ALLAMA AL-BAHRANI quotes the FAQIH ABU AL-HASAN

MUHAMMAD IBN ALI IBN SHADHAN as stated in AL-MANAQIB AL-MA'AHMIN TARIQ AL-AMMAH, quoting IBN 'ABBAS saying that he heard the Messenger of God (P.B.U.H.) say in a lengthy HADITH: "O people! Whoever is pleased to emulate me, let him accept the WILAYAT of ALI IBN ABU TALIB and the Imams from my offspring, for they are the storehouses of my knowledge". JABIR IBN 'ABD ALLAH AL-ANSARI stood and asked: "O Messenger of God! How many are these Imams?" He (P.B.U.H.) answered: "O JABIR! You have asked me, God bless you,

about Islam in its entirety!" then he added: "Their number is similar to the number of wells which gushed forth for MUSA IBN 'UMRAN when he struck the stone and twelve wells gushed forth". On p. 406-407, Vol. 2, of TAFSIR AL-BURHAN, 'ALLAMA AL-BAHRANI quotes IMAM ABU JA'GAR MUHAMMAD IBN JARIR from SHADHAN from SALMAN saying: "The Messenger of God (P.B.U.H.) said once to me: 'God the Almighty and Sublime never sent a prophet or a messenger without assigning twelve NAQIBS (representatives or deputies)'.

I said: 'O Messenger of God! I have come to know that from the People of the two Books'. He said: 'O SALMAN! Did you come to know who are my NAQIBS and who are the twelve men God selected for the nation after me?' I said: 'God and His Messenger know best'. He (P.B.U.H.) said 'O SALMAN! God created me of the choice of His light and called upon me and I obeyed Him, and He created IMAM ALI out of my light and He called upon him and Ali obeyed Him, and He created Fatima of both myself and Ali, and He called her and she obeyed Him, and He created AL-HASAN of me, of Ali and of Fatima, and He called upon him and he obeyed Him,

and He created AL-HUSAIN of me, of Ali, of Fatima, and of AL-HASAN, and He called upon him and he obeyed him. Then He named us after five of His own Names: God is the Praised One (MAHMUD), and I am Muhammad; and God is the Sublime ('ALI), and this is 'Ali, and God is the Creator (FATIR; see Chapter 35 of the holy QUR'AN), and this is Fatima; and for God are all the attributes of bounty (IHSAN), and this is AL-HASAN; and God is the One Who grants (MUHSIN), and this is AL-HUSAIN. Then He created out of us and out of AL-HUSAIN nine Imams, and He called upon their souls, and they obeyed Him even before He created the heavens or the earth or the human species; for we have been but light raising God, listening unto Him, obeying Him". SALMAN continues to say that he asked the Messenger of God (P.B.U.H.): "May both my parents be sacrificed for thy sake, what shall be the reward of those who know these Imams?

" He (P.B.U.H.) answered: "O SALMAN! Whoever knows them as they ought to be known and emulates them and befriends their friends and becomes the enemy of their enemy shall, by God, go where we shall go, and shall live where we live". SALMAN continued to ask the Messenger of God (P.B.U.H.): "O Messenger of God! Can Imam be acquired without knowing

their names and lineage?" He (P.B.U.H.) answered: "No, SALMAN". Then SALMAN asked: "O Messenger of God! I would like to be one of their men, for I know them up to AL-HUSAIN", whereupon the Messenger of God provided him with the names of the rest of AHL AL-BAYT, saying, "Then the master of the worshippers ALI IBN AL-HUSAIN, then his son MUHAMMAD IBN ALI splitter of the knowledge of the early ones and the latter of the Prophets and Messengers,

then JA'FAR IBN MUHAMMAD, God's truthful tongue (AS-SADIQ), then MUSA IBN JA'FAR who suppresses his anger perseveres for the sake of pleasing God, the Almighty and Sublime, then 'ALI IBN MUSA who accepts God's destiny (AR-RIDA), then MUHAMMAD IBN ALI who is chosen from the best of God's creation, then 'ALI IBN Muhammad who guides people to God's way (AL-HADI), then AL-HASAN IBN ALI who is the silent keeper of God's secret, then Muhammad IBN AL-HASAN the guide and the truly guided one who is the living articulator (AL-QAIM) of God's Rights". Then the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) continued saying, "You shall come to see him (AL-QA'IN, AL-MAHDI) upon his Return, and so shall everyone who is like you, and whoever accepts his sovereignty out of knowledge". SALMAN continues to describe is feeling of ecstasy at such glad tidings. This proves that all those who possessed the spiritual caliber of SALMAN, who believed in an emulated these saintly souls, will have the unique distinction and honor of being risen from death to witness the return of AL-HAHDHI and enjoy the kingdom of God which he will INSHA-ALLAH establish on earth.

The first in the series of biographies of these illustrious sages is the biography of Prophet Muhammad, the Chosen One, the Seal of the Prophets, peace be upon him and his Progeny. His noble conduct is an ideal to be followed by every Muslim. Nay! Since the character of that great teacher was the climax of moral excellence, all humanity ought to proudly emulate him. Then we will narrate the biography of IMAM ALI IBN ABU TALIB. It is so comprehensive that not one group of men, or inhabitants of a particular region, but rather people of the whole world can find in it their ideal model. His career was so multi-faceted that we can see numerous models of cardinal virtues in that one individual. If we analyze the biographies of great men, we will find that each excelled in one virtue or two. Take, for example, Alexander the Great, napoleon, or Cromwell.

They can be taken as models of martial talents, men who maneuvered their armies skillfully in very precarious situations, winning astounding victories. But you cannot learn a lesson in sacrifice, humbleness or generosity from them. NAUSHERWON, Persian ruler, is renowned for his unparalleled justice, but he is a model for kings only. His life does not teach people how to live peacefully as good neighbors maintaining a social order. HATIM AL-TA'I is distinguished for generosity. But how to fight for the cause of righteousness and the interest of the nation cannot be taught by that Bedouin chief.

Names of RUSTAM, RICHARD LION-HEART and KHALID IBN AL-WALID shine brilliantly in the sky of bravery, but they will not demonstrate for us as to how we should deal with oppressive rulers patiently for the sake of the good-will of humanity, or how to relinquish our rights to avert the calamities of a civil war. Even the combination of three or four, or even five, of such "great" personalities will not form a model to guide us in various walks of our lives.

History nevertheless brings before our view one sublime figure whose character has acquired the combination of all virtues, one who has left his footprints to guide us in all circumstances. He prompts us to fare honorably in prosperity or adversity, in success and in failure, as a king or as a laborer, as a commander or as a soldier, as an orator or as a philosopher- in all phases of life. This is the personality of IMAM ALI IBN ABU TALIB who was the true successor of the holy Prophet and the living embodiment of his teachings. In the biography of IMAM ALI, one finds all aspects of human conduct which teach him how to lead his life in changing circumstances, and how to stand before the world as a model of moral perfection. It was IMAM ALI from whom humanity can seek guidance by scrutinizing the various facets of his life and career. Another personality to be particularly cherished by half the human race, I mean the fair sex, is that of FATIMA AZ-ZAHRA, the chaste daughter of the holy Prophet.

Islamic teachings are not confined to men only; they include women, too. The personality that can be a model exclusively for women is that of Fatima, the sublime among the ladies of the world. She can singly guide half the human race as successfully towards moral perfection as the thirteen Infallible ones can guide men. Then comes the prince of Peace, IMAM HASAN, who for the sake of the welfare of the Muslims, and for the sake of saving them from bloodshed, relinquished his right as Caliph of the Muslims and concluded a treaty with his opponent MU'AWIYA on such equitable and wise terms as would ensure, if implemented, the protection of the Divine Law,

which was the ultimate objective of his life. He also provided chances to prepare the UMMA for JIHAD or for the great sacrifice which his younger brother HUSAIN performed on the blooded field of KARBALA. In order to attain moral excellences in a life full of hardships, a pious person has first to subdue his own desires and animal instincts. He has to tread upon and rise above his physical urges, and he has to struggle for the achievements of his principles in the light of reason and wisdom. He has also to fight external obstacles hindering his path towards the truth.

Environment, atmosphere, the pace of time and the forces of oppression, all unite to distract him from the path to righteousness. The floods of injustice, the storms of tyranny and downpour of troubles make it impossible for him to stand in their face. In such situations, it is not possible for everyone to lay down his life for the cause of defending the truth. Fortitude, forbearance, patience and courage are words written in dictionaries and are narrated as tales

or legends or recorded in books of ethics.

But to demonstrate the actual meaning of these words during times of hardship, or advance bravely towards the valley of death, or to quicken the staggering legs towards a real challenge, we need a living guide who serves as a model of such caliber. We desire the presence of a seasoned and experienced hero who braves the storms of calamities, swims through the ocean of blood and calls upon the whole world to: "Come up and follow me to the zenith of truth, the apex of righteousness, and the heights of fortitude...!" Such a personality can undoubtedly be none other than HUSAIN IBN ALI.

Among the Fourteen Infallibles, tall stands IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN, IMAM ALI son of HUSAIN, the embodiment of patience and devotion. He was strong enough to undergo the hardships of fetters, shackles and imprisonment in the way of God on one hand, while, on the other hand, we find him given to worshipping his Lord in the loneliness of dark nights. These days, the human race is stooping into materialism, forgetting the Creator, living in a world where the mighty and powerful wish to trample upon the weak and the meek, the majority desiring to crush the minority. It was always needed, and it is now needed more than ever before, to cultivate in our hearts a feeling for devotion and worship since a true worshipper will never shrink from serving humanity.

A true devotee of God will always serve His fellow human beings. If he is strong, he will not abuse his strength by oppressing the weak; rather, he will protect them with his God-given strength. This feeling will obligate the majority to defend the minority instead of crushing it. In order to cultivate this feeling in our hearts, we ought to narrate the biographies of those purified persons who, even during times of extreme desperation and dismay, did not forget their Lord.

When composed and enjoying all conveniences, one can enjoy the freedom of worship. But when the clouds of calamity and misery rest heavily on the mind, and the heart-rending shocks of the massacre of a whole family overwhelms the soul, worshipping the Lord so sincerely as to receive the title "ZAIN AL-ABIDIN", that is "chief of the prostrates", is the task of none but IMAM ALI son of HUSAIN.

IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-BAQIR and IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ were scholars who revived the passion for learning and the pursuit for knowledge. The highway of the Divine Law, paved by Prophet Muhammad, the last Messenger of God, was blocked by doubts, fallacies and superstitions. Yet every individual among the Prophet's Descendants attempted to preserve the message of God and offered while doing so precious sacrifices, but alas the grip of political persecution always choked his voice and in the end brought him to an untimely death. IMAM AL-BAQIR and IMAM AS-SADIQ, however, had the chance to present to the world the sacred

teachings of the Prophet which can ensure the reform of the sinful human race. IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM suffered the hardships of prison cells while upholding the banner of truth. IMAM AR-RIDA was appointed as the heir-apparent to the 'ABBASIDE monarch during the hey-days of the dynasty. He was surrounded by the elites, princes and ministers of the most significant and powerful empire of its time.

But he always sought to please his Lord, ignoring the pomp and power bestowed upon him even against his own will. He kept his escutcheon stainless, spotless, and he demonstrated how to perform that noble duty for which man was placed on earth. IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI lived the shortest span of life among the Imams, yet he demonstrated that when a person is resolved to be the model of moral perfection, he can leave an immortal impression of his conduct on the human mind.

Such a life, in spite of its short span, can be as important in moral history as any other of a longer duration. The biographies of IMAM ALI AN-NAQI and IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI are characterized with the same virtues which were the legacy of this household of Prophet-hood. Although both Imams lived in exile and imprisonment, they incessantly continued to propagate the teachings of the Prophet, braving all odds.

It is a fact that the religion of Islam is not merely a collection of doctrines. Islam came to bear the torch and shed the light on the zigzag of the human life. This is the way which may be described as 'thinner than hair and sharper than the sword'. One method, considered right at one time, may become wrong at another. It was, therefore, necessary to set up before the world different models of behavior to be emulated at every possible turn in the ever-bending path of life. Such cross-roads are usually met in man's journey. At every bend, it is possible that the traveler might take the wrong road and thus stray. The study of the biographies of these Infallible Leaders viz. the Prophet and his holy Progeny, consisting of Fatima and the twelve Imams from her descendants, is now available to the discreet reader on the pages of this book. Its size could not permit comprehensive details; therefore, we had to be satisfied with narrating the basic events only. May God render our humble effort the means of recognizing the real legacy of the holy Prophet and his true successors. ALLAHOMMA AMIN.

The Supreme Among The Prophets

MUHAMMAD THE CHOSEN ONE (PEACE BE UPON HIM AND HIS PROGENY)

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NAME AND LINEAGE

Prophet Abraham, the Friend of God, had two sons: ISHAQ (ISAAC), whose descendants included BANI (children of) Israel, Moses, Jesus and many other prophets arising from his tribe, and also Samuel (Ishmael) who had twelve sons one of whom was QAYDAR whose offspring inhabited HIJAZ (northern Arabia). Among his other sons was 'ADNAN who earned a high reputation. Prophet Muhammad's family tree reaches up to 'ADNANA as follows: He is Muhammad son of 'ABD-ALLAH son of 'ABD AL-MUTTALIB son of HASHIM son of 'ABDU MANAF son of QUSAY son of KILAB son of MURRA son of KA'B son of LUAYY son of GHALIB son of FEHR son of MALIK son of NADR son of KANANA son of KHUZAYMA son of MUDRIKA son of ILYAS son of MUDAR son of NEZAR son MA'AD son of 'ADNAN.

The descendants of NADR son of KANANA were known as QURAYSH. Prophet Muhammad's mother was 'AMINA daughter of WAHAB son of 'ABD MANAF son of ZUHRA son of KILAB son of MURRA. This shows that on both maternal and paternal sides, the Prophet belonged to the distinguished tribe of QURAYSH.

BIRTH

In 570 A.D., ABRAHA AL-ASHRAM, then vice-gerent of Yemen on behalf of the ABYSSINIAN king the NEGUS, was a staunch Christian who had built a magnificent cathedral in SAN'A' and had ordered the Arabs to go there for the pilgrimage instead of Mecca. He had marble brought to it from one of the derelict palaces of the Queen of SHEBA. In it, he set up crosses made of gold and silver, and pulpits of ivory and ebony. He wrote to his master the NEGUS saying: "I have built thee a church, O King, the like of which was never built for any king before thee; and I shall not rest until I have diverted unto it the pilgrimage of the Arabs". Not only was his order totally ignored, and man from KINANAH, a relative tribe of QURAYSH, went to SAN'A' to deliberately defile the church, which he did one night, returning safely to his people.

ABRAHA'S fury knew no bounds and he vowed to raze the KA'BA to the ground in revenge. He advanced with a large army in the van of which he placed an elephant, hence the Year of the Elephant which started a whole era of reckoning. That system of reckoning continued to be followed until the days of UMAR IBN AL-KHATTAB, the second caliph, when, upon the suggestion of IMAM ALI IBN ABU TALIB, the era of the HIJRI calendar was introduced. It was on a Friday, the 17th of RABI' AL-AWWAL in that year (corresponding to April 28, 570 A.D.) that the holy Prophet was born in Mecca, the main metropolis of HIJAZ. Earth received the greatest blessings from Heaven and mankind was exalted by the advent of its greatest Law-giver ever.

But this great child, destined to be the supporter of the poor, the helpless and the orphans, could

not enjoy the bliss of his father's love.

'ABD-ALLAH passed away in the full bloom of youth only a few months before Prophet Muhammad (P) was born. Some historians say that 'ABD-ALLAH died from an unidentified sickness only two months before the birth of his son Muhammad. The sadness of the situation is yet further aggravated when we learn that at the age of six he was deprived of his mother's affection as well. Providence had perhaps decided that he who would one day encompass every creature of the world in his affection, would have to taste the bitterness of the loss of his parent's affection in the tender years of childhood. As was the custom, a good-natured nurse of the tribe of BANI SA'D was appointed as a foster-mother to nurse Muhammad in the healthy climate of her desert village.

After weaning, he came back to Mecca to live with his mother 'AMINA. After her death, his grandfather ABD AL-MUTTALIB took him into his personal care and brought him up with fatherly affection. But after two years, this noble family-head also died. In the last days of his life, his major concern had been the safe upbringing of that child who he thought would grow up into a great personality. While breathing his last, he called his son ABU TALIB and entrusted Muhammad to his care. Other sons, older in age, stood by, but the far-sighted chief could see that none would look after his grandson as sincerely as ABU TALIB. History tells us that right up to his last breath, ABU TALIB fulfilled the promise which he had made to his respected father at the time when the life's lamp of the latter flickered.

In fact he extended the same love to Prophet Muhammad (p) as he did to his own children. He fostered him from the young age of eight years up to the time when he was a ripe, seasoned man of fifty-three, protecting him at the obvious risk of jeopardizing both his own life and that of his dear sons. His wife Fatima daughter of ASAD, too, was so affectionate to him that the Prophet tasted the flavor of maternal love from her. It was, therefore, only natural that when that noble lady died, Prophet Muhammad (p) uttered sorrowfully: "She was a mother to me after my real mother".

FIRST TRIP TO SYRIA

When Muhammad was twelve years old, ABU TALIB undertook a trade trip to Syria. Being an ambitious boy, he accompanied him. It was during this journey that BUHAIRA, a Christian hermit, met him and observed the signs of which he had read in previous Scriptures, and predicted: "This boy is destined to be a Prophet of great power and prestige". It was a very brief and fleeting encounter. They never stayed with BUHAIRA as some people mistakenly suggest.

PARTICIPATING IN THE 'LEAGUE OF THE INTERVENERS'

When Muhammad was twenty years old, the elders of the tribe of QURAYSH, headed by ZUBAIR son of ABD AL-MUTTALIB, drafted a covenant which they called "HILF AL-FUDUL", that is, "the league of the interveners", promoting chivalric principles. In the aftermath of 'ABD AL-MUTTALIB'S death, the Arabian tribes took to lawlessness. The anarchy and chaos reached such a level that the lives and property of strangers were no longer safe in Mecca. Resenting this situation, the HASHEMITES, the Prophet's clansmen, called upon the tribes of ZOHRA and TAYM to suppress the shameful disorder. They assembled at the house of 'ABD-Allah son of ADNAN and took an oath that: "We will always defend the oppressed, redress the grievances at all cost, and cooperate with one another to achieve this noble cause". Muhammad was one of the participants, and he held this agreement in high esteem. Even in the hey-day of Islam, when all other covenants of the Days of ignorance had been cancelled, he held himself bound by the said agreement and used to say: "If somebody were to appeal to me today in the name of that charter, I would surely respond to his appeal".

Yet in spite of such noble efforts, the vicious circle of evil was in full rotation. Women were regarded as inferior creatures; many of them were reduced to prostitution. Drinking, gambling, idolatry, adultery and usury were the order of the day. Murder, inter-tribal feuds and endless chains of revenge incidents were devastating the land. Life was neither safe nor peaceful. These were the moral and social conditions which the sensitive youth Muhammad was watching with very profound concern.

TRADE JOURNEY

The Prophet was twenty-five years old when he made a journey to Syria to sell KHADIJA'S merchandise there. The trip was so successful that KHADIJA obtained twice the profit she usually accrued every year.

MARRIAGE

KHADIJA daughter of KHUWAILID was deeply impressed by the moral excellence, honesty, and respectable personality of Prophet Muhammad (p) He, too, admired her fair dealing and noble character. So when an intermediary suggested that he should marry her, Muhammad reflected upon it and said, "She is a wealthy lady while I am too poor to be considered by her". But when he was assured of her agreement should he propose, he gladly made the formal request. KHADIJA acceded to it and a date was fixed for the marriage ceremony. AMR IBN ASAD acted as the trustee of his niece KHADIJA. ABU TALIB, on behalf of his nephew Muhammad, recited the marriage sermon and paid the matrimonial dower. Thus, the most sacred wedlock was executed. Although she was senior in age, Prophet Muhammad (P) esteemed her so much that he never thought of taking another wife during her lifetime.

EXCELLENCE OF CONDUCT

The MECCANS had seen and tested the Prophet from boyhood to youth. They were so much impressed by his honesty and righteousness that they called him "the truthful" and "the trustworthy". They entrusted their cash and precious articles to him with full confidence. His opinion was eagerly sought in disputed affairs of contending tribes.<br

PROPHETHOOD

Muhammad was forty years old when, on the 27th of RAJAB (July, 610 A.D.), the revelation commanded him to deliver the Message of God. He was now to preach in the capacity of the Final Prophet. He first conveyed the divine message to his spouse KHADIJA. She expressed her sincere belief in it. His cousin IMAM ALI, who had always accompanied him and was for long an eye-witness to his angelic majesty, bore testimony to his prophet-hood. The divine message then reached some other people who believed in it though in single numbers. But time was not yet ripe to proclaim it openly. Even those who embraced Islam were told to carry out their religious duties secretly and not to make the matter public.

FEAST OF THE RELATIVES

Having carried on the religious mission secretly for three years, Prophet Muhammad (p) was commanded by the Almighty to proclaim the message among members of his family according to verse 214 of Chapter 26 of the holy QUR'AN. He asked Ali to arrange a feast to which all prominent members of the tribe were invited. When everybody had finished eating, Prophet Muhammad (p) stood and addressed them thus: "Noble men! Will you believe me if I tell you that hostile army is lying in ambush behind the hill of SAFA?" All bore testimony to his truthfulness. He then warned them: "Your deeds and creeds are not virtuous. They will bring you disaster in this life and the life hereafter. I have been commanded by God to call His servants to worship Him only and to do good deeds. Who among you is prepared to assist me in this mission and be my companion, trustee and successor?" All remained silent. Then a boy, young in age but advanced in courage and faith, stood up and said, "I shall help you in this mission, O Messenger of God". This boy was ALI IBN ABU TALIB. He was already assisting the Prophet and was now declaring his faith publicly. The Prophet put his hand on Imam Ali's shoulder and declared: "This is my companion, trustee and successor".

HARDSHIPS AND AGONIES

Six years after the beginning of his mission, the Prophet was ordered by the Almighty to start preaching his mission in public. Accordingly, he began to publicly condemn idol-worship and preach the worship of one God. The infidels resolved to harass him but could not do so in face of his sheltering guardian ABU TALIB. Their persecution was so intense that the Prophet said: "No

other Prophet was harmed the way I have been". At last their chiefs, headed by UTBA IBN RABI'A, ABU SUFYAN'S father-in-law, came in a group to ABU TALIB and complained bitterly about his nephew Muhammad, requesting him to either restrain his nephew or give up his guardianship so that they could deal with him on their own. First, their message was; "If Muhammad wants power and prestige, we will nominate him the over-lord of Mecca. If he desires marriage in a big family, we offer the hand of the fairest maiden in the land. If he desires hoards of gold and silver, we shall provide him with all these and more".

ABU TALIB had to convey their message to his nephew Prophet and explain the gravity of the situation to him. His reply was: "By God, Uncle, even if they put the sun on my right hand and the moon on my left in order to persuade me to renounce my mission, I will never desist from proclaiming the world of God till He makes His cause manifest".

The harassment was intensified and was extended to include those poor men who had accepted Islam through the Prophet's efforts.

FIRST MIGRATION

The atrocities of the infidels against the Muslims increased in the fifth year of Prophet-hood. Prophet Muhammad (p) advised his followers to migrate to ABYSSINIA (Ethiopia) and a good number of them migrated under the supervision of JA'FAR AL-TAYYAR son of ABU TALIB. Having come to know about their migration, QURAISH sent a deputation with 'AMR IBN AL-'AS and 'AMARA IBN RABI'A to NEGUS, the good king of ABYSSINIA, demanding the deportation of the emigrants back to Mecca. The deputies tried to prejudice the king against the emigrants. Asked to explain their position, JA'FAR, who represented the group, delivered his defense of its faith at the royal court quite eloquently. He addressed the king thus:

"O King! We were plunged into the depths of ignorance and barbarism. We adored idols. We lived in immorality. We ate dead animals and we uttered abominations. We disregarded every feeling of humanity and discarded the duties of hospitality. We knew no law except that of the strong. Then God raised among us a man of whose birth, truthfulness, honesty and integrity we were aware, and he called us to the unity of God and taught us not to associate anything with Him. He forbade us from worshipping idols, and he enjoined us to speak the truth, to be faithful to our trusts, to be merciful and to respect the rights of neighbors. He forbade us from speaking ill of women or confiscating what belongs to the orphans. He ordered us to flee from vices, abstain from evil, offer prayers, render alms and observe the fast. We have believed in him. We have accepted his teachings and injunctions to worship God and not to associate anything with Him. For this reason, our people have risen against us and persecuted us in order to force us to forego the worship of God and return to the worship of idols of wood and stone. They have tortured and injured us. Having found no safe haven among them, we have come to your country and hope you

will protect us from their oppression".

The king and courtiers were profoundly impressed. The Muslims thus obtained the opportunity to stay there and worship peacefully.

THE BOYCOTT

Then came even harder times. When the infidels heard that the emigrants were comfortably accommodated in ABYSSINIA, their grudge and hostility knew no bounds. Unanimously they resolved to boycott the whole clan of BANI HASHIM (the HASHEMITES), prohibiting trade and marriage with its members, including a ban on food and water supplies. ABU TALIB was compelled to take his nephew and all members of his household to his dwelling in a ravine of the mountain of HUJUN which was called SHI'B ABU TALIB. There were forty adults among them, while all the rest were children. The situation grew so tense that their own existence was in jeopardy. At times, they had nothing but the leaves of trees to sustain them. For three long years, beginning in the ninth year of Prophet-hood, these people lived in that lonely, ominous place where there was always the danger of a night-attack. In order to protect the Messenger, ABU TALIB used to let the holy Prophet Muhammad (p) sleep in different beds of his own sons, accommodating them by turn in the bed of Prophet Muhammad (p). his plan meant that even if the enemy traced the Prophet's sleeping place and lanced a night attack, the Prophet of God would still be saved even if this meant that one of his own sons, such as JA'FAR, AQIL, or ALI, would be killed in such maneuvering. Thus IMAM ALI (AS) repeated the practical lesson of sacrificing his life later in the blooming days of his youth.

During the boycott, Prophet Muhammad (p) and all the HASHEMITES had to suffer untold hardships. There were only 40 adults among them. HAKIM IBN HIZAM, a nephew of KHADIJA, used to secretly supply them with provisions whenever he could for if any of their relatives sent them food, and the news leaked out, that relative would be publicly insulted and defamed. For three long years, they were beleaguered: it had begun in MUHARRAM of the seventh year of BI'THA (commencement of the prophetic mission), and it continued till the beginning of the tenth year. Only twice a year did they dare to come out: in RAJAB and DHU AL-HIJJA. When, according to ancient Arabian customs, all types of violence were taboo. QURAISH used to express its pleasure upon hearing the cries of hungry children.

One day, the holy Prophet (p) said to ABU TALIB: "I have been informed by Allah that the agreement of QURAISH has been eaten away by insects and that no writing is left therein except the name of Allah". ABU TALIB never doubted any saying of the holy Prophet (p), therefore, he came out at once and went to MASJID AL-HARAM where QURAISH had gathered.

There, as luck would have it, the subject of discussion was the same boycott. HISHAM IBN AMR,

AZ-ZUBAIR IBN ABU UMAYYA, and a few others who were related to KHADIJA and the clans of HASHIM and MUTTALIB, and who lived near the SHI'B of ABU TALIB and thus used to hear the cries of the children day and night, were condemning the cruel attitude of their infidel kinsmen and they were persuading them to abrogate the agreement. The arguments were very heated and had reached a climax when they saw ABU TALIB approaching. ABU JAHL and others who opposed the idea of abrogating the boycott said, "ABU TALIB is coming. It seems that now he is tired and he wants to hand Muhammad over to us. The boycott will thus end to the satisfaction of all of us. Keep silent and listen to what he wants to say".

But ABU TALIB went there to challenge them, not to surrender. He stood before the gathering and said, "My son says that the agreement which you had written has been eaten away by insects and that nothing remains in it except the name of Allah. Now look at that paper. If the news given by my son is correct, you must end your injustice and high-handedness, but if the news is wrong, we will accept that you were right and we were wrong". The agreement was brought out and opened and, lo, there was nothing left of it except the name of Allah in one place. Now ABU TALIB thundered condemning their tyranny. Those who wanted the boycott to be terminated said that now there was no agreement at all to be adhered to. ABU JAHL and others tried to outwit them but they failed, and the boycott ended with a total moral victory for Islam, and the HASHEMITES were allowed to return to Mecca.

TWO GRAVE EVENTS

These noble souls enjoyed peaceful life for only two months when in the twelfth year of Prophethood, ABU TALIB, the greatest benefactor of Islam, died. Thirty-five days after this loss, KHADIJA also passed into God's Mercy. Prophet Muhammad was so deeply shocked by these two deaths that he called that year "the year of grief".

A TRIP TO TAA'IF

After ABU TALIB'S death, the infidels intensified their hostilities. The paradise of the native town of Mecca turned into a hell. Prophet Muhammad (p) now looked for some other place suitable for the propagation of the divine message. At the end of the twelfth year, he made a trip to TA'IF. Without provisions and accompanied only by ZAID IBN HARITHA, he reached there and stayed for ten days in that green, fertile town, conveying the teachings of Islam to one person after another. But even this town refused to listen to the heavenly message. Instead of welcoming Prophet Muhammad (p), its residents refused to let him stay there and even hurled stones at him. Deeply dismayed, he returned to Mecca without being deterred by such hardships from advancing his mission. In such desperate situation he prayed thus to God:

"Lord! Make my complaint unto Thee out of my own feebleness and the vanity of wishes. I am

insignificant in the sight of men. O Thou Most Merciful, Lord of the weak! Thou art my Lord: do not forsake me. Do not leave me a prey to strangers nor to my enemies. If Thou art not offended, I am safe. I seek refuge in the light of Thy Countenance by which all darkness is dispersed and peace comes here and hereafter. Let not Thy anger descend upon me. Solve my difficulties as it pleases Thee. There is no power, no help, but from Thee..."

MEETING THE ANSARS (SUPPORTERS)

Two commercial fairs of MAJINNA and 'UKAZ were held every year in Mecca. Tribes from every direction came to participate in their social activities; traders sold their merchandise and poets recited their poems. The holy Prophet (p) also went there to deliver the message of God and invite people to support the sacred cause. But the voice of truth is heeded only by those who have an aptitude for virtue. Most tribes, instead of helping, jeered at him and tried to harass him. However, a group of the inhabitants of YATHRIB (as Medina was called before Islam) was impressed by the Prophet's speech and embraced Islam, pledging to help the Apostle of God. This was the first batch of YATHRIBITE ANSARS who were enlightened by the rays of the new faith. In YATHRIB, they propagated the new religion, and some people were converted to Islam. In the following year, twelve of them visited the Prophet (p) to learn the teachings of Islam. One year later, seventy persons came and were admitted into the new religion. By and by, Islam became popular in Medina and people began accepting it in groups. Most of them welcomed the call to truth although they had not yet seen the Apostle of God.

MIGRATION TO MEDINA

Having heard the news of the success of Muslims in propagating the faith in Medina, the MECCAN infidels grew more furious. They began to inflict intolerable atrocities on the Muslims. Prophet Muhammad (p) allowed the believers to migrate to YATHRIB (Medina), and gradually most Muslims left Mecca. Only the Prophet (p), Imam Ali (as) and a few other Muslims remained there. The infidels now clearly saw that the Prophet (p) would command great power in that city. They, therefore, assembled at their counsel chamber to discuss the gravity of the situation. It was finally decided that they would collectively besiege the Prophet's house at an appointed night and put him to death.

The Prophet (p) was forewarned by God about their mischievous plan, and he decided to let Imam Ali (as) sleep in his bed and, thus dodging the infidels, leave his dear home town and set out to Medina. Imam Ali (as), who realized the risk he was taking, accepted it with courage and fortitude, and he slept in the holy Prophet's bed in order to fool the infidels into thinking that the Prophet (p) was sleeping there; and so did he sleep thus soundly. The Prophet (p) managed to set out for Median (which, upon his migration, was renamed "MEDINAT AN-NABI", that is, city of the Prophet (p), or simply Medina), obscured from hostile eyes. This important event which took place on the

night of twelfth/thirteenth of September of 622 A.D. is known as HIJRA (HEGIRA, the Migration) which marks the beginning of the lunar Islamic calendar.

THE PROPHET'S MOSQUE

The first task which the Prophet (p) undertook was to build a mosque. Along with his followers, he took part in its construction. It was simply an enclosure of medium height. When the congregation complained about the heat of the sun, long branches of trees interlaced with mud were spread across the walls; no elaborate roof was built yet. The mosque was surrounded by small houses which he instructed to have built for his relatives and the needy. Later on came the divine ordinance that their doors and windows overlooking the mosque be closed except those of Imam 'Ali's and of the Prophet's. The admission to the prayer yard was, thus, open from only one external side.

CAMPAIGNS

When the infidels came to know that Prophet Muhammad (p) was safe in Medina, out of their reach, and that his religion was spreading speedily, they started desperately preparing for war. The first encounter was at BADR where three hundred and thirteen Muslims, all on foot, had to face the overwhelming onslaught of one thousand infidels on horse-back and on foot. 'UBAYDAH and HAMZA fought bravely. Six Umayyad chiefs who were all relatives of Abu Sufyan, the arch-enemy of the Prophet (p), fell to the sword of Imam Ali (as). The infidels fled after having suffered heavy losses. The year was the second Hijri year which corresponded to 624 A.D.

In order to avenge this defeat, Abu Sufyan raised the next year (3 A.H.) an army of three thousand strong and marched towards Medina. A bloody battle raged all day long at the foot of the mountain of Uhud from which both parties had to withdraw after suffering heavy losses. The fighting was so severe that at a time, all Muslims had to flee for their lives except a few closely related to the Prophet (p). Here, too, the sword of Imam Ali (as) held the enemy at bay. Abu Sufyan, commander of the infidels' camp, returned to Mecca with his pride deeply wounded. The next year, i.e. 4 A.H.

(626 A.D.), he invaded Medina again after winning over some of the Jews of Medina to his side. Salman al-Farisi, the great companion of the Prophet (p), suggested that the Muslims must dig a moat on the unprotected side of Medina. Muslims were divided into parties of ten and each party was allotted ten yards to dig. The holy Prophet (p) himself participated in the task. The Khandaq (moat) was completed in just three days before the host of the enemies reached Medina. The Muslims could muster no more than three thousand men to face the army raised by twenty Jewish leaders in Medina belonging to Banu an-Nadira and their Meccan allies numbering fifty Quraishi leaders in addition to enforcements which came from other tribes

friendly to those QURAISHI leaders and belonging to the tribes of BANU GHATFAN, BANU ASAD, BANU ASLAM, BANU ASHJA', BANU KINANA and BANU FIZARA. It was probably the largest army raised to annihilate the Muslims. Many Muslims were extremely terrified as the number of the enemy army kept increasing day by day. The gravity of the situation is portrayed best by this passage from the holy QUR'AN:

"When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes were turned dull and the hearts reached the throats, and ye even imagined about God diverse thoughts. There, the believers were tried, and they were shaken tremendously". [QUR'AN: 33: 10-11]

The matchless bravery of Imam Ali (as) was greatly appreciated by the Prophet (p). Young Ali faced AMR IBN ABD WUDD, the MECCAN infidel whose courage was proverbial and who was said to equal a thousand on the battlefield. When Ali came out to challenge him, the holy Prophet (p) said: "The whole faith has come out to fight the whole infidelity". Ali was able to kill his foe, and the excitement of the Prophet (p) was quite obvious when he said commenting: "Verily one attack by Ali in the Battle of KHANDAQ is superior to the worship of all human beings and JINNS till the Day of Resurrection".

The prolonged confrontation caused the Muslims to suffer an acute shortage of provisions, so much so that even the Prophet (p), who was used to hunger, had to tie a stone on his stomach to lessen the pang of hunger, and whatever provisions were the Mosque of Victory (MASJID AL-FATH) now stands and prayed to God. A fierce storm raged and uprooted the tents of the enemies, causing their pots and belongings to fly in all directions. An unbearable terror was cast in their hearts, and both MECCANS and all others had to flee. The first to flee was ABU SUFYAN who, being too upset to think rationally, tried to ride his camel without first untying his rope. The Muslims again won a victory. The event is known as the Battle of the Trench (KHANDAQ).

The Prophet (p) personally commanded the Muslim forces in what are known as GHAZAWAT. The battles in which the Muslim forces were sent under the command of one of his companions were called SARIYYAS. They are thirty-six in number. The most famous of these is the SARIYYA of MU'TA in which his cousin JA'FAR AT-TAYYAR was martyred.

THE TREATY OF HUDAYBIYYA

After the battles of BARD, UHUD and the Trench (KHANDAQ), the infidels avoided further military encounters. The Prophet (p), therefore, decided to perform the 'UMRAH in the sixth year A.H. (628 A.D.). As the head of a host of the believers, he marched towards Mecca. When the infidels saw their approach, they flocked outside the city to check the Prophet's advance and forbid him from entering the city. Seeing them bent on aggression, the peace-making Apostle arranged a written treaty with them wisely drafted by Imam Ali (as): its conditions which soon proved to be

very beneficial to the cause of Islam were as follows:

- 1- The Prophet (p) and his followers shall return to Mecca without performing the pilgrimage that year.
- 2- There shall be a ten year truce.
- 3- If any of the infidels of Mecca wished to join the Muslims, he or she would have to be returned to Mecca.
- 4- Contrariwise; if a Muslim wished to join the infidels, he would not be returned to Medina.
- 5- The tribes of Arabia shall be free to make an alliance either with the Prophet (p) or with the MECCANS.
- 6- The Muslims shall be allowed to perform the pilgrimage in the next year and they shall be allowed to stay there for three days only.
- 7- The Muslims shall be allowed in the next visit to carry light weapons only, i.e. swords in their sheaths.

Some Muslims were very much annoyed about these rough-sounding terms. Some prominent companions even doubted Prophet (p) Muhammad's Prophet-hood altogether, but the Messenger of God concluded the treaty and returned to Medina so that he would not be accused of aggression. In the next year, in accordance with the terms, he went to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage. As agreed, he remained there for three days after which he returned to Medina.

CONQUEST OF MECCA

Shortly thereafter, the MECCANS violated the terms of the treaty. The tribe of BAKR, which allied itself with the infidels, killed several men belonging to the tribe of KHUZA'A which was allied with the Prophet (p). When the Prophet (p) knew about it, he set out to help the oppressed ally. As the head of a force of ten thousand men strong, he camped near Mecca. The infidels were now too weak to wage a battle and thought it would be wise to surrender. So in the month of Ramadan of the year 8 A.H. (January 630 A.D.), he entered Mecca victoriously.

Now came the time when the benevolence and mercy of that Apostle of God could well be assessed. All those who had harassed and hurt him, those who had forced him to leave his home and hearth, were indiscriminately pardoned. At that victorious moment, when thousands of MECCANS thronged around him, he asked them: "What do you expect I would do to you?" "We except good from you; you are a generous brother, and the son of a generous brother", they replied.

The MECCANS' amazement was beyond description when they saw that the Prophet (p) pardoned all of them-even ABU SUFYAN and his wife HIND who arranged to have her slave WAHSHI kill the Prophet's uncle HAMZA in exchange for setting him free. Seeing HAMZA'S corpse lying on the ground, she cut it open, took out his liver, and savagely chewed it. The Prophet (p) pardoned

WAHSHI, too. He overlooked the atrocities of 'IKRAMA son of ABU JAHL and of so many others who had inflicted great tortures on him and who now reluctantly accepted the faith. He stayed there for one month and a half and passed such rules of administration as may be proudly adopted by the most civilized among the nations of the world today.

THE LAST PILGRIMAGE

In 10 A.H. (632 A.D.), the Apostle performed the last pilgrimage most magnificently, accompanied by thousands of believers. Some estimates run as high as almost half a million pilgrims. On the return journey, he delivered his historical sermon at GHADIR KHUMM in which he hinted at the probability of his approaching death and asked the whole gathering if he had delivered to them the message of God completely. When they bore testimony to this, he called upon God to bear witness to that. The Prophet (p) then directed them to adhere to the faith and to desist from plundering or killing their Muslim brethren and from committing other sins. Next he asked them if he held more authority on them than they themselves did. All eagerly affirmed that he had complete authority over their bodies and souls. At this point he took 'Ali by the hand and raised it before the surging multitude and proclaimed: "Whosoever I have been his master, this Ali (henceforth) is his master; O Almighty God! Be the friend of whoever befriends him, and be the enemy of whoever antagonized him; support whoever supports him, and betray whoever betrays him". Thus it was on the 18th of THU AL-HIJJAH of 10 A.H. (March 16, 632 A.D.), and exactly at a swamp known as GHADIR KHUMM, that the Prophet (p) proclaimed his successor who was warmly congratulated by the leading companions on such an auspicious proclamation. Since that day, 'ID AL-GHADIR has always been celebrated by followers of AHL AL-BAYT.

TEACHINGS, CONDUCT AND CHARACTER

The focal point of the teachings of the Prophet (p) was to deliver the human race from the clutches of materialism and lift it spiritually to the highest level of moral excellence. He preached the Unity of God and the compassion towards His creatures. These were the foundations on which the whole ethical structure stands. In the history of man, he was the first to grant people the first Charter of Human Rights. Prior to him, nobody preached regarding the basic human rights condemning discrimination on the bases of race, color, religion, sex or financial status. He set aside all former standards of who is honorable and who is distinguished as the holy QUR'AN stated: "The most honored among you in the sight of God is he who is most pious", (QUR'AN, 49: 13) and the holy Prophet (p) said: "The best is he who performs his duties best".

The Prophet (p) placed a great deal of emphasis on moral excellence. He used to say: "I have been sent to bring the ethical code to its perfection". His character and conduct, too, reflected his aforesaid objective. Being the head of a state and a formidable religious power did not hinder him from associating with the poor and the destitute, inviting them to whatever simple food he

preferred for himself. During the dead of the night he adored his Maker till his legs swelled. The next morning he was busy meeting with delegations and heads of the tribes who came to see him, solving problems and settling disputes. And English historian, BOSWORTH SMITH, writes: "We do not find in the pages of history a man like Muhammad who performed triple duties at the same time. He founded a nation, a religion and a new government system. Nowhere else can we find such a reformer". In spite of all this, the Prophet (p) never liked to be considered as a king. He despised the mere suggestion.

Once a person began to shudder at the Prophet's majestic dignity upon approaching him. The Apostle appeased him by comparing his own life with that of the poorest among the poor. He was quite a simple man in his manners and norms of living. While building his house, he worked side by side with other laborers. He shopped for his family and for his neighbors as well. Forgiveness was the salient feature of his character; fortitude, determination, sacrifice and compassion were his conspicuous virtues. His actions agreed with what he taught and his teachings are reflected in his deeds. His speech was comprehensive. His short sentences contained such principles and suggestions as could guide humanity in every phase of life.

THE QUR'AN

It is the divine Scripture which contains a complete legal code, a treasure-house of knowledge and wisdom, and a perfect code of morals to the human beings revealed to the Messenger of God. Since its revelation till this day, a period of 1400 years, billions have sought the light of guidance from it. Adherents of other religions, too, who studied it admitted the heights of thought and moral teachings contained therein. It comprises 114 chapters in a volume of about 300 pages.

DEATH

It was a sad Monday, the 28th of SAFAR of the year 11 A.H. when Prophet Muhammad (p), the greatest of all those who are great, after a short illness, passed into the mercy of God. According to his will, his cousin and successor Imam Ali (as) arranged for his funeral and burial. The Green Dome, built over his tomb in Medina, is a very sacred shrine for the Muslims of the world. They visit it before or after performing the pilgrimage (HAJJ). Adjoining it stands the presently graceful and elaborately decorated mosque where he used to worship, preach, and administer the state affairs.

Amir Al-Mu'minin Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib (A.S.)

NAME AND PARENTAGE

From the family of Abraham and the tribe of QURAISH, IMAM ALI, a descendant of HASHIM, was the illustrious son of ABU TALIB son of ABD AL-MUTTALIB, the latter being the grandfather both of IMAM ALI and Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.). Ali father ABU TALIB is the person who raised Prophet Muhammad (p), and Ali's mothers is Fatima daughter of ASAD, also a lady of the HASHEMITE clan. She treated Prophet Muhammad (p) so affectionately that the Prophet considered her as a second mother.

BIRTH AND TITLES

IMAM ALI enjoyed the unique honor of being born within the precincts of the KA'BA, on the thirteenth of RAJAB, thirty years after the Invasion of the Elephant (May, 600 A.D.), twenty-three years before the HIJRAH. His parents, ABU TALIB and Fatima daughter of ASAD, were overjoyed by such a blessing of God, and Prophet Muhammad (p), then 30 years old, was very anxious to see his newborn cousin. Probably he read in the babe's face that he would strengthen the Cause of Islam and provide his right hand in the sacred mission ahead. Due to his accomplishments, he earned several titles the most famous of them include: AMUR AL-MU'MININ (Commander of the Faithful), AS-SIDDIQ AL-AKBAR (The Greatest Testifier), IMAM AL-MUTTAQIN (Leader of the Righteous), AL-FARUQ AL-A'ZAM (The Greater Distinguisher between Right and Wrong), YA'SUB AL-MUSLIMIN (The Elite among the Muslim),

AL-MURTADA (The One whom God Pleased), AL-WASI (The Vicegerent) WALIALLAH (The Friend of God), SAYYID AL-WASIYYIN (Master of the Successors of Prophets), QASIM AN-NAR WAL-JANNAH (Distributor of Hell and Paradise), WARITH RASUL-ALLAH (Heir of the Messenger of God), KHALIFAT RASULLALLAH (Successor of the Messenger of God), HAIDER AL-KARRAR (The Oft-charging Knight), KHATAM AL-WASIYYIN (The Seal of the Successors of Prophets), AS-SAFI (The Pure), SAQI AL-KAWTHAR (Waiter of the Pool of KAWTHAR), YADALLAH (The Hand of God), ASADALLAH AL-GHALIB (The Victorious Lion of God).

UPBRINGING AND INSTRUCTION

IMAM ALI was brought up and instructed under the direct care of the Prophet (p) who spent most of his time imparting knowledge and teaching the principles of morality to his young cousin. IMAM ALI (A.S.) himself said: "I followed the Prophet (p) like the little one of the camel following its mother". Ali was a gifted child, with physical and mental potentials. Contrary to the common custom prevailing then, Imam Ali never prostrated before an idol; this is why Muslims say "KARRAMA-ALALHU WAJHAHU" that is, Allah safeguarded his face against prostrating before

idols, after mentioning his name. The instruction of the Prophet (p) soon turned him into an accomplished, learned and highly intellectual youth. At the age of ten, he was wise enough to bear testimony to the Prophet-hood of Prophet Muhammad (p) and to promise him his full assistance.

But the occasion was not all merry. Prophet Muhammad (p) was to bring such radical changes in the prevailing religion, culture, society and thinking that none could be expected to help him in his mission. The environment, age, atmosphere, his nation - all were hostile to him. It was only Ali who bore testimony to his claims and promised to support his cause. The Prophet (p), too, declared that 'Ali was his minister and the executor of his will. He enjoined on all the believers to obey 'Ali. The second person to support his mission was his wife KHADIJA, the first lady of Islam, who promoted the cause of the faith through her wealth for a long time.

HARDSHIPS AND AGONIES

As soon as Prophet Muhammad (p) declared his mission of Prophet-hood, all the town residents turned against him. The same MECCANS who, until then, called him "truthful" and "trustworthy", now began to label him as "mad", "magician", "insane", and the like. They jeered and hurled stones and rubbish at him. In those days of misery and misfortune, it was Imam Ali (as) who did not shrink from helping and protecting the Messenger of God.

During the Battle of UHUD, the tables were turned and the victory turned into a defeat. MUS'AB IBN UMAYR, the Muslims' standard-bearer who bore facial resemblance to the Prophet (p), was killed, and the cry went that the Prophet (p) was killed. Most Muslim combatants were disheartened and they ran away for their lives, yet Imam Ali (as) remained to protect the Prophet (p) who had fallen into a pothole after 'ABDALAH IBN QAMI advanced towards him and struck him with his sword on the head with such force that two links of his own helmet were stuck in his face. Two of the Prophet's upper teeth were broken by the stone of another infidel. It was Imam Ali (as) who dashed like a lion to fight ABDALLAH IBN QAMI and all others alone and subdue them. When the Prophet (p) saw such a sacrificing spirit of Imam Ali, he asked him why he did not flee like others. Imam Ali (as) replied: "should I become KAFIR after accepting Islam?" The fighting was so intense that Imam Ali's sword broke down under the weight of the battle, and the Prophet (p) gave him his own sword "DHU AL-FIQAR". It was then some eye-witnesses reported, that a voice was heard from above saying: "LA FATA ILLA ALI; LA SAYFA ILLA DHU AL-FIQAR", that is, "There is no brave youth like 'Ali; there is no sword like DHU AL-FIQAR".

MIGRATION

After three years of painful exile in the ravine of SHI'B ABU TALIB, ABU TALIB died in Mecca. The death of such an affectionate and sacrificing protector passed very heavily on the Prophet's heart

and he resolved to migrate to Medina. The enemies came to know about his intention and they planned to assassinate him after besieging his house at night. It was decided by the pagan MECCAN clans that every clan should provide one man and that they should collectively assault the Prophet (p) as soon as he came out of his house. The Prophet (p) was apprised of the danger and he explained the situation to Imam Ali (as) asking him to stay behind. Sleep in his bed, wrap himself in his green covering-sheet, in order to fool the blood-thirsty foes and thus provide the Prophet (p) with the chance to safety. When Imam Ali (as) heard that his life was to be the ransom for the holy Prophet's life, he at once prostrated to God to thank Him for this unique honor.

It was the first SAJDAH of SHUKR (prostration of thanks) in Islam. Imam Ali (as) hated to part with the Prophet (p), so he asked him why he decided to let him stay in Mecca and not accompany him. The Prophet (p) said: "Are you not pleased that you are to me like Aaron to Moses, except that there will be no Prophet after me?" Imam Ali (as) slept soundly on the bed of the Prophet (p) while the Prophet (p) walked out of the house under the infidels' very noses. Coming out of the house, the Prophet (p) recited the first few verses of SURAT YASIN (Chapter 36 of the holy QUR'AN), and threw a handful of dust over their heads so none of the enemies could see him going out. He made his way safely to Medina. The enemies, armed with swords and lances, were resolved to assault at the first breath of dawn. When they did, they were puzzled to find Imam Ali (as) wrapped in the sheet of their intended victim. Sternly they asked Imam Ali (as) to tell them the whereabouts of Prophet Muhammad (p), and sternly Imam Ali (as) replied that the Prophet (p) had gone where his God wished him to be. This act of chivalric sacrifice is approvingly mentioned by God in his holy Book in verse 207 of Chapter 2. Imam Ali (as) remained in Mecca for three days. He returned the trusts, kept by the Prophet (p), to their owners; then, taking the ladies of the family with him, he too set out for Medina. He journeyed on foot for days the entire distance and joined the Prophet (p) at QIBA while his feet were bleeding. The Prophet (p) had full trust in the faithfulness of Imam Ali (as) and Imam Ali (as) proved that he was worthy of his trust.

MARRIAGE

On the fifteenth of RAJAB of the first year of HIJRA, Fatima (as) daughter of the Prophet (p) was married to Imam Ali (as) as instructed by God. The marriage of the daughter of that Master of the world and of the Hereafter was performed in the simplest manner. Her dowry, which was 47 ounces of silver, was paid by Imam Ali (as) for which he sold his armor. It was thus demonstrated that the Muslims should never commit extravagance when they marry. The Prophet (p) could not afford to give his cherished daughter a marriage gift other than two earthen pitchers, a pair of palm-leave pillows, a leather-bed, a spinning wheel, a hand-mill and a water-skin.

LIFE AT HOME

The marriage life of Imam Ali (as) and Fatima (as) was the finest example of the behavior of a

Muslim family. They both demonstrated how husband and wife can be each other's companion till death. They divided house work between them and helped each other with domestic chores. Their unfurnished house was totally void of any luxury or decoration except the composure and flavor of mutual love and confidence. Imam Ali (as) used to go in the morning to water the gardens for the Jews of Medina and come back in the evening with the hard-earned wages to buy barley so that Fatima (as) might grind it into rough flour then bake it. She swept the house, spun the cotton for the garments of the family, partaking in the struggle of life.

HOLY JIHAD

A complete volume can be written about the contributions of Imam Ali (as) in the martial field. He proved his mettle in the battles of BADR, UHUD (which took place in the next year after BADR), in the battles of the Trench (5 A.H.), KHAYBER (7 A.H.) and HUNAYN (8 A.H.). He performed deeds of matchless bravery and swordsmanship. In nearly all these battles, he was also the standard-bearer. There were other encounters as well, where the Prophet (p) sent him single-handed and he displayed great gallantry, fortitude and courage. He also served in the armies raised by the three preceding caliphs (to whom he was more of an advisor than a soldier) without any distinction in ranks. AR-RIYAD AL-NADIRA, vol. 2, p. 149 records that the second caliph 'UMER used to say: "O Almighty God! Don't involve me in any difficulty when Ali (as) is not with me". IZALAT AL-KHAFA', vol. 2, p. 268 quotes 'UMER saying: "LAWLA ALI (AS) LA HALAKA 'UMER", that is, "Had it not been for Ali (as), UMER would have perished". The third caliph, UTHMAN, relied on Imam Ali (as) in his bid to compile the holy QUR'AN, and Imam Ali (as) discharged his responsibility most faithfully, thus preserving and protecting the text of the holy QUR'AN for all Muslim generations till the Day of Judgment. During the caliphate of Imam Ali (as) he had to fight during the battles of JAMAL and SIFFIN

The MECCAN infidels did not let the Prophet live peacefully in Medina where he had taken shelter. They harassed, beat, imprisoned and killed his followers in Mecca. In addition, they made preparations to attack him in Medina with a well-equipped and trained army. The Prophet was morally bound to save his MEDENITE supporters from the flames of war, for they had given him shelter under the most precarious circumstances. He avoided being besieged while in the city since that would have disturbed the peaceful life of its inhabitants especially the women and children. The Messenger of God had a limited number of three hundred and thirteen brave though poorly armed supporters who had to face a well-equipped and trained army of one thousand strong. So he decided to battle the enemy outside the city limits. It was on the 17th of Ramadan, 2 A.H. (624 A.D.) that the first battle was fought at BADR, in which the Prophet arrayed his relatives in the foremost rank. His dear cousin 'UBAYDAH IBN AL-HARITH IBN 'ABD AL-MUTTALIB fell fighting. Imam Ali (as), then twenty-five, appeared in the field for the first time in his life but it was he to whom Islamic history owes its first victory. Seventy dead MECCANS was the toll, of whom thirty-five were killed by Imam Ali (as).

In the Battle of the Trench, besides showing dauntless courage before his distinguished enemy AMR IBN ABD WUDD, the acknowledged warrior of Arabia, he displayed feats of chivalrous nobility. Having struck down the great warrior 'AMR, who in desperate hatred spat on his victor's face, Imam Ali (as) backed away from the fatally wounded foe. The insulting act of 'AMR had infuriated Imam Ali (as), so, in order to keep the sacred JIHAD unbolted from the sentiments of personal indignation, he left his enemy for a few moments till his fury dissipated. Having subdued his fury, he slew him.

Yet Imam Ali (as) took away neither the costly armor nor the clothes of his opponent as was the common custom in Arabia then. He did not like to insult the slain warrior by leaving his dead body unburied. So when AMR'S sister came to mourn her brother and she saw him lying on the ground with his magnificent armor and garments on, she could not help admiring the nobleness of the slayer. She grew calm and said: "Had someone else killed my brother, I would have kept weeping for the rest of my life; but I am patient and composed to find that he has been slain by such a noble person as Ali who did not like to disgrace a fallen foe". On other occasions, too, Imam Ali (as) never hurt the women or children, nor did he ever think of taking booty. The true disciple of the Prophet kept his escutcheon spotless, and observed the rituals of battle gallantly.

SERVICES TO ISLAM

Besides JIHAD, Imam Ali (as) was always ready to serve the community, the Prophet, and the cause of Islam. The drafting of treaties, the writing of letters, the compilation of the holy QUR'AN, the recording of the revelations, etc. were mostly done by him. When the Messenger of Allah sent him to Yemen on a propagation mission, he performed his duty so well that the entire country embraced Islam. When the QUR'ANIC Chapter of BARA'A was revealed, the Prophet was instructed by God to send Imam Ali (as) to convey its injunctions to the infidels, which he did. He also served the Prophet and even thought it an honor to stitch his shoes.

HONORS AWARDED

The status Imam Ali (as) enjoyed in Islamic theology is quite lofty. There are numerous verses in the holy QUR'AN which praise him. The following are excerpts which represent a mere drop in the ocean: According to the most authoritative books of traditions, one day the Prophet of Islam assembled Imam Ali (as) Fatima (as), Imam HASAN and Imam HUSAIN (AS) under a robe and prayed God to purify his household (AHL AL-BAYT) whereupon verse 33 of Chapter 33 was revealed. It is referred to as the verse of purification and it states: "God only wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye Members of the Family (of Muhammad, AHL AL-BAYT) and make you pure and spotless". (QUR'AN: 33:33)

In his grand exegesis, IMAM AL-THA'LABI, who quotes ABAN IBN TAGHLIB citing IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS, IMAM ALI (AS) and his descendants are referred to in the holy QUR'AN as:

1- "Allah's Rope" concerning whom He has said: "Hold ye together to Allah's Rope and do not be divided" (QUR'AN: 3: 103). Chapter 11 of IBN HAJAR'S AL-SAWA'IQ AL-MUHIRQA cites this verse as number 5 of the QUR'ANIC verses revealed in praise of Imam Ali (as) and the rest of the Prophet's AHL AL-BAYT.

2- "the truthful": The HAFIZ ABU NA'IM, and also MUWAFFAQ AHMED, as quoted by IBN HAJAR on p. 90 of the same work, testify that Imam Ali (as) and the Imams among his offspring are "the truthful" concerning whom the Almighty has said: "Be ye all with the Truthful" (QUR'AN: 9:119).

3- "Allah's path" about which He has said: "Do not follow different paths lest they should divert you from Allah's Path" (QUR'AN: 6:153)

4- The ones "entrusted with authority": According to AL-KULAYNI, IMAM ALI (AS) and the Imams among his offspring are described by the Almighty as the ones "entrusted with authority among you" (QUR'AN, 4:59)

5- The "custodians of Revelation". According to 'ALLAMA AL-BAHRANI, IBN MARDAWAYH, AL-AYYASHI, AL-THAN'LABI, AL-QAWSHAJI, AL-SAFI, ALI (AS) IBN IBRAHIM, AL-HAMAWAINI, IMAM AL-WAHIDI, AL-SHIBLINJI, AL-DAYLAMI, ABU NA'IM, IBN AL-MAGHAZILI, IBN HAJAR, AL-KULAYNI, MUJAHID, YA'QUB IBN SUFYAN, IBN AL-NAJJAR, SHAIKH AL-TUSI, AL-BUKHARI (p. 107, vol. 3, of original Arabic text), AL-HAKIM, KA'B IBN AJRA, who all are the most reliable SUNNI traditionalists, authors, scholars, researchers and historians, in modern and ancient times, IMAM ALI (AS) and the Imams among his progeny are the "Custodians of Revelation" about whom the Almighty says: "Ask the custodians of Revelation when you do not know" (QU'AN, 21:7).

6- "The Believers" about whom He says: "Whoever differs from the Messenger, after guidance has been made clear to him, following paths other than those of the Believers. We shall leave him in the path he has chosen and place him in Hell, what an evil refuge" (QUR'AN, 4:115)

7- The "guides" about whom He says: "You are a Warner, and for each nation there is a guide" (QUR'AN, 13:7). They are among those upon whom Allah has showered His blessings and to whom he has referred in the FATIHA and throughout the Glorious QUR'AN in saying: "Guide us unto the Right Path, the Path of those You have blessed", (QUR'AN, 1:6-7).

8- The Almighty has also said: "These are with those whom Allah has blessed from among the prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous" (QUR'AN, 4:69).

9- These and other scholars testify that Imam Ali (as) and the Imams among his offspring are also referred to in this verse: "Your Master is Allah and His Messenger and the Believers who uphold prayers, and pay the ZAKAT even while prostrating; whoever takes for his Master Allah and His Messenger and the Believers, then the Party of Allah are indeed the victorious" (QUR'AN, 5:55-56). God has made salvation for those who repent and do good deeds dependent upon accepting their guided authority, saying: "I am most Forgiving towards those who repent, believe, do good deeds, and receive guidance" (QUR'AN, 20:82). Their WILAYAT is part of the "trust" about which the Almighty says: "We offered the trust unto the heavens, the earth and the mountains, but they all refused to bear it out of extreme fear, then man bore; he is most unjust, most ignorant" (QUR'AN, 33:72). 10- They are the "peace" wherein Allah has commanded everyone to enter, saying: "O ye who believe! Enter in peace all of you, and do not follow the steps of Satan" (QUR'AN, 2:208).

11- Imam Ali (as) and his chosen descendants are the "blessing" concerning whom Allah the Sublime has said: "You will be questioned on that Day about the Blessing" (QUR'AN, 102:8).

12- The incident of GHADIR KHUMM is referred to in the section about the holy Prophet in the holy QUR'AN when the Almighty God emphasized the conveying of His Message there and then, in tone which sounded like threatening, saying: "O Messenger! Convey that which has been revealed unto you from your Lord, and if you do not do it, then you have not conveyed His Message at all, and Allah shall protect you from (mischievous) people" (QUR'AN, 5:70).

The Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his Progeny, conveyed it on the Day of GHADIR KHUMM, having reached its plains and delivered the Message, whereupon God revealed this congratulating verse. 13- "Today have I completed your religion for you and perfected My blessing unto you and accepted Islam as your religion" (QUR'AN, 5:4) thus making it clear that in order to have a perfect faith in Islam, one must follow Imam Ali (as) and his progeny, the holy AHL AL-BAYT. The Prophet, too, expressed his appreciation of Imam Ali (as) and had the greatest regard for him in view of his conspicuous services and rare merits. Among his sayings praising Imam Ali (as) are these:

- Ali is from me, and I am from Ali.
- I am the city of knowledge, and Ali is its gate.
- The best judge among you is Ali.
- You are in the same position with respect to me as Aaron (HARUN) was to Moses (MUSA).
- Ali is more loved by God and His Messenger than anyone else.
- Whoever fights Ali fights me.

When the doors of all the houses overlooking the Prophet's Mosque were closed, that of Imam Ali (as) was permitted to remain open just as that of the holy Prophet (p) When the Fraternity was

established between each MECCAN emigrant and a MEDENITE ANSAR, the Prophet declared that Imam Ali (as) was his brother in this life and the life Hereafter. Upon returning from his last pilgrimage (HIJJAT AL-WADA'), he proclaimed before the numerous multitude that: "Ali is the master of whomsoever I have been the master". All Muslims present there congratulated Imam Ali (as) and realized that the Prophet had proclaimed him to be his successor.

THE PROPHET'S DEATH

It was ten years after the HIJRAH when the Prophet suffered from a fever which proved fatal. During that time of great calamity for the Prophet's family, Imam Ali (as) was always by his side, nursing and looking after him. The Prophet, too, did not part from him. Just before breathing his last (on May 25, 632 A.D.), he called Imam Ali (as) to get closer to him. He hugged him, talked with him slowly for a long time and conveyed to him his last will. When the Prophet passed into the Mercy of God, Imam Ali's hand was on his bosom.

AFTER THE PROPHET'S DEATH

Imam Ali (as), who always kept company with the Prophet, could not leave his sacred body unattended. Assisted by a number of HASHEMITES and a few true companions, therefore, washed it and covered it with the burial shrouds. Imam Ali's saddest moment ever was when he finally lowered the corpse of his beloved Prophet and cousin into the grave. Having performed this last burial service, he came to know that some companions, who did not bother to even attend the Prophet's funeral, had managed to proclaim ABU BAKR as the Prophet's successor, or caliph.

Yet Imam Ali (as), who had always kept a keen eye on the progress of the Cause of Islam, publicly showed no signs of indignation at being deprived of his right to succeed the Prophet as the Prophet himself had proclaimed in the presence of a great multitude only two months earlier. He, therefore, suffered the shock patiently, avoiding to be driven to him. Instead of fanning the flames of battle among the Muslims themselves who had only recently lost their Prophet, he sought shelter in patience and fortitude. ABU SUFYAN provokingly instigated him to recover his right, but he remained silent, rejecting his offer of military assistance. Imam Ali (as) knew fully well ABU SUFYAN'S real and evil intentions. Besides being calm and patient while in the company of shrewd and cunning people, Imam Ali (as) expressed his readiness to cooperate with the new regime, however artfully it was established. Deprived of the power and prominence, lavished upon him as long as the Prophet lived, he offered his sound counsel whenever ABU BAKR, UMER or UTHMAN, solicited him. Yet these caliphs never gave him a chance to display his talents in the field of administration or in commanding an army, for which job he was so obviously qualified.

Imam Ali (as), therefore, silently busied himself in the domains of spiritual and scholarly services to Islam. He arranged the QUR'AN chronologically, with references to the abrogating as well as

the abrogated verses, the clear and the multi-faceted ones. He encouraged the Muslims to develop a taste for academic and scientific researches. He wrote useful treatises on jurisprudence, commentary and KALAM (rationalistic interpretation). Some of his sermons, speeches, lectures and directives have been compiled by AS-SAYYID ASH-SHARIF AR-RADI in the form of a volume commonly known as NAHJ AL-BALAGHA (the path of eloquence). This book contains the best masterpieces of Arabic oratory. It abounds in wisdom,

knowledge and spiritual inspiration. Its eloquent phrases are endowed with the vigor of sublime oratory, reinforced by pairs of rhythmic rhymes. It contains rules and regulations of conduct for the individual as well as the society. It contains codes of moral virtues and guidance for civil administration and military tactics. Imam Ali (as) also prepared a group of such scholastically inclined disciples as could pave the path to the academic and scientific development of the nation. He laid the foundation of syntax, regulated the grammar and formulated the rhetoric. Thus he taught the lesson that even in the days of adversity, a great mind, though robbed of power and prowess, should not neglect its intellectual duty. He also instructed that in his quest for personal dignity, honor or position, a person should not trample upon national interests; rather, he ought to serve his nation and faith with all his might and means.

CALIPHATE

The way in which the first and second caliphs were "elected" encouraged to a great extent the spirit of tribalism which Islam vehemently fought. Even the second caliph, UMER IBN AL-KATTAB, himself admitted once, as quoted by AL-SHAHRISTANI in his AL-MILAL WANN-NIHAL, saying: "The allegiance to ABU BAKR was a calamity the oath of allegiance to another man without consulting all Muslims, then it will be a calamity which requires both men to be killed". For twenty-five years after the Prophet's death, Imam Ali (as) led a secluded life. After UTHMAN'S murder in 35 A.H. (655 A.D.), the much-troubled residents of Medina requested Imam Ali (as) to accept the caliphate. He strongly rejected their offer. Being fully aware of the circumstances which left nothing in the caliphate to be desired for, he answered them, as we read on p. 217, vol. 1, of NAHJ AL-BALAGHA, saying: "Leave me alone and seek someone else, for we are approaching an event the facets and hues of which are not pleasant to the heart nor to the mind. The horizons have been clouded, and evidences have been distorted.

Keep in mind that if I respond to your request, I shall direct you according to my own views, without listening to anyone who blames me for doing so. If you leave me, I will be just like anyone else, and I may endorse the appointment of the ruler of your choice, and it is better for you that I act as an advisor rather than as a ruler". But they continued insisting until he finally accepted, telling them clearly that he would act in accordance with the QUR'AN and the SUNNAH of the Prophet, showing no favor to anyone. The elderly chiefs of Medina accepted his conditions and the nation followed him. A few years later, however, their loyalty began to waver. The Umayyads

and many others whose vile interests were endangered by his purely Islamic rule, plotted against him. Imam Ali (as) resolved, as his duty, to subdue them. As a result, the battles of the Camel, SIFFIN and NAHRAWAN ensued in which Imam Ali (as) played the same role of a gallant warrior as he had done in the battles of BADR and UHUD, still remembered by many.

The first thing Imam Ali (as) did after being elected Caliph was to dismiss the corrupt governors previously appointed. They proved that they were not competent, and that their position was mainly due to their being relatives or fiends of the caliph who appointed them. Qualities of honesty and equity did not permit him to heed even the advice of his uncle IBN 'ABBAS who warned Imam Ali (as) of dire consequences. Some gave up the office without resistance while others revolted.

THE BATTLE OF JAMAL

TALHA IBN UBAYD-ALLAH, AZ-ZUBAIR IBN AL-AWWAM and 'A'ISHA, consort of the Prophet, who had all played an important role in the murder of UTHMAN, started accusing Imam Ali (as) of the same! 'A'ISHA was often heard saying; "UQTULU NA'THANAN FAQAD KAFAR", that is, "Kill NA'THAL (a bad name she chose for UTHMAN), for he has committed KUFR". With the help of the Umayyads, they collected an army and marched towards BASRAH. When Imam Ali (as) came to know about this hostility, he also marched there at the end of RABI' II, 36 A.H. 'A'ISHA was riding a huge camel and urging her men to fight,

hence "the Battle of Camel". 'A'ISHA'S army was composed of 30,000 well trained soldiers, while the men of Imam Ali (as) were 20,000. In vain did Imam Ali (as) try to convince 'A'ISHA to desist from waging a war between the Muslims. Victory was finally on the side of Imam Ali (as) who, when the war over, ordered his men to bury the dead and collect all the goods and weapons of the enemy at a certain place in the city. Then he made an announcement: "People may come and take their own goods and weapons back". In that battle, 13,000 of 'A'ISHA men and 5,000 of Imam Ali's men were killed as recorded on page 177, vol. 5 of MURUJ ADH-DHAHAB. Upon assisting her to alight from her camel, he said: "May God forgive you, Mother of the Believers...." Imam Ali (as) gave her 50,000 DIRHAMS and sent her very respectfully to Medina accompanied by forty women dressed in men's clothes.

THE BATTLE OF SIFFIN

Among the people who revolted against the Imam was MU'AWIYA IBN ABI SUFYAN, the powerful, wealthy and cunning governor of Syria. He had been governor since the days of UMER IBN AL-KHATTAB. At the time of the battle of JAMAL, he was inciting people against Imam Ali (as), and cursing him from the pulpit during Friday congregational prayers at which UTHMAN'S severed fingers were displayed before the congregation, attempting to thus convince people that Imam Ali

(as) was responsible for the murder of UTHMAN. In reality, not only did Imam Ali (as) try to stop them but also sent both of his sons Imam HASAN and Imam HUSAIN (as) to try to stop the mobs when they assaulted UTHMAN'S house prior to murdering him. Imam HASAN received a sword-cut from his forehead while defending UTHMAN.

Imam Ali (as) made all possible efforts to prevail upon MU'AWIYA to desist him from armed conflict but the latter paid no heed. They met at SIFFIN, a place on the river Euphrates. MU'AWIYA tried to deprive the army of Imam Ali (as) of access to water but could not succeed. From the first of SAFAR, severe fighting took place which continued for seven days and nights. One day, Imam Ali (as) shouted: "O son of HIND (MU'AWIYA) why are you shedding the blood of Muslims? Come to the battlefield yourself and let us decide it between you and me". But MU'AWIYA knew the military prowess of Imam Ali (as) and did not respond to his challenge. Imam Ali (as) came to the field disguised and challenged the enemy to a duel. AMR IBN AL-'AS did not recognize him. AMR had been appointed by UMER as governor of Egypt, accumulating a vast fortune which included, according to MURUJ ADH-DHAHAB,

vol. 3, p. 23, three hundred and twenty-five thousand DINARS in animal wealth, one thousand DIRHAMS, two hundred thousand DINARS' worth of crops Egypt, and his estate in WASIT Egypt, estimated at ten thousand DINARS. Imam Ali (as) knew that this wealth had not been accrued from the man's salary alone; therefore, he had to force him to leave office. AMR, therefore, came from Egypt to assist MU'AWIYA in Syria against Imam Ali (as). AMR came and recited a couplet: Imam Ali (as), still in disguise, also recited one. At once the rogue knew that it was Imam Ali (as), and he ran away. Imam Ali (as) hit him with a spear; he fell from his horse and raised both legs. Imam Ali (as) said: "Go, for the exposure of your private parts is your deliverer!" when defeat was nearing him, MU'AWIYA decided to ask for pardon. In the Syrian army, cries of "surrender" and "forgive" were heard all over. In short, a very fierce battle was being fought. Finally, the soldiers in the army of MU'AWIYA started fleeing. Suddenly, AMR IBN AL-'AS played a trick which really worked. He ordered his men to raise their copies of the holy QUR'AN on spearheads and shout "This book of the Almighty is between us". He meant that they should postpone the battle and decide according to the commandments of the holy QUR'AN. Imam Ali (as) men, on the other hand, pressured their leader to accept a ceasefire and decide the conflict according to the holy QUR'AN. On this Imam Ali (as) said: "MU'AWIYA, AMR IBN AL-'AS and their companions have nothing to do with religion. I am fighting them alone only because I want them to become true Muslims. Their raising of the copies of the holy QUR'AN is simply a fraudulent trick, nothing else". But they did listen; therefore, a declaration of armistice suspending fighting was announced.

Being thus occupied with continuous warfare, Imam Ali (as) could not bring about his reforms as fully as he wished. Yet during his brief reign of five years, he brightened the worn-off outline of simple Islamic living, justice, equality and honesty, earning a livelihood by the sweat of his brow. He had practically the power of a king but he wore patched garments and ate the most simple

food consumed by the poorest of his subjects. He equally distributed among the people the revenues and other incomes levied by the state treasury.

Once his brother AQIL asked him to give him a bit more than the common shares. Imam Ali (as) rejected his request and said: "Had I possessed some wealth of my own, I would have given you more of it; but I have no right to give my relatives anything above their lot from the common wealth". He always tried to give priority in the distribution of treasury funds to the deserving destitute. He did not even keep the treasury candle burning for his own personal use.

MARTYRDOM

It is a sad fact that this model of peace, equality, and Islamic civilization could not be tolerated by dishonestly ambitious persons. At the dawn of Ramadan 19, 40 A.H. (January 26, 661 A.D.), while leading the morning prayers at the KUFA MOSQUE, he was mortally wounded by a stroke of a poisoned sword. None could help admire his manly fortitude and forgiveness when his murderer was brought before him. He saw the wretched fellow's pale face and he had mercy on him. There and then he directed his two sons Imam HASAN and Imam HUSAIN (as) to be lenient to him, saying: "He is now your prisoner; so, don't be harsh on him. Give him from your own food to eat. If I recover, I shall deal with him myself-punishing him or forgiving him- as I choose. If I die, and you want to avenge my murder, then slay him with only one single stroke of the sword. Do not ever think of severing his hands or legs for that is against the teachings of Islam.

For two days Imam Ali (as) suffered from extreme pain. The poison of the sword spread throughout his powerful frame. At last, though, on Ramadan 21, 40 A.H. (January 28, 661), at the hour of morning prayers, the sun of Islamic Knowledge had set. Imam HASAN and Imam HUSAIN (as) arranged his funeral and laid him to rest in the soil of NAJAF, then a suburb of KUFA. There reposes that king of humanitarianism, compassion, courage and wisdom, the man who brought back to the world the pattern of simple and sublime Islamic life which prevailed during the days of his cousin, the holy Prophet of Islam (P.B.U.H.).

Fatima Az-Zahra' The Sublime Among All Women

NAME, TITLES AND PARENTAGE

Her name is Fatima (as) and her most popular title is AZ-ZAHRA' (The Lady of Light). She was given

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many other titles the most popular of which are: SAYYIDATU NISA' AL-ALAMIN (Mistress of Womankind), KHATUN AL-JANNAH (Lady of Paradise), KHATUN AL-QIYAMA (Lady of the Day of Judgment), MA'SUMAT AL-ALAM (The Infallible Lady of the World), SIDDIQA (Truthful), TAHIRA (Purified). She was the only daughter of the Prophet from KHADIJA and it was her son Imam HUSAIN (AS) who perpetuated the Cause of Islam, and we can say without any hesitation that she provided the mainstay to support the mission of her illustrious father.

BIRTH

There is a difference of opinion regarding the dates of her birth and death. Some historians say that she was born in the 5th year before Prophet-hood, while other biographers place it five years earlier. Based on AHL AL-BAYT references, one can safely say that she was born on the 20th of JUMADA AL-AKHIR in the fifth year of Prophet-hood (615 A.D.) or the 8th year before the HIJRA.

INSTRUCITON AND STATUS

Up to the age of five, she enjoyed the love and teaching of both parents. Then she was deprived of her mother's love and was looked after by her affectionate father, the Prophet of mercy. Aged ladies of the household, that is, Fatima daughter of ASAD, SAFIYYA daughter of 'ABD AL-MUTTALIB (the Prophet's aunt), and UMMU SALAMA was requested to tutor the child Fatima (as), the wise woman replied: "How can I tutor one who is the personification of high virtues and purity? It is I who should learn from her!" Her childhood, therefore, was passed in a very chaste and modest environment. Both Imam AHMED IBN HANBAL and AT-TABARI quote the Messenger of God (p) saying to his daughter Fatima (as): "I and you, and these two (i.e. Imam HASAN and Imam HUSAIN, (as), and this sleeping man (i.e. Imam Ali (as)) shall be in the same place on the Day of Resurrection". P. 219, vol. 2, of KANZ AL-'UMMAL quotes the Messenger of God (P.B.U.H.) saying that she was named Fatima (as) because God protected her and those who cherish her from Hellfire. 'A'ISHA is quoted on p. 319, vol. 2, of TIRMIDHI'S SAHIH saying: "I have never seen anyone who was so similar to the Messenger of God in his dignity and guidance, whether sitting or standing, more than Fatima daughter of the Messenger of God".

PREVAILING CIRCUMSTANCES

It was then that she saw her revered father preaching Islam in an un-conducive atmosphere. The hostility of the infidels and the death of ABU TALIB and KHADIJA were the shocks that broke the heart of the Prophet (p) Fatima (as) sometimes saw and dressed the wounds sustained by her father due to the stones flung at him by hostile infidels. She might have heard that certain wretches hurled rubbish on her noble father. She might also have learnt of the plans made to put an end to his life. But from all these things, Fatima (as) was neither frightened nor disheartened. She comforted her father even at that tender age, so much so that he gave her the title of

"UMMU ABIHA", mother of her own father. She was dismayed at seeing the whole world around her hostile to her father, bent upon ending his life. The entire family was blanketed with clouds of sorrowful grief as a result of the almost daily humiliation and mockery to which her most revered father was subjected.

MIGRATION

When the Migration took place, Fatima (as) was left under the care of Fatima daughter of ASAD. It was a horrible test for the girl of eight to see a group of blood-thirsty enemies surrounding the house with drawn swords. The departure of the loving father whose life was at stake was no less shocking, but Fatima (as) went successfully through this ordeal by virtue of God-gifted courage and fortitude.

MARRIAGE

It was after one year's stay at Medina that Fatima (as) came of age. The Prophet loved and esteemed her a great deal, so much so that whenever she came to him, he respectfully stood up for her. Many dignitaries, including some companions of the Prophet, sought the honor of marrying her, and some made their request formally, but the Prophet rejected all of them saying that he awaited God's Decree in that matter.

Fatima (as) was the model of the Prophet's teaching among women just as Imam Ali (as) was the best embodiment of his instructions and manly qualities among men. Judged from this point of view, they were the most suitable couple. But Imam Ali (as) was too modest to speak on this subject; therefore, some individuals encouraged him to make the formal request. Some historians say that she was nine, others say she was eleven, when her cousin Imam Ali (as) finally proposed to marry her. Her holy father said to her upon that occasion: "Ali has sought your hand for marriage. You are perfectly aware of his kinship to you and devotion to Islam. I have sought the permission from the Almighty God to give you in wedlock to Ali. Tell me if you approve of the same". Out of modesty, Fatima (as) kept silent. The holy Prophet said: "God is great! Her signifies her approval!" The Prophet asked Imam Ali (as) if he had some property of his own. The youth explained that he possessed a horse, a sword and armor. The Messenger said: "The sword and the horse are indispensable for a warrior like you, but the armor is superfluous; so go and sell it".

Historians say that the armor was sold for 480 silver DIRHAMS which he presented as his bride's MAHR (dower). The Prophet arranged his daughter's matrimony. The Messenger of God told ANAS IBN MALIK to invite a group of SAHABA (companions) including ABU BAKR, UMER IBN AL-KATTAB, UTHMAN IBN AFFAN, 'ABD AR-RAHMAN IBN AWF, SA'D IBN ABU WAQQAS, TALHA, AZ-ZUBAIR IBN ABD AL-MUTTALIB, and some men of the ANSARS. ANAS says: "When they all came and were seated, while Ali was absent on an errand for the Prophet, the Prophet said: 'All praise

belongs to God Who is praised through the bounties He bestows, worshipped due to His Might, obeyed due to His Authority, Whose torment and Might are feared, Whose command is obeyed in heavens as on earth, Who created everything by His own Might. He distinguished them through His commandments, dignified them through His religion, was generous unto them through His Prophet Muhammad. God, praised is His Name, Sublime is His Might, has made marriage the means towards maintaining a family line, and a matter whereby He enjoined to link the relations and He made it an obligation on His servants, saying: He it is Who created man from (congealed) water then He established relationships of lineage and marriage: for thy Lord has power (over all things) (QUR'AN, 25:54).

God's commandment leads to its implementation, and its implementation is His commandment, and for each there is timing, and for each timing there is a record. God obliterates what He wishes and fixes what He desires, and He has the Mother of the Book. God has commanded me to marry Fatima daughter of KHADIJA to ALI IBN ABU TALIB...' Then he ordered a platter of unripe dates to be brought to him of which we ate, and while we were eating, Imam Ali (as) entered, whereupon the Prophet smiled in his face and said: 'God has commanded me to marry you to Fatima for (the dower of) four hundred (or five hundred according to other traditions) ounces of silver if you agree'. He said: 'I agreed to that, O Messenger of God!''.

ANAS continued his tale by quoting the Prophet praying thus for the newly weds: "May God safeguard your tie and make happiness the reward of your toil and bless you both and bring about out of both of you a great deal of good". ANAS comments, as AT-TABARI quotes him on p. 30-31 of his History, saying, "By God, a great deal of good did indeed come out of them both". A traditionalist stated that God Almighty had granted a great portion of his universe river water as the MAHR of Fatima (as). In view of the spiritual excellences of the Messenger's daughter, this saying cannot be dismissed altogether, but the implication of the amount of silver stated above is that Muslims should not fix fabulously large amounts as their daughter's MAHR or consider the MAHR to be the scale of respect for and admiration of the brides. The meager weight of silver was to change the mentality of pride-indulging fathers. If Muslims keep the details of this marriage in view, they will never ruin their financial position by indulging extravagant customs at the marriage of their children.

CHILDREN

Fatima (as) lived only nine years after her marriage. In the second year, she gave birth to IMAM HASAN, and in the year after she gave birth to IMAM HUSAIN (as). Probably in the fifth year, her daughter ZAINAB was born, and in the seventh year, her daughter UMMU KULTHUM was born. The above-named sons later became the Imams of the Muslim community. Her daughter ZAINAB and UMMU KULTHUM proved to be the facsimiles of their noble mother.

CHARACTER AND VIRTUES

In form and features, in courage and eloquence of speech, Fatima (as) was the true copy of her holy father. Especially in truth and trust, she was an exact model of the great sire. During the brief span of her life, she left visible marks of her noble conduct that will serve as a model to lead women forever towards a sense of duty, patience, obedience and chastity. Her husband, upon being asked to describe her after she had already left this world, said, with tears in his eyes, "She was a fragrant flower of Paradise. Her fragrance perfumed my mind even after she herself had withered".

HOUSEHOLD DUTIES

After her marriage, she did all household work in person. Sweeping the floor, cooking, wheel-spinning, flour-grinding, raising and educating the children, in addition to many other household chores, were all carried out by Fatima (as) single-handedly. She neither complained of the overwhelming rush of work, nor did she request her husband Imam Ali (as) to get her a helper. Once she asked her father if she could have a maid. The Prophet instead of acceding to her request gave her a moral counsel. He taught her a special prayer through the use of rosary beads which is still called "TASBIH AZ-ZAHRA". It consists of thanksgiving and calling upon the Glory of God the Great. Fatima (as) was so content with this celestial instruction that she gave up her desire for a helping hand.

It was her habit to be the last to take a meal, waiting till her husband and children were through. Her revered husband asked her one day for something to eat. She lowered her head with silence. He left. Coming back home, he found her busy in prayers and prostrations to God, invoking His mercy. She was not mindful of hunger but of adoration to the Almighty. On a similar occasion, the Imam expressed his surprise at not knowing the state of affairs in the house. Lowering her head, she said: "My revered father had bidden me on his departure (from this world) not to embarrass you by making any demand on you. It is for this reason that I was careful not to upset you on account of any household need".

Later, when Islam brought a measure of prosperity to the Prophet, he granted her a maid named FEDDA whom she always treated as a companion, never degrading her. Islam certainly requires a woman to take equal part with her husband in the struggle of life. But due to differences in physique, their duties are different. This division of work was so nicely demonstrated to the world by Imam (as) and Fatima (as). All the outdoor functions. Fetching water, watering the gardens and earning a living for his family by the sweat of his brow, fell to the lot of Imam Ali (as) who never hesitated to even assist his wife in some of her household chores. All indoor duties were performed by Fatima (as). In most countries, this division of work is still followed. Requirements of time may change this practice to some extent, but the spirit and motives that make the difference

between indoor and outdoor duties should always be taken into consideration.

INDIFFERENCE TO ADORNMENT

It is only natural that women are inclined towards ornamentation and adornment. This creates anxiety for men who cannot afford it and spoils the balance of income and expenditure, sometimes resulting in financial and psychological problems. Fatima (as) always desisted from this, making her life a model for the women of poor families. She never allowed elaboration or adornment in dress or household articles because this was the instruction of her father the holy Prophet (p). Some traditions even that once she had somehow managed to acquire two silver bracelets, one necklace, a pair of ear-rings and a new door curtain. When the Prophet came to visit her, his meaningful silence was sufficient to instruct the pious daughter to accordingly give away all these things as an act of charity. When the Prophet came to know of it, he was so pleased that he exclaimed three times in joy: "May her father be sacrificed for her! She did exactly what I wished!". And undoubtedly it was only this high-minded daughter of the greatest teacher of humanity who could give a practical shape to her father's exalted teachings and bring high moral excellence to its climax.

SELFLESSNESS IN WORSHIP AND PRAYER

She was a devoted worshipper of God and indeed she set a noble example for humanity in this matter. Worshipping is a negotiation between man and the Creator. Some people can sacrifice their wealth and even their hard-earned bread for others; as regards their worship, they are more or less "selfish"; they do it for their own good. But the Prophet's Progeny were the exception. Whenever they stood humbly before the Almighty for prayers, they bore compassionate feelings for His creatures in their hearts. According to Imam HASAN (as), Fatima (as) once spent a whole night praying. At the end of the night, she prayed for God's mercy for the believers, imploring nothing for her self. When Imam HASAN made a mention of that to her, she said; "The neighbors must take preference", meaning that a noble person should seek the welfare of others, negating his own personal interests for their sake.

THE VEIL

Fatima (as), the chief of the ladies, put a great deal of emphasis on PURDAH, or veiling both by her conduct and word of mouth. In those days, some ladies took part in congregational prayers in the mornings, standing behind the last row of men and leaving the mosque immediately before the men did. Fatima's house adjoined the Prophet's Mosque but she never took part in those prayers or in the sermons delivered by her revered father. She, rather, managed to hear the contents of those sermons through her son Imam HASAN when he came back home. Once the Prophet, while on the pulpit, asked the audience as to what could be the best thing for a woman. When Fatima

(as) was informed of this, she simply uttered: "The best thing for woman is that she neither views a stranger, nor is she viewed by him". When these words reached the Prophet, he proudly remarked; "Naturally, quite correct; she is, after all, a part of my own being".

SERVICES TO ISLAM

In Islamic teachings, women's sphere of work is quite different from that of men. Women are not required to take a combative part in JIHAD. Reliable historians say that Fatima (as) never went to a battlefield. But indirectly she contributed to it as much as she could. For example, when the Messenger of God came back home after being injured during the battle of UHUD, she washed his face and dressed his wounds. When Imam Ali (as) came back home from the same battle, holding his victorious weapon, he exultingly said: "Take this sword; it has exceeded all the limits of faithfulness today". The Prophet also remarked: "Yes, Fatima! Take the saber from his hand. Your husband discharged his duty at the most critical moment. And it is his sword which put to death the prominent chiefs of the infidels". Fatima (as) heard all this with calm modesty and took the sword. She left exalted, thinking that her faithful husband had fulfilled all the requirements of JIHAD because her personal contribution to the religious battles was only that which she made within the four walls of her home. Undoubtedly she had once gone out in a peaceful expostulation known as the MUBAHALA, but she was completely veiled in her long garb and was accompanied by her husband, father, and children. The details of this event are as follows: A delegation of Christian scholars and spirituals of Yemen came to Medina to argue with the Prophet about the truthfulness of Islam. The discussions with them continued for several days, and though all points of argument were completely covered, they were not prepared to acknowledge the supremacy of Islam. At this juncture, the following verse was revealed to the Messenger:

"but whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of knowledge, then say to them: "Come, let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, and our (dearest) souls and your (dearest) souls. Then let us pray earnestly to God, calling His curse upon the liars". (QUR'AN, 3:60).

The Christian deputation accepted this challenge. On DHU AL-HIJJAH 24, 10 A.H. (March 22, 632 A.D) the two parties appeared in a plain outside Medina. From one direction came those spiritual leaders of NAJRAN, Yemen, who were the elite among Yemen's clergy, and from the other came the messenger of Allah and his sacred progeny, graceful and dignified. The Prophet was foremost, bearing Imam HUSAIN (as) on his arm while Imam HASAN was holding him by the finger. Behind them was Fatima (as) followed by her husband Imam Ali (as). When the Christian spirituals saw the angelic faces of this assembly, they were struck with grave awe. Fearing the certain and unsparing curse of God in case of a spiritual contest, they gave in and made a treaty on reasonable conditions. The event shows that if once or twice Fatima (as) came out of her house, she was thoroughly veiled, and it was just to carry out the order of God and His Messenger.

THE PROPHET'S TREATMENT

It was due to the heavenly virtues of Fatima (as) that the Prophet was extremely affectionate to her. He also respected her in a degree never shown by any other sage. One of the demonstrations of his love for her was that whenever he proceeded to battle, he bade her farewell the last of all; and when he returned, she was the first he would visit. As regards respect, he stood up to receive her whenever she came into his presence and seated her in his own place, an honor never shown to anyone else by the Prophet.

DISTINCTIONS

The traditions of the Prophet, affirming her virtues are so numerous that with the exception of Imam Ali (as), none can vie with her. Many of them are undisputed, equally acknowledged by all Muslim scholars. Among such traditions are:

- Fatima is the chief of all the women of Paradise.
- Fatima is the chief of all the women of the worlds.
- God is pleased with whomsoever she is pleased.
- Whoever harms Fatima is as though he harms God.

Even her name, which means "redeemer", indicates that God will free from sins a multitude that emulates Fatima (as). Countless traditions like these are recorded in books of tradition.

ON THE PROPHET'S DEATH

In the beginning of the 11th year A.H. (May 632 A.D.), her affectionate and revered father passed into Mercy of God. The shock was so devastating that she lived for only a few months after that sad event. During those days none saw her smile or heard her laugh.

ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES

It is the most heart-rending fact that the same lady whom the Prophet always stood to receive, began to feel that the world-seeking opportunists had deserted her. Her accomplished husband Imam Ali (as) was deprived of the caliphate which was vested upon him by the Prophet. That was sad enough, but still sadder was the fact that those who snatched it from him asked him to pay them homage and endorse their regime. They even subjected him to oppression and at one time tried to set his house on fire, but they did not. According to some reports, Fatima's rib was fractured as she hid behind the door which was forced open by the intruders. Imam Ali (as) refused to swear allegiance to them in spite of their pressure as long as Fatima (as) was alive. It

was only after her death that Imam Ali (as) felt compelled, in order to safeguard the unity of the Muslim nation, to do so. All these affairs pressed so heavily on her noble heart that she could not bear it and consequently died. The seriousness of these calamities can be sensed in a couplet she composed which roughly says:

Calamities befell me that would turn the most bright Of daylight into the pitch of the darkest night

FADAK

The physical and spiritual shocks which distressed her were intensified by the confiscation by both ABU BAKR and UMER IBN AL-KHATTAB of the land of FADAK left for her by her father the Prophet as inheritance. It meant depriving her of a supplementary source of livelihood which was badly needed in addition to its sentimental value. Still heavier pressed on her heart the fact that when she asked ABU BAKR, the ruling caliph then, why he deprived her of her father's inheritance, he told her that he had heard the Messenger of God say that prophets do not leave inheritance. In vain did Fatima (as) try to convince ABU BAKR that he misunderstood her father's statement which meant that Prophet-hood is not a matter of inheritance, that the sons of Prophets are not necessarily prophets too. She reminded him of the references in the holy QUR'AN to SULAYMAN (Solomon) being DAWUD'S (David's) heir (holy QUR'AN, SURAT AN-NAML, verse 16),

and the inheritance for which ZAKARIYYA had prayed (holy QUR'AN, SURAT MARYAM, verses 6 and 7). Indeed, what the Prophet had meant was simply that Prophets are not supposed to hoard silver and gold in order to leave it as inheritance for their descendants after them as is the practice of monarchs and those who love this vanishing world. She felt deeply disappointed and never forgot it till the last moment of her life. Fatima's children felt the same way, and they kept trying to get FADAK back and finally succeeded at the hands of the just ruler the Umayyad caliph UMER IBN ABD AL-AZIZ. FADAK at that time was an agricultural village situated near KHAYBER in the outskirts of Medina. The Prophet (p) had made peace with its residents in exchange for half of its crops, and it was the property of the Prophet (p) which God permitted him to have without having to fight or wage a war for it. According to ABU SA'ID AL-KHUDRI, when the verse "and grant the near in kin his right" (QUR'AN, 17:26) was revealed, the Messenger of God (p) called Fatima (as) and granted her FADAK. This is recorded on p. 136, vol. 3, of FADA'IL AL-KHAMSA IF AS-SIHAH AS-SITTA (virtues of the five persons in the six SAHIH books), in AL-HAKIM'S TARIKH, in IBN AN-NAJJAR, and it is also recorded on p. 158, vol. 2, of KANZ AL-'UMMAL by AL-MUTTAQI AL-HINDI.

HER WILL

Fatima (as) died while still quite young due to being profoundly disappointed with how things went in the world of Islam immediately after the death of her father the Messenger of God. Prior to her death, she made a most moving dialogue with her husband IMAM ALI IBN ABU TALIB (AS)

which is recorded in several books of history and quoted by HASAN AL-AMIN in his Encyclopedia. In it, Fatima (as) said: "Cousin! My first will is that you marry after me my niece 'UMAMA (daughter of her sister ZAINAB, after whom she named her own daughter ZAINAB), for she will treat my children just as I have, for women are a necessity to men, not a commodity".

Who is this ZAINAB? According to HASAN AL-AMIN, who quotes prominent historians of Islam, ZAINAB was daughter of KHADIJA BINT KHUWAILED (the Prophet's first wife) by her former husband whose biography seems to have slipped the attention of historians. Before the Prophet had received the first revelation, ZAINAB was married to her cousin ABU AL-'AAS IBN AL-RABI' IBN ABD AL-UZZA IBN ABD SHAMS. ZAINAB believed in Muhammad immediately after her mother KHADIJA did, while her husband remained polytheist. ZAINAB'S only offspring were Ali, who died young, and UMAMA, whom Imam Ali (as) married in deference of his wife's will. Fatima (as) emphasized the importance of veiling even in the last days of her illness. One day when she seemed to be very upset, her aunt ASMA' daughter of UMAYS (the widow of JA'FAR AT-TAYYAR) asked her for the reason. She said she did not like the custom of carrying a dead woman on a plank which discloses her size and physique. ASMA' said she had seen in ABYSSINIA a better method. She made for her a semblance of the covered plank or coffin in which a woman's body was carried in that country. Fatima (as) was glad to know it and smiled for the first time since her father had died. She indicated in her will that her corpse should be carried in such a manner. Historians record that it was the first corpse should be carried away in that way. She also indicated that her corpse should be carried away at night, and that those persons whose behavior had wounded her heart and with whom she was extremely displeased when she died should not be allowed to accompany it.

DEATH

Realizing that her end was coming near, she asked her husband to arrange for her last (pre-burial) bath. Having bathed, she put on neat clothes, applied perfume and asked her husband to give her the funeral bath without removing those clothes (see HILYAT AL-AWLIYA'. Part II. P. 43). After she had left this vanishing world to the eternal one, her husband did as she had requested him, using seven pieces of cloth as her shroud and applying whatever remained of the holy Prophet's camphor to perfume her with. Those present at the time of the ceremonial funeral bath were ASMA' daughter of UMAYS, both of her sons, her daughter ZAINAB and UMMU KULTHUM, and her maid FEDDA. When the news of Fatima's death became known in the city, a large number of the faithful gathered outside Imam Ali's house awaiting the funeral, but Imam Ali (as) sent them both SALMAN AL-FARISI and ABU DHARR AL-GHIFARI to ask them to disperse, for Fatima (as), in her last will and testimony, emphatically expressed her desire that she must not be buried in public or be mourned by the crowds as customary. The funeral prayers therefore were conducted by Imam Ali (as) with five TAKBIRS. He buried her at midnight, obliterating thereafter all the signs of her grave and leveling the ground, just as she had requested in her will.

At the time of the funeral prayers, none was present besides Imam Ali (as) except both his sons, AMMAR IBN YASIR, AL-MIQDAD IBN AL-ASWAD AL-KINDI, AQIL IBN ABU TALIB, AZ-ZUBAYR IBN ABD AL-MUTTALIB, ABU DHARR AL-GHIFARI, SALMAN AL-FARISI, BURAIDAH, and a few members of the clan of BANU HASHIM. Her will also indicated that her grave should not be visited by anyone with whom she was displeased during her lifetime. Finishing the burial, the bereaved Imam stood up, turned his face towards the holy Prophet's sepulcher and said:

"O Messenger of God! I offer salutations to you on my own behalf and on your daughter's. She has come to be your neighbor. She will be resting in your vicinity under the dust. The Almighty God has arranged a quick reunion between you both. O Messenger of God! I have lost patience because of separation from your beloved daughter. I put up with the shock of being separated from you. I repeat the same attitude now with this new separation. I laid you to sleep in your grave. The separation of your soul from your body came about when your body was resting between my chest and neck. The command of the holy QUR'AN suffices me: "Verily we are God's, and verily unto Him is our return".

It was on JUMADA AL-AKHIR 3, 11 A.H. (August 26, 632 A.D.), three months after her father's death, that this most noble lady passed into the Mercy of God. She was buried in the graveyard of JANNAT AL-BAQI'. Her tomb, built later, was razed to the ground along with other tombs of the Prophet's family by the WAHHABI monarch of SAUDI ARABIA the bigoted IBN SA'UD on SHAWWAL 8, A.H. (April 21, 1926 A.D).

The Second Imam Al-Hasan Al-Mutaba (A.S.)

NAME AND PARENTAGE

His name is IMAM HASAN; "AL-MUJTABA" and "ABU MUHAMMAD" are his titles. He was the elder son of Imam Ali (as) and Fatima (as), the revered daughter of the holy Prophet (p).

BIRTH

He came into this world on RAMADAN 15, 3 A.H. (March 1, 625 A.D). This was the first joyful event of its nature in the Messenger's immediate family. In Mecca, when the Prophet's sons passed away during their infancy and only his daughter Fatima (as) survived, the infidels taunted him by

calling him ABTAR, (issueless, sonless). It grieved the Prophet a great deal, but soon a prediction was revealed to him through the verses of SURAT AL-KAWTHAR that he would have many descendants and that his enemy would instead become "issueless".

So Imam HASAN'S birth in the third HIJRI year was the first manifestation of SURAT AL-KAWTHAR. The world knows that through Imam HASAN and Imam HUSAIN (as), the Prophet's descendants spread to every corner of the globe. In such great numbers are they that towns are brimming with them. The Umayyads and other dynasties tried to eliminate them by murder or hanging on crosses and successfully poisoned many of them, yet in every village or town of the world they are still bearing the standard of the Faith. On the other hand, the Prophet's enemies, once rejoicing in the plentitude of their own offspring, have effaced so completely that historians find it hard to trace them. This is also one of the proofs which bear testimony to the truthfulness of the holy QUR'AN.

INSTRUCTION

IMAM HASAN (AS) had the opportunity to be contemporary to his grandfather the holy Prophet (p) for eight years, enjoying his great affection. History records several accounts of the Prophet's love for Imam HASAN (as) and for Imam HUSAIN (as), the younger brother of Imam HASAN (as). Many QUR'ANIC verses and traditions testify to the virtues and qualities these descendants of the Messenger share in common. The following are samples of such verses: On p. 25 of YANABI' AL-MAWADDA, the HANAFI HAFIZ AL-QANDUZI, quoting AL-MUFADDAL, says: "I asked JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) about verse 124 of Chapter 2 (AL-BAQARA): 'IBRAHIM was tried by His Lord with words'. And he said: 'They are the words Adam received from his Lord before is repentance was accepted, that is, that he said: 'Lord! I implore Thee in the name of Muhammad and Ali and Fatima and HASAN and HUSAIN (to accept my repentance)'. Then he asked: "What about 'and He completed them?'. The Imam answered: "It means that He completed them up to the QA'IN AL-MAHDI, twelve Imams, nine of them being the offspring of HUSAIN (AS)".

The traditions in praise of Imam HASAN (AS) and Imam HUSAIN (AS) are numerous. These are excerpts of the sayings (AHADITH) of the holy Prophet of Islam (p):

- HASAN and HUSAIN are the chieftains of the youths of Paradise.
- They both are the decoration of Heaven.
- Both are my two bouquets.
- Lord! They are dear unto me; so hold them dear too.

These and many other traditions indicate the greatness of Imam HASAN (AS) and Imam HUSAIN (AS). According to the common customs of the world, the lineage or descent is traced through male children, but the Prophet explicitly indicated that his grandsons could be rightfully called his

own sons. Another tradition which is unanimously acknowledged by the traditionalists of all Muslim sects affirms that the Prophet said: "God defines everyone's children as his offspring; in my case, He has defined Ali's sons as my own". In view of the above, the Prophet looked after the instruction of these two children with special care. The two brothers were undoubtedly rendered sanctified and infallible through AYAT AT-TATHIR (holy QUR'AN, 33:33). Both brothers, even while still children, were miniature models of the Prophet's own conduct and behavior. The Prophet, explaining their characteristics, said: "HASAN possesses my majesty and grandeur of leadership, while HUSAIN has inherited my courage and generosity". The word "leadership" represents and reflects a number of manly qualities. One of them was demonstrated by the Messenger himself, as commanded by God, even during Imam HASAN'S childhood, when he carried him to take part in the MUBAHALA, i.e. the spiritual contest with the YEMENITE Christians based on the asserting of one's own truthfulness and calling for the Lord's curse on the liars. This also shows that under God's guidance, the Prophet intended his progeny to carry on his sacred mission after his death.

The Prophet passed away on the 28th of SAFAR (or on the 12th of RABI' AL-AKHIR according to other traditions) of the year 11 A.H. (May 25, 632 A.D) and Imam HASAN (AS) was deprived of his cherishing love. After three months, he had to suffer the calamity of the death of his dear mother. His instruction was now carried on totally by his father IMAM ALI IBN ABU TALIB (AS). In this atmosphere of learning, Imam HASAN (as) grew up to be a graceful and highly accomplished youth. After the Prophet's death, Imam Ali (as) led a secluded life for twenty-five years. During those years, he did not involve himself in political affairs except when expressly requested for consultation by the three caliphs. On 'UTHMAN'S tragic death, the Muslim community of Medina repeatedly requested him to assume the caliphate. As soon as Imam Ali (as) became the caliph, a series of battles ensued: JAMAL, SIFFIN and NAHRAWAN. In all these battles, IMAM HASAN (AS) assisted his father with feats of valor of his own.

CALIPHATE

Imam Ali (as) was martyred on 21st of Ramadan, 40 A.H. (January 28, 661 A.D.). The Muslims then unanimously acknowledged IMAM HASAN (AS) as their caliph. He had to shoulder such a great responsibility while still grieved by the loss of his revered father. When he addressed the nation from the pulpit for the first time, he described his qualities in detail, highlighting his indifference to property and wealth. He was quite emotional while saying that, so much so that tears choked his throat and his audience, too, burst into tears. Then he reminded people of his ancestors and their virtues. ABDALLAH IBN ABBAS stood up and, after a short speech, invited people to take the oath of allegiance to Imam HASAN (AS). All obeyed willingly. IMAM HASAN (AS), before whose eyes the coming events were already their shadows, put to the eager audience the condition that they should follow him sincerely; that if he wanted to fight, they should all join him against the foe, and observe peace if he made a treaty. All agreed to these terms; IMAM HASAN (AS) took up the administration, appointed governors and officials, and began to issue his verdicts in disputed

matters.

During that time, MU'AWIYA was firmly seated on his throne in Damascus, Syria. The battles he fought with IMAM ALI (AS) had been a profitable bargain for him through the cunning arbitration of AMR IBN AL-'AS. Northern Arabia and Iraq, which used to be ruled by Imam Ali (as), were now under the control of Imam HASAN (AS). Soon disunity and dissension started prevailing due to the intrigues and plots of MU'AWIYA. Even Imam Ali's orders in the last year of his life were being ignored as is obvious from reviewing his sermons during that year. The KHARIJITES, whose power had been crushed by Imam Ali (as) at the battle of NAHRAWAN, were scattered throughout various parts of Arabia and were bent on ruffling the peace of the nation. It was a member of this very group who had wounded Imam Ali (as) at the Mosque of KUFA and had been the cause of his death.

The nation was still mourning Imam Ali (as), and Imam HASAN (as) had not yet straightened out the administration, when MU'AWIYA started ambushing the highways in the territories under the rule of Imam HASAN (AS). His secret agents were already busy conducting anti-Islamic activities. For example, a man of the tribe of HUMAIR was arrested in KUFA at the house of a butcher and was found guilty of such conduct; another, belonging to BANI SALIM, was arrested in Basra, and both admitted that they had come from Syria to create unrest and a disagreeable atmosphere against IMAM HASAN (AS), and to send intelligence reports to Damascus. Both were caught red-handed and were punished accordingly.

At this stage, IMAM HASAN (AS) wrote to MU'AWIYA warning him in the following tone: "You have sent your agents to create trouble and rebellion in my territory; your spies are busy in various quarters. It appears that you are bent on fighting. If it is really so, be prepared for it as its stage cannot be far away. I have also come to know that you spoke tauntingly at my father's death. Such taunting does not suit a wise person. Death is destined for all of us. If we face it here today, you shall confront it there tomorrow. In reality, we think that our dead have just left one place to go to rest in another". After this, a good deal of correspondence was exchanged between IMAM HASAN (AS) and MU'AWIYA. The latter had learned through his agent that the people of KUFA were disunited, that they were divided among themselves and were very weakened. MU'AWIYA, therefore, thought that the time was opportune to attack Iraq. Accordingly, he led his forces to the border. IMAM HASAN (AS), too, made preparations for battle. He sent HIJR son of 'ADIISON of HATIM AL-AT'I to tour the territories and expedite the government officers for war, and to persuade people to enlist for JIHAD. But as IMAM HASAN (AS) had already expected, his appeal received the cold shoulder. The army, which was formed anyway, consisted of KHARIJITES, trouble-seeking soldiers who desired nothing but booty, and some warriors who joined only because their tribal chiefs had compelled them to. Those who could be taken as faithful SHI'AS of Imam Ali (as) and Imam HASAN (as) formed only a tiny minority.

MU'AWIYA sent ABDALLAH IBN AMR IBN KARIZ as his vanguard. He camped at ANBAR. Imam HASAN (as) set forth to meet him and he camped at SABAT near DIYAR BAKR. In order to know the people's intentions, he assembled them and delivered a sermon saying:

"Know that I don't bear a grudge against any Muslims. I seek your welfare as keenly as that of my own. I have formed a decisive opinion about you and I think you will not contest it. I see that many of you have lost the courage to fight the enemy. Accordingly, I do not think it is wise to goad you into warfare".

At the conclusion of the sermon, some of his men burst into revolt. The gallant son of Imam Ali (as) could have suppressed the tumultuous mob personally had they been his open enemies. But these were his own soldiers whom he would not antagonize. His father Imam Ali (as), too, had to face a similar situation during the Battle of SIFFIN. He was likewise unable to control his own men when the enemy raised copies of the holy QUR'AN on their lances according to the trick invented by IBN AL-'AS. IMAM ALI soldiers had surrounded him and demanded that he should stop the fighting or else they would take hold of him and hand him over to the enemy. In such a situation, Imam Ali (as) did not like to wield his sword on his disobedient soldiers; he preferred to postpone the battle. The same or even more serious situation now threatened Imam HASAN (as). The revolting mob assaulted him. They pulled away the prayer mat from underneath his feet. One of them pulled away his mantle from his shoulders. The Imam had to mount his horse and call loudly upon the tribes of HAMDAN and RABI'A to come to his rescue. The faithful warriors of these two tribes speedily repelled the mutiny. Imam HASAN (as) then marched from SABAT to MADA'IN. a KHARIJITE named AL-JARRAH IBN QABAISA AL-ASADI lay in ambush and attacked the Imam with his dagger, wounding him in the thigh. He was arrested and punished. After having been under treatment at MADA'IN for a few weeks, Imam HASAN (as) recovered and made preparations to fight MU'AWIYA

TERRORISM OF MU'AWIYA

Besides the weekly cursing of Imam Ali (as) from the pulpits of Syria and the degradation of the dignity of the Messenger's family, MU'AWIYA ruled with an iron fist, he once summoned SUFYAN IBN AWF AL-GHAMIDI, one of the commanders of his army, and said to him: "This army is under your command. Proceed along the river Euphrates till you reach Hit. Any resistance in the way should be crushed, then invade ANBAR. After that, penetrate deep into MADA'IN. O SUFYAN! These invasions will frighten the Iraqis and please those who like us. Such campaigns will attract frightened people to our side. Kill whoever has a different opinion from ours; loot their villages and demolish their houses. Indeed, the war against their financial interest is similar to killing but is more painful to their hearts".

BISHR IBN ART'A, another commander, was summoned and ordered to proceed towards HIJAZ

and Yemen. MU'AWIYA instructed him thus: "Proceed to Medina and expel its people. Meanwhile, people in the way who are not from our camp should be terrorized. When you enter Medina, let it appear as if you are going to kill them. Make it appear that your aim is to exterminate them. Then pardon them. Terrorize the people around Mecca and Medina and scatter them".

TREATY

MU'AWIYA had come to know the condition of Imam HASAN'S army and the mutiny of his men. He concluded that the Imam was not in a position to carry on any battle. He also knew that the son of Imam Ali (as) and Fatima (as) and the grandson of the Prophet, however powerless or forlorn he might be, would never stoop to make peace on such conditions as might be against righteousness a promotion of KUFR. With all these facts in view, he sent a message through ABDALLAH IBN AMIR to the followers of Imam HASAN (as), asking them not to endanger their lives, and he dissuaded them from further bloodshed. Some he won over to his side by bribing while some cowards were frightened by a reference to the overwhelming numbers of MU'AWIYA'S forces. Besides this, he sent a message to Imam HASAN (as) requesting him to conclude a peace treaty on any terms he chose. Imam HASAN'S decision not to fight MU'AWIYA was a most painful one. He confided to a few of his followers: "By God, I did not give up the fight except due to the absence of supporters. Had I had sufficient supporters, I would have fought him (MU'AWIYA) day and night till God judges between us".

IMAM HASAN (AS), who fully and painfully aware of the disloyalty of most of his men, thought it would be completely unwise to continue the fighting, yet he was cautious enough not to act in such a way that would result in encouraging the faithless enemy. The Prophet's progeny never hankered after power; they only desired the welfare of humanity and the implementation of the Divine Law. Now that MU'AWIYA himself made him an unconditional offer for peace, IMAM HASAN (AS) could not afford to refuse it because such a refusal would have been interpreted as a desire for bloodshed. The grandson of the Prophet was placed in exactly the same situation as had the Prophet himself been placed prior to concluding the treaty of HUDAYBIYYA. Still before sending his reply to MU'AWIYA, IMAM HASAN (AS) assembled his followers and addressed them thus:

"Know that two battles have already been fought in which countless warriors fell. Some of them were slain at SIFFIN whom you are still mourning; others died at NAHRAWAN whose blood-money you are still demanding. Now if you do not fear death, let us refuse this offer of peace; rely on God and let our swords decide the matter. But if life is dearer to you, then let us accept this offer of peace". In response, most people began to shout: "We prefer to live! Make peace with the foe!" as a result, Imam HASAN (as) drafted the terms of the treaty and dispatched them to MU'AWIYA.

TERMS OF THE TREATY

The conditions of peace were as follows:

- 1- That MU'AWIYA shall rule in accordance with the QUR'AN and the SUNNAH of the Prophet throughout the territories under his control.
- 2- That MU'AWIYA shall have no right to nominate his successor.
- 3- That all people in Syria, Iraq, HIJAZ, and Yemen shall lead their lives safely and securely.
- 4- That the lives and properties of the SHI'AHs of Imam Ali (as), as and where they are, shall remain safe.
- 5- That MU'AWIYA shall not try, openly or secretly, to do harm to or kill Imam HASAN (as), his brother Imam HUSAIN (as) or other members of the Prophet's family, nor shall they be threatened or terrorized.
- 6- That the abusive phrases, the cursing of Imam Ali (as) during prayer services which were already taking place at the Grand Mosque of Damascus, be stopped. (This cursing had started immediately after 'UTHMAN had been murdered and Imam Ali (as) was unfairly accused of murdering him. MU'AWIYA agreed not to permit it as long as Imam HASAN (as) was in power. It continued not only during MU'AWIYA'S reign of terror but also during that of all the succeeding UMAYYAD rulers till the days of UMER IBN ABD AL-AZIZ).

This treaty was signed in RABI' AL-AWWAL or JUMADA AL-AKHIR of the HIJRI year 41 (July or September of 661 A.D.). In a letter Imam HASAN (as) wrote to HIJR IBN 'ADII AL-KINDI, he said: "I found the people wishing to reconcile, and they disliked war, I did not want to go through something which they disliked. I therefore reconciled especially for the sake of our followers so that they would be spared from being killed. However, I have only postponed the war, and God has a surprise every day".

AFTER THE TREATY

As a result of peace, the forces dispersed. MU'AWIYA'S authority was now recognized throughout all Muslim territories. Syria, Egypt, Iraq, HIJAZ, Yemen and even Persia were all under his sway. As a result of this treaty, Imam HASAN (as) had to hear very insolent and taunting phrases from his followers which none but a forbearing person like Imam HASAN (as) could tolerate. Those who once greeted him as "chief of the faithful" now labeled him as "The Humiliate of the faithful". As for MU'AWIYA, he entered Iraq, came to NUKHAILA at the border of KUFA and, after the Friday sermon, he proclaimed:

"O people of Iraq! By fighting HASAN, I did not mean to pressure you to observe the prayers or the fast or to pay ZAKAT or to perform the pilgrimage, for you were already doing them. My purpose of fighting was to make you acknowledge my superiority which has been fully served by this very treaty with Imam HASAN (as). God gave me success although you are not pleased with it. As to the

terms of the treaty, they are all henceforth under my feet".

The audience stood aghast but none could speak against the arrogant self-imposed ruler. He even spoke insolently of Imam HASAN (as) and his father Imam Ali (as) at which his brother Imam HUSAIN (as) stood up to check the tongue of the haughty tyrant. But Imam HASAN (as) made him sit down and he stood instead to reply to MU'AWIYA with a brief yet convincing speech. MU'AWIYA, however, persisted in violating all the terms of the treaty. Although Imam HASAN (as) led a peaceful life, he was constantly harassed by the Umayyads. Their false propaganda interpreted his deeds so scornfully that he was degraded in the public esteem. The taking by MU'AWIYA of several wives and his divorcing of some of them without taking into consideration the rules of the SHARI'A was justified in the most hideous manner, claiming that what he did was within the limits of the Divine Law, and on account of the "prevailing circumstances". Moreover, the Umayyads continued their inhuman behavior towards the descendants of the Prophet, cursing and abusing them. One event will suffice to depict how things went in those days:

While Imam HASAN'S coffin was being carried to the graveyard, MARWAN went weeping along with the others. Imam HUSAIN (as), tortured by the past behavior of this man, said to him: "Now you weep after HASAN' death, but during his life you made him drink the bitter cups of grief and sorrow, such as only our hearts know". MARWAN replied: "I admit that. But whatever I did, I did it with the one whose tolerance is more than the mountain can bear".

CONDUCT AND VIRTUES

Apart from other saintly virtues, the outstanding quality of IMAM HASAN (AS) which was acknowledged by friend and foe alike was his tolerance which even an enemy like MARWAN had to admit. The flatterers of the Syrian regime intentionally provoked Imam HASAN (as) with their abusive language so that his rage might flare up and they would have an excuse for bloodshed. But Imam HASAN (as) demonstrated such patience and tolerance in those situations as could not be shown by anyone else. His hospitality and generosity, too, were famed throughout Arabia. Thrice did he give away his entire wealth to please God. Twice he gave away in charity half of his belongings, including the bedding and garments.

IMAM HASAN (AS) used to give to some destitute thousands of DIRHAMS at one time. Some historians claimed that in his treaty with MU'AWIYA, one of the conditions was that MU'AWIYA should pay him a certain amount of his collected revenues every year. If this is correct, Imam HASAN'S condition might have been just to enable him to distribute a portion of the treasury to deserving destitute of HIJAZ. Surely he did not mean to spend the amount to satisfy his personal whims. It was his custom to give away to the beggar whatever money he had. On being asked why he did not reject the beggar's requests, though he himself was in need, he replied: "I myself an a beggar in the Kingdom of God. I feel too shy to reject the requests of other beggars like me. If I do

not grant them what they want, how can I expect that God would grant me my boon?". Besides the above-mentioned virtues, Imam HASAN (as) was a great scholar, ABDALLAH IBN ABBAS, the renowned scholar of the Divine Law, had attained a high position in learning as he had availed of Imam Ali's companionship. He was the unquestioned monarch of the realm of religious sciences. But in comparison with Imam HASAN'S knowledge, he admitted his subordination to the Imam, and the world would have to acknowledge that the Prophet's family had no peer. Once a person came to the Prophet's Mosque and inquired about the commentary regarding a certain verse. He approached ABDALLAH IBNABBAS first, then he consulted ABDALLAH IBN UMER IBN AL-KATTAB. Finally, he came to Imam HASAN (as). He stated that Imam HASAN'S explanation was definitely better than what he had heard from all the others.

He spoke several times in the hostile court of his opponent MU'AWIYA on the virtues of AHL AL-BAYT and the qualities of Imam Ali (as) so fluently that the enemies lowered their heads in respect and were impressed by his matchless eloquence, based as it was on truth. His piety, too, commanded appreciation. He made the pilgrimage to Mecca twenty or twenty-five times barefoot. Upon the mention of death, the grave, and Doomsday, he used to burst into tears. When he reflected on the reckoning of good and bad deeds, he cried till he lost his consciousness. Whenever he stood to say his prayers, his whole body shook.

DEATH

In spite of leading a calm life, without harming anyone, his presence was intolerable to the Syrian monarchy which finally put him to death using the same soundless weapon which was quite often used by the Umayyad regime, that is, poison. JU'DA daughter of AL-ASH'ATH IBN QAYS was wife of IMAM HASAN (AS). The tribal enmities were working in her blood. MU'AWIYA allured her with the promise of one hundred thousand DIRHAMS as a reward for her complacency and promised to marry her to his son and heir-apparent YAZID. She was tempted enough to poison IMAM HASAN (AS). Physicians who had a chance to examine his corpse said that his liver was so fatally affected that it was split by poison into bits and pieces. Before breathing his last, he called his younger brother IMAM HUSAIN (AS) to his side and made his will that he should be buried near his grandfather the holy Prophet provided it would not be resisted by the enemies; otherwise, IMAM HUSAIN (AS) should refrain from any bloodshed and bury him at JANNAT AL-BAQI' instead.

IMAM HASAN (AS) passed into God's mercy on the 28th of SAFAR, 50 A.H. IMAM HUSAIN (AS) took his coffin to the Prophet's tomb. But as IMAM HASAN (AS) had expected, both UMM AL-MU'MININ A'ISHA and MARWAN IBN AL-HAKAM resisted his burial there, so much so that their hooligans shot arrows at him, some of which fell close to the coffin. IMAM HUSAIN (AS), in accordance with his brother's will, took his brother's corps to JANNAT AL-BAQI' where he buried him.

The Third Imam Sayyid Ash-Suhada' Al-Husain (A.S.)

NAME AND PARENTAGE

His name is IMAM HUSAIN (AS). "SAYYID ASH-SHUHADA'" (Chief of Martyrs) and "ABU ABDALLAH" (Father of 'ABDALLAH) are his titles. He was the younger grandson of the holy Prophet, i.e. the younger son of Imam Ali (as) and Fatima (as).

BIRTH

He was born on the third of SHA'BAN in the fourth HIJRI year (January 9, 626 A.D.). When the Prophet hearted the good news, he came, took him on his arm and kissed him. He called the ADHAN in his right ear and the IQAMAH in the left and placed his tongue in the babe's mouth, thus saturating him with the fountain of Faith. On the seventh day, the sacrifice of goat was offered. The family was overjoyed by this auspicious occasion. But the events which followed were already casting their shadows on the intellect of the Prophet whose anxiety saddened the AHL AL-BAYT and made them contemplate upon and discuss the inflictions which were to happen on the tenth of MUHARRAM of the year 61 A.H. (October 10, 680 A.D.).

UPBRINGING

The Prophet, who was devoted to the service of Islam, was now also occupied by the upbringing of both of his grandchildren, IMAM HASAN (AS) and IMAM HUSAIN (AS). He was assisted in their instruction by their father Imam Ali (as) who had earned God's Pleasure by virtue of his deeds, and by Fatima (as) who was entrusted to convey the teachings of her holy father to her offspring and to the ladies of the nation. In short, IMAM HUSAIN (AS) was growing up in a most sacred environment IMAM HUSAIN (AS) was the third Imam of the sacred series of the Infallibles. He was the embodiment of the nobleness and dignity. His sincere worship, abstinence, generosity and grace were acknowledge by friend and foe alike. Keen observation and farsightedness, which he inherited from his grandfather the Prophet, enabled him to clearly foresee the oncoming grave events.

THE PROPHET'S AFFECTION

As the biography of Imam HASAN (as) indicates, the holy Prophet loved these two grandsons exceedingly. He loved them and enjoined his community to love them too. But his love for this younger child was of a special distinction. Sometimes while he was in prostration and Imam HUSAIN (as) mounted his back as a child's prank, the Prophet remained in that position till Imam HUSAIN (AS), of his own will, came down. While delivering a sermon at the Mosque, he once saw Imam HUSAIN (as) stumbling as he entered, so the Prophet cut his sermon short and descended from the pulpit to pick him up. He then took his seat on the pulpit again to warn people against their reluctance to recognize the status that child would enjoy in the nation. He also declared emphatically: "HUSAIN is from me, and I am from HUSAIN". The future events proved what he meant: his mission would be carried out by Imam HUSAIN (AS).

AFTER THE MESSENGER'S DEATH

IMAM HUSAIN (AS) was seven year old when his loving grandfather passed away. IMAM HUSAIN'S father Imam Ali (as) spent the next 25 year in seclusion and Imam HUSAIN (AS) witnessed the unpleasant turns of events of those days, studying his father's conduct during that period. When he was thirty-one, the community acknowledged Imam Ali (as) as their caliph, who ruled in that capacity for only five years. During the battles of JAMA, SIFFIN and NAHRAWAN, IMAM HUSAIN (AS) took an active part, assisting his father most gallantly. In 40 A.H. (660 A.D), Imam Ali (as) fell a martyr at the Mosque of KUFA. The responsibilities of Imamate were forthwith borne Imam HASAN (as), the elder son of Imam Ali (as). Imam HUSAIN (as) followed his leadership faithfully as an obedient younger brother. When Imam HASAN (as) signed the treaty with MU'AWIYA on such conditions as would safeguard the interests of Islam (had they been implemented), Imam HUSAIN (as) too consented to Imam HASAN'S instructions.

For ten years during the life of Imam HASAN (as), and ten years after his death, Imam HUSAIN (as) led a secluded life. He was occupied with worshipping God and propagating His Divine Law. MU'AWIYA, on the other hand, had violated all the conditions he made with Imam HASAN (as) and in the end succeeded in having the Imam poisoned through one of his tricks. The SHI'AHs of Imam Ali (as) were unsparingly arrested, beheaded or hanged. To top all iniquities, MU'AWIYA announced YAZID as his successor, in glaring contravention of the terms of the treaty with Imam HASAN (as). He devoted all his endeavors to secure the oath of allegiance to his son YAZID. Pressure, wealth, position, power, poison-all were employed to force the Muslim community to bow in obeisance to his will.

FABRICATION OF HADITH

During MU'AWIYA'S regime, the flood of fabricated and irreligious traditions and practices threatened to sweep away the religion of Islam. As an example of fabricated traditions (AHADITH), ABU HURAYRAH quoted the Prophet allegedly saying: "God has trusted three for his revelation:

myself, Gabriel, and MU'AWIYA". We wonder what God was doing for the revelation when MU'AWIYA was heading the infidels' camp. Another example: ABU HURAYRAH narrated that the Prophet had given MU'AWIYA an arrow and told him: "Take this arrow until we meet in Paradise". What a lucky arrow to enter Paradise!

MU'AWIYA APPOINTS HIS SUCCESSOR

While MEDENITE Muslims decided to swear the oath of allegiance to Imam HUSAIN (as) son of IMAM ALI IBN ABU TALIB (AS), MU'AWIYA, who was still alive and well, decided to appoint his son YAZID to succeed him as the caliph in Damascus. In order to secure the job for his son, MU'AWIYA wanted to obtain the oath of allegiance to him during his own lifetime. His decision caused a fury among the circles of Arab dignitaries who voiced their objection. Among the first to voice such objection were: IMAM HUSAIN (AS) son of Imam Ali (as), 'ABD AR-RAHMAN IBN ABU BAKR, ABDALLAH IBN AS-ZUBYR, ABDALLAH IBN UMER, and many others. MU'AWIYA wrote to MARWAN IBN AL-HAKAM, of Medina, instructing him to obtain the oath of allegiance to his son YAZID. MARWAN accordingly delivered a speech and concluded it saying, "The commander of the faithful (meaning MU'AWIYA) is of the view that he chooses his son YAZID to succeed him as your ruler following in the footsteps of ABU BAKR and UMER IBN AL-KATTAB..." 'ABD AR-RAHMAN IBN ABU BAKR interrupted him with his objection, "Nay! It is rather in the footsteps of KISRA and CAESAR! Neither ABU BAKR nor UMER appointed their sons or relatives as their successors...!"

In the year 51 A.H., MU'AWIYA performed the pilgrimage and, while in Medina, called upon ABDALLAH IBN UMER IBN AL-KHATTAB to come to see him whereupon he said to him: "O son of UMER! You used to tell me that you never liked to sleep one night without knowing who your ruler is, and I warn you against spreading the seeds of dissension among the Muslims or corrupting their views". ABDALLAH praised God and said: "There were other caliphs before you who had sons who were not inferior to yours, yet they did not decide to do what you have decided to do regarding your son. Rather, they let the Muslims make their own choice. You warn me against dissension, and I am not an advocate of dissension. I am just one of the Muslims, and if they are unanimous regarding an issue. I will then add my voice to theirs". MU'AWIYA said: "May God have mercy on you". ABDALLAH IBN UMER left. MU'AWIYA then invited ABU BAKR'S son (ABD AR-RAHMAN) to come to his presence. When he came, MU'AWIYA articulated the KALIMA and started his rhetoric but ABD AR-RAHMAN interrupted him by saying: "All you want to say is that you wish us to obey your son after obeying God, and this by God we will never do and, by God, we shall settle this issue by mutual consultation of the Muslims; otherwise, we will treat you as you were treated at the dawn of Islam...!". Then he stood up and left. MU'AWIYA, however, delivered a sermon from the pulpit at the grand mosque of Damascus in which he claimed that both sons of the first two caliphs had endorsed his nomination of his son as his successor! People inquired about the truth from those who were in MU'AWIYA'S company while the latter performed the pilgrimage that year, and they were told that was not true.

YAZID'S CHARACTER

The character of YAZID son of MU'AWIYA was worse than that of his father. His grandmother HIND had chewed the liver of HAMZA, the Prophet's uncle, during the battle of UHUD. YAZID was a drunkard, an evil-doer, wicked and tyrannical. He once composed a pornographic poem in which he flirted with one of his aunts and described every part of her body. AL-WALID was the governor appointed by the Umayyads over Medina. When he was instructed by YAZID to secure the oath of allegiance to him, he summoned Imam HUSAIN (as) to his court and asked him to swear the oath of allegiance to YAZID, the Imam answered thus: "AMIR (Prince)! I belong to the AHL AL-BAYT of the Prophet. God has consigned to and charged us with the Imamate. Angels pay us visits. YAZID is a wicked sinner, a depraved reprobate, a wanton drunkard, a shedder of unjust blood, a shameless voluptuary, and an open defiler of God's commandments. A man like me will never yield his allegiance to a man like him".

Imam HUSAIN (as) knew that he could not stem the tide of the profane and impious monarchy except by sacrificing his kith and kin, and doing battle with the damascene despot who was enthroned by MU'AWIYA.

Yet the political turbulence caused by his refusal to swear the oath of allegiance to the Umayyad tyrant did, indeed, upset his noble mind, and he predicted dire consequences. While in Medina, he busied himself with the dissemination of the teachings of the faith. His convincing speech, dignified dialogues, eloquent exhortations, all displayed the wisdom of Islamic creed and practices. He administered as much charity to the poor as he possibly could, and he never felt tired of dressing the wounds inflicted on the human race by pleasure-seeking rulers and their insensitive subordinates. Calm and quiet, he advanced the Cause of Islam with word of mouth, and with the example of his saintly character. Like his illustrious grandfather, he behaved humbly even with the most lowly members of the society. He never disappointed the beggars who invited him to partake of their food. Since he was not permitted to accept charity from anyone,

he instead kept company with them. In spite of such humbleness, his sublime personality commanded such respect that wherever he was present, people could not look at him in the eyes. Even those who were sworn enemies of his family could not help acknowledging the greatness of his personality. Once Imam HUSAIN (as) wrote to MU'AWIYA strongly criticizing his misdeeds and cunning diplomacy. MU'AWIYA read the letter and felt uneasy. The flatterers who kept company with him suggested that he should reply in the same tone. MU'AWIYA said: "If I make wrong allegations, they shall carry no weight; if I write truthfully, by God I cannot trace the slightest defect in HUSAIN'S conduct". The epics of his moral courage, truthfulness, righteousness, charisma, enthusiasm, fortitude and perseverance can be observed by reviewing the battle of KARBALA'. In spite of the fact that he was on the Right Path, he tried till the last moment to

conclude peace with his enemies. When this proved futile, he upheld his principles and willingly paid the dear price. Determined to face whatever might befall, he proceeded on the path which he had chosen, the path towards an honorable death.

HARASSMENT OF THE IMAM

One of the main conditions of the treaty signed by IMAM HASAN (as) and MU'AWIYA was that MU'AWIYA must not appoint his successor. Violating all other terms as well, MU'AWIYA violated this term too. He appointed his son YAZID as his successor, and having toured all the territories under his authority, he obtained oaths of allegiance for him. When he came to Medina for the same purpose, he compelled all the outstanding inhabitants, at the point of the sword, to pledge obeisance to his son. IMAM HUSAIN (as), however, refused to do so. MU'AWIYA tried all his tactics in vain to force IMAM HUSAIN (as) to accede to his wishes. Due to YAZID'S conduct and character, it was vile even to call him a Muslim ruler for this would be a blot on the Divine Law of Islam. A lustful debaucher and an open drunkard, he freely indulged in all immodest and indecent acts. Demanding the oath of allegiance from the grandson of the holy Prophet obviously meant that MU'AWIYA wanted the sacred Imam of fix the seal of approval on YAZID'S devilish deeds. After the death of MU'AWIYA, YAZID occupied the throne. His first concern was to obtain the oath of allegiance from the Imam.

While informing AL-WALID, the then governor of Medina, of his father's death, he instructed him to summon IMAM HUSAIN (as) and have him pledge his obeisance to him. AL-WALID sent for the Imam and delivered YAZID'S message politely. IMAM HUSAIN (as) had already decided never to bend his lofty head. He also knew the consequences of his denial, but he was prepared to suffer every calamity to safeguard the Prophet's faith and the Divine Law. Asking AL-WALID to give him time to consider the matter, he came back home and resolved that his further stay in his native city was no longer safe. On RAJAB 28, 60 A.H. (May 4, 680 A.D), IMAM HUSAIN (as) bade farewell to his grandfather's tomb and set out on a journey, accompanied by all his relatives. Mecca was the sanctuary where none was supposed to harass anybody. Islamic teachings guaranteed safety and security for anyone who took refuge in it. IMAM HUSAIN (as) decided to stay there along with his family.

He stayed in Mecca till the first quarter of DHU AL-HIJJAH monitoring the situation. During that period, the people of KUFA were incessantly dispatching letters requesting him to come to Iraq to rid them of the tyranny of the Umayyads. In response to their letters, IMAM HUSAIN (as) dispatched his cousin MUSLIM IBN AQIL to them, and as many as eighteen thousand Kufians swore the oath of allegiance to IMAM HUSAIN (as) at the hands of Muslim. KUFA became the only place of which he could think as the starting point for his revolution against Umayyad tyranny and despotism. On the 8th of DHU AL-HIJJAH of 60 A.H. (680 A.D), he started marching towards KUFA where his cousin had made satisfactory progress assisted by many dignitaries of KUFA such

as HANI IBN URWAH. But due to the dishonest and deceitful role of corrupt and hypocritical mediators such as SHURAIH, the judge of KUFA, and the mercenary behavior of some influential persons such as MUHAMMAD IBN AL-ASH'ATH, the governor of KUFA, and UMER IBN SA'D, who was the most staunch supporter of the Umayyads in KUFA, obtained a respite which he utilized very well to reorganize a ruthless governmental machinery empowered by a harsh military regime and impose a reign of terror and persecution in almost all the strategic centers of Arabia, particularly Iraq.

The same city which earlier had given a warm welcome to Muslim Ibn Aqil, KUFA was now turning unfriendly. AL-NU'MAN IBN BASHIR, a lenient governor, had been recently replaced according to YAZID'S orders by UBAYD ALLAH IBN ZIYAD, a very ruthless and hard-hearted governor. Having taken charge, he issued very strict orders in the city which terrified the inhabitants. The latter, their lives and properties being threatened by the new governor should they help Imam Husain (as) in any way, deserted Muslim Ibn Aqil who was left without any protection. The representative of Imam, whose supporters, with the exception of only ten brave ones, fled in the face of the new wave of terror, had to fight courageously before dying a martyr on the 9th of DHU AL-HIJJAH, 60 A.H. (September 9, 680 A.D.).

Imam Husain (as) had neither the intention, nor the equipment for a battle or the means of bloodshed, and the time of the pilgrimage had drawn near. But circumstances took quick turns and he was unable to perform the pilgrimage which he had performed twenty-five times before barefoot. Thirty men disguised as pilgrims were dispatched by YAZID to assassinate the Imam while he was engaged in performing the rite of the pilgrimage (TARIKH OF 'ASIM AL-KUFI, MAQTAL ABI MIKHNAF, etc.). Commenting on this assassination attempt, the Imam is quoted in AT-TARIKH AL-KABIR as saying: "And even if I were to bury myself in some hideout, they are sure to hunt me out of it and force upon me allegiance to YAZID, and if I refused to do so, they would kill me, and they would not spare me without inflicting upon me the same tortures as the Jews had inflicted upon Jesus".

Imam Husain (as) did not like to be the cause of bloodshed in the sacred mosque; therefore, he left Mecca on the 8th of DHU AL-HIJJAH, (two days before the pilgrimage) 60 A.H, for KUFA with all members of his family.

Imam Husain (as) was on his way to KUFA when at the roadside inn of ZARUD he heard with great sorrow the heart-rending news of Muslim's death. But that mountain of fortitude did not shake a bit. To return was out of the question. He continued the journey till at the halting station of THU-HASAM, a detachment of one thousand cavaliers commanded by AL-HURR IBN YAZID AR-RIYAHI confronted him to halt his advance and to force him to go nowhere except in the direction of KUFA. Imam Husain (as) treated that enemy force with such chivalric benevolence that in the end it won him the heart of its commander. Seeing that the hostile army was extremely thirsty,

IMAM HUSAIN (as) gave his water supply to it. The enemy was still bent on aggression and stopped IMAM HUSAIN (as) from proceeding anywhere except to KUFA. It was the first day of MUHARRAM, 61 AH. (October 1, 680 A.D.). The next day, IMAM HUSAIN (as) dismounted at NAINAWA. IBN HAJAR writes in his AS-SAWA'IQ AL-MUHRIQA that when IMAM HUSAIN (as) came to the place, he took a handful of its earth and, having smelled it, declared:

"By God! This is the land of KARB (affliction) and BALA' (trial)! Here the ladies of my family will be taken prisoners! Here my children will be butchered and our men will be slain! Here the AHL AL-BAYT of the Prophet will be subjected to indignities! Here my beard will be stained with the blood of my head! And here our graves will be dug..."

Contemporary historians relate that after coming to that place, which was named thereafter KARBALA (the land of KARB and BALA). The Imam purchased that piece of land from its owners. It was only four miles square, yet he paid 60,000 DINARS for it to be the gravesite of himself, his family and relatives.

The total number of the fighting force which remained with IMAM HUSAIN (as) till 'ASHURA' was no more than seventy-two companions and eighteen who were his kinsmen, the rest being followers and supporters of IMAM HUSAIN (as) who came from different tribes, while the enemy's forces numbered, according to some reports, as many as six thousand, or sixty-eight thousand according to others. IMAM HUSAIN'S small force could have been wiped out in hours by such overwhelming numerical superiority, but the courage of its members prolonged the confrontation for ten days.

IMAM HUSAIN (as) negotiated with the foe for a peaceful agreement. He even offered to leave the whole country and go somewhere else across the border in order to avoid a clash with the forces of YAZID who still demanded the oath of allegiance from him. On the evening of the 9th of MUHARRAM, all possibilities of peace diminished. IBN ZIYAD'S order, addressed to UMER IBN SA'D, the commander of the forces, and delivered by SHIMR IBN DHU AL-JAWSHAN, clearly directed; "Ask HUSAIN to pledge his fealty unconditionally or give him battle". UMER IBN SA'D now had no choice but to raid the small and annihilate it, since IMAM HUSAIN (as) would not give in even in the face of certain death. IMAM HUSAIN (as), still calm and composed, analyzed the situation once more. The riverside had already been blocked by the foe; the cries of the children for water could be heard from a distance. To die fighting was their heritage, but what of the widows and orphans after him? The coming events were casting their ominous shadows.

Still, obeisance or bending his head before YAZID was all the same impossible. He wanted to obtain the respite of twelve hours as he wished to pass the last night of his life worshipping his Creator. The enemy too could have a chance to reconsider the whole matter. Granted the respite, IMAM HUSAIN (as) assembled all his followers and addressed them thus: "Whosoever remains

with me will be killed tomorrow; so, consider this opportunity afforded to you as God-sent and take advantage of the dark and take off to your homes and villages".

He then extinguished the light so that the sight of others might not prevent anyone else from going away if he so desired. The loyal companions burst out in inconsolable weeping and spoke out distressfully thus:

"O MAWLA! (Master)! Shame us not before the Messenger of God, Imam Ali (as) and Fatima (as)! With what face would we present ourselves to them on the Day of Judgment if we desert you? If we desert you, may the wild beasts of the jungle tear us to pieces". Saying this, the companions drew their swords from their scabbards, threw the scabbards in the fire of a ditch dug to protect the tents of the ladies and, holding in their hands the naked swords, they humbly offered supplicate prayers to the Almighty beseeching Him thus: "O Lord of the creation! We are passing through the sea of trouble and sorrow in obedience to thy Prophet, and for the sake of the defense of thy religion. Thou art the Sustainer of our honor and reputation. Thou art our Lord and Master. Grant us the strength of will and the spirit of enduring, patience and perseverance so that we may remain firm and give our all in thy Path".

Among those who remained with the Imam till the last minute were close friends such as HABIB IBN MUZAHIR, MUSLIM IBN 'AWSAJA, SUWAID IBN AMR, ANAS IBN AL-HARITH, ABD AR-RAHMAN IBN ABD AR-RABB, who were in their sixties and seventies. Some of them had had the honor of being the Prophet's companions. Some were HAFIZ for the holy QUR'AN such as BURAYR AL-HAMDANI, KANANA IBN ATIQ AT-TAGHLIBI, NAFI' IBN HILAL, and HANZALA IBN AS'AD. Also among them were great scholars of religious sciences, traditionalists, and pious men who passed the night invoking their Lord, in addition to world-renowned warriors whose gallantry was acknowledged throughout Arabia. In his Islamic SHI'ITS Encyclopedia, HASAN AL-AMIN quotes IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-BAQIR (AS) saying that the number of all males present at the beginning of the battle was one hundred and forty. They were martyred one after another as the battle raged. Seventy-two of them survived till the tenth of MUHARRAM or what is known as 'ASHURA'.

LOVE AND DEVOTION

AL-QASIM, son of IMAM HASAN (AS), who was a lad of only thirteen, sought the presence of the Imam to inquire if his name was in the list of martyrs. "Your name", the Imam said to QASIM, "is also included in the list of martyrs. You will be killed; so also will my suckling baby 'ALI AL-ASGHAR". "I will be killed too", continued the Imam, "but God will continue my lineage; how would the cruel oppressors succeed in putting an end to the life to (Imam) ALI ZAIN AL-ABIDIN, (AS) when eight Imams are to be born as his offspring?"

In one tent, UMMU KULTHUM was sitting with a woe-stricken face, tears trickling down her eyes

while opposite her was her brother ABBAS sharpening his arms. Suddenly he happened to look up and, seeing her in tears, inquired: "Honored sister, why are you weeping?" How could I help not doing so?" she replied helplessly. "I am an unlucky childless woman. Tomorrow when all the ladies offer their sons to be sacrificed for the Cause of the Imam, whom will I offer, having no son of my own?" Tears trickled down from the eyes of ABBAS and he said: "Sister, from today I am your slave, and tomorrow you offer me, your salve, as a sacrifice for the Imam".

'ASHURA

The author of SALAH AL-NASH'ATAIN records that the tragic and historical battle began on Friday, the tenth of MUHARRAM, 61 A.H. First the Imam tried his best to admonish the stone-heated men by eloquent sermons, asking them: "Am I not your Prophet's grandson? Am I not the son of the first caliph and his cousin, the first and foremost of those who believed in the Divine Message of God to the Prophet? Is not HAMZA, the head of the martyrs, my father's uncle? Is not the martyr JA'FAR AT-TAYYAR my uncle? Is it not that the Prophet reached your ears with words spoken in respect of me and my elder brother that, 'These (IMAM HASNA (AS), and IMAM HUSAIN (AS) are the Chiefs of the Youths of Paradise?" ALLAMA AT-TABARI and all other historians unanimously record that when he had proceeded so far in his sermon, the audience was so moved by his speech that streams of tears began to flow from the eyes of friend and foe alike. The sermons of the Imam deeply moved AL-HURR AR-RYAHYI who, approaching the Imam with eyes streaming with tears, flung himself at the Imam's feet and fell to praying with bowed head: "O God! I turn to Thee in penitence from the depth of my heart! Forgive my sinful misconduct towards the Prophet's beloved AHL AL-BAYT". UMER IBN SA'D, who was selected by YAZID to fight the Imam, feared that other commanders of his army might follow the example of AL-HURR and likewise defect to IMAM HUSAIN'S camp. Calling upon his slave who was bearing the standard and putting an arrow on the string of his bow, he shot his arrow at IMAM HUSAIN (as), thus starting the battle.

FIRST MARTYRED LADY

A Christian named WAHAB IBN HUBAB AL-KALBI and his wife, who were married a fortnight ago, embraced Islam at the hands of the Imam after hearing the Imam's sermon. WAHAB'S mother said to WAHAB: "I will not be pleased with you till you give your life for IMAM HUSAIN (AS)". He darted towards the enemies of God like a lion, and when a KUFIAN severed his right hand, WAHAB transferred the sword to the left hand and went on fighting. Soon his left hand too was lopped off with a single stroke of a sword, and the hero fell to the ground. His wife watching, she pleaded the Imam: "O Imam! Do not ask me to come back (from avenging my husband)! I prefer to die fighting than falling a captive in the hands of BANU UMAYYA". The Imam tried to deter her, explaining to her that fighting was not decreed for women, but at seeing her husband finally martyred, she rushed to him and, putting his lifeless head in her lap, began to wipe the blood from the head with her clothes. Soon a slave of SHIMR IBN DHU AL-JAWSHAN put an end to her life while she was

thus engaged; may the Almighty shower His mercy upon both of them. It is unanimously agreed upon by the historians that she was the first lady martyred in that event. WAHAB'S mother was very pleased. She said; "God be thanked that He has saved my honor by my son's martyrdom before the Imam". Then she addressed the KUFANS thus: "You wicked people! I testify that the Christians in the churches and Zoroastrians in their fire-houses are better people than you". Saying this, she seized a stout candle in her hand, fell upon the enemies and sped two of them to Hell! The Imam sent two of his companions to bring her back, and when she was standing before him, he said to her; "O bondmaid of God! Women are not allowed to go to war. Sit down; I assure you that you and your son will be with my grandfather in Paradise".

Another man who was martyred then and who deserves to be mentioned is John slave of ABU DHARR AL-GHIFARI; my God be pleased with him. He was for years in the service of the Imam, and he was at that time a very old man. Although the Imam (as) had permitted John to leave the battlefield and save his life, the believing and courageous John insisted on defending the pure and sinless AHL AL-BAYT (AS) so that his blood would be mixed with theirs and be with them in Paradise.

MORE MARTYRS

When the companions were all martyred, the relatives of IMAM HUSAIN (AS), i.e. BANU HASHIM, took their turns. The first was 'ALI AL-AKBAR whom IMAM HUSAIN (AS) advanced towards the field. He resembled the Prophet in shape and manners: a handsome youth whose separation must have passed heavily on IMAM HUSAIN'S heart. Fighting and killing many KUFANS in single combat, at last he fell a martyr. The offspring of AQIL, the sons of 'ABDALLAH IBN JA'FAR, AL-QASIM son of IMAM HASAN (AS), all took leave of IMAM HUSAIN (AS) and, after giving the enemy a fierce battle, all fell fighting.

After them came the turn of IMAM HUSAIN'S brothers, the sons of ALI ABDALLAH, JA'FAR and UTHMAN went to the field and, after slaying many warriors, fell one by one. The anecdote of the martyrdom of ABU AL-FADHL AL-ABBAS, brother of IMAM HUSAIN (AS) and his standard-bearer, is indeed very moving. The access to the Euphrates was blocked by the merciless enemy. Repelling the soldiers with his sword, striking down the foes right and left, ABBAS made his way and threw his horse into the river. There he filled the water-skin and although he himself was extremely thirsty, as was everyone else in IMAM HUSAIN'S camp, he refused to drink one drop before letting the children and women drink first. But the dauntless standard-bearer did not succeed in carrying water to his camp. The onslaught of fresh columns halted his advance and cut both his arms. The water-skin was pierced with an arrow. Its water was mixed with his crimson blood as it drained out. ABBAS grew feeble due to intensive bleeding. The heavy stroke of a war-mace brought that matchless warrior down. His exemplary behavior earned him the title of "SAQQA", the bearer and server of water.

This fatal shock bent IMAM HUSAIN (AS) double and for the first time he felt weakness in his arms. But determination soon straightened his stature. He went back to his tent where his six month old infant ALI AL-ASGHAR lay in the cradle on the point of death due to overpowering thirst. He approached the KUFIAN army to request them to give the innocent infant some water. This pathetic scene would have softened even stones but the ruthless enemies instead of showing mercy or regard towards the family of God's Last Prophet, took up their bows and arrows. HARMALA shot an arrow that pierced the throat of the babe. Seeing his son bleeding in his own arms, IMAM HUSAIN (AS) raised the corpse towards the heavens and supplicated: "God! I beseech thee to accept this as my sacrifice for sake..."

Having made the last offer on the altar of the Will of God, IMAM HUSAIN (AS) himself advanced to give battle to the enemy. With a heart agonized by the deaths of seventy two faithful followers and of his own kith and kin, IMAM HUSAIN (AS) drew his sword, and the world once more witnessed the awe-inspiring dash of HAMZA the valiant and JA'FAR AT-TAYYAR and the awesome majesty of the onslaught of Imam Ali (as).

IMAM HUSAIN (AS) was, like his father, a warrior of superb caliber. Having lost all his men while he himself received 72 wounds, he charged single-handedly through the thick ranks of ruthless, hideous enemies. Fatigued and having bled due to the enemy's arrows, lances and swords, IMAM HUSAIN (AS) could not hold up any more and fell down. The enemy thronged from all sides, each one trying to deal the deadly blow. A KUFAIN drew near the Imam and struck him with a blow of his sword. The Imam opened his eyes and said, "may you ever be able to eat or drink with your right hand, and on the Day of Judgment, may Allah raise you herded with the perpetrators of cruel and vile deeds". MAQTAL ABU MIKHNAF narrates that "after than, SHIMIR IBN THU AL-JAWSHAN IBN RABI'A drew near the Imam but he fled upon seeing the eyes of the Imam.

When the Imam opened them again, he approached and cried out: 'God save me from killing HUSAIN! BY God! When I glanced at HUSAIN'S eyes, they appeared to me looking like those of the Prophet", and he drew back in panic. SHIMIR, however, made up his mind to commit the foulest act and he jumped upon the Imam's chest. After a brief talk, the wicked man cut the neck of the Imam while the Imam was in the recumbent position, offering his prayers... "INNA LILLAH WA INNA ILAIHI RAJI'UN..." "we are God's, and unto Him is our return". Historians record that when the Imam was assassinated thus, the earth quaked, the wind blew violently and gloom and darkness spread all over the surroundings. It seemed as if Doomsday had dawned. KHEWALLI IBN YAZID AL-ASBAHI, who commanded one thousand troops, placed the head of the Imam, with was separated completely from the body, atop a spear and carried it thus the entire distance from KARBALA to YAZID'S court in Damascus and threw it before YAZID as a trophy.

Those very people who claimed to be followers of the Prophet set fire to the tents of his

immediate family. Bent on looting, and eager for booty, the wretches snatched away the sheets and scarves from the heads of the chaste ladies of the Prophet. The corpses of IMAM HUSAIN (AS) and his followers were trampled upon by their horse so that the KUFIAN chargers crumbled the bones and ribs of the champions of truth, direct descendants of the Prophet of Islam. Among the males only ALI AS-SAJJAD (ZAIN AL-ABIDIN) survived. Due to being seriously sick, he was forgotten inside one of the tents. His hands were cuffed and feet fettered, and the ladies of the Prophet's family. They were brought to the court of YAZID in Damascus as captives. More details of these painful events are recorded in the biography of AS-SAJJAD.

Those men who were bred by MU'AWIYA and YAZID did not have the decency to bury the corpse of their Prophet's grandson. It was only when they marched away from the blood-saturated field that the neighboring tribe of BANU ASAD dared to bury the corpses of those saints. Today, the tomb of IMAM HUSAIN (AS) in KARBALA' is a magnificent shrine visited by admirers from every quarter of the globe. People annually commemorate his martyrdom with honors and preaching. His name is an insignia of truth, righteousness and courage. His conduct holds an ideal position in the history of humanity and will eternally stand as a lighthouse in the dark stormy waters of faithlessness, falsehood and injustice. If the world would like to seek guidance from the lesson the Imam taught in KARBALA', it can ensure a new life for itself through the matchless deeds of piety, truth and bravery displayed by those immortal martyrs.

The martyrdom of IMAM HUSAIN (AS) has been the inspiration of many generations of Muslims who saw in him the symbol of all that Islam stood for. Even non-Muslims bear testimony to his dedication to the cause of the truth and persistence to stand, till the last minute, for what he believe. For example, the renowned British novelist CHARLES DICKENS has said: "If HUSAIN fought to quench his worldly desires (as alleged by certain Christian critics), then I do not understand why his sisters, wives and children accompanied him. It stands to reason therefore that he sacrificed purely for Islam". The great British historian Gibbon has said: "In a distant age and climate, the tragic scene of the death of HUSAIN will awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader". The enemies of IMAM HUSAIN (AS) were eliminated one after another by the "TAWWABIN" led by SULAYMAN IBN SURAD AL-KHUZA'I. They were all martyred, and they were succeeded by AL-MUKHTAR IBN UBAIDAH ATH-THAQAFI who followed in their footsteps and sought revenge for the family of the Prophet. The shocking incident awakened the Islamic world from its slumber and forced it into self-examination in search of the causes of the tragedy. Sympathizers with IMAM HUSAIN (AS) and his family started a whole new era of Islamic history and the enlightenment goes on forever.

The Fourth Imam Sayyid As-Sajidin, Zain Al-Abidin (A.S.)

BIRTH AND PARENTAGE

IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS) was born on the fifteenth of JAMADA II, A.H. (November 19, 658 A.D) At that time, IMAM ALI IBN ABU TALIB (AS) was administering the affairs of caliphate at KUFA. The family, especially the newborn's grandfather IMAM ALI (AS), rejoiced to see the new born, and it was probably IMAM ALI (AS) who, noticing his own features in the babe's face, named him after himself.

He is ALI son of IMAM HUSAIN (AS), commonly known by his titles ZAIN AL-ABIDIN, AS-SAJJAD, and SAYYID AS-SAJIDIN. His graceful personality was the combination of Arab and Persian nobility. On paternal side, he inherited the spiritual grace of the Prophet, while through his mother, SHAHR BANU, daughter of the last Persian emperor YAZDEJERD, he inherited the dignity of the Persian royal dynasty. After the final victory of the Arabs over Persia, SHAHR BANU was brought in custody to Medina. With the age-old racist attitude still alive, not too many Arabs would have expressed due respect to her. But it was the humane chivalry of IMAM ALI IBN ABU TALIB (AS) who paid full regard to this royal prisoner whom he married to his noble son HUSAIN (AS). IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN was, thus, the grandson of Imam Ali (as) and the Persian emperor YAZDEJERD, making him regarded by both Arab and Persian nations.

UPBRINGING

ZAIN AL-ABIDIN could not enjoy the love of his mother for a long time. She died soon after giving birth to him. At the age of two, his grandfather Imam Ali (as) was also martyred. He was, thus, brought up and instructed by his father HUSAIN (AS). He was twelve when IMAM HASAN (AS) died and the burdens of Imamate fell on HUSAIN'S shoulders. The cunning of MU'AWIYA, the Umayyad ruler of Syria, led to the tragedy of KARBALA' during the reign of his son YAZID; therefore, youthful ZAIN AL-ABIDIN watched the pace of the events which culminated in that grievous massacre. IMAM HUSAIN (AS), who was leading a peaceful life in Medina, arranged the marriage of his son to Fatima daughter of IMAM HASAN (AS), thus ensuring that the series of Imamate would continue even in the face of coming events.

KARBALA'

When YAZID demanded in the year 60 A.H., that IMAM HUSAIN (AS) should swear the oath of allegiance to him, IMAM HUSAIN (AS) had no choice but to leave Medina, taking ZAIN AL-ABIDIN, who was twenty-two years old then, with him. It cannot be ascertained whether ZAIN AL-ABIDIN

fell ill during the journey or after reaching KARBALA'. On the tenth of MUHARRAM, 61 A.H. (October 10, 680), he was too ill to move. As access to the Euphrates was blocked for three days and water was extremely scarce, the illness of ZAIN AL-ABIDIN intensified. For the most part of that day, he lay unconscious and could not participate in the battle which was carried on by all the male members of his family. So when IMAM HUSAIN (AS) bade his family farewell and went to the battle-field, he could not talk with his son ZAIN AL-ABIDIN to be tested in another way when he was to lead his distressed family as prisoners.

Immediately after the martyrdom of IMAM HUSAIN (AS), the ruthless enemies turned to his tents to burn and plunder. The overwhelming grief, the flames of burning tents, the tumult among the widowed ladies and orphans must have taken its toll on the sensitive SAJJAD. No tongue nor pen could have described the psychological impact. But the son HUSAIN (AS) maintained his composure and spiritual serenity. In spite of illness and crushing distress, he kept the grace of a true believer. Having said the night prayers on that fateful eve, he lay prostration with his forehead on the ground and his tongue repeating these phrases all night long till day dawned:

"No deity but Allah in all certainty:

There is no god but Allah in justice and truth; I bear witness to this in submission and humility".

Next day UMER IBN SA'D assembled all his slain soldiers, performed the funeral prayers for them and arranged for their burial, leaving the corpse of IMAM HUSAIN (AS), Prophet Muhammad's grandson, and those of his faithful adherents uncovered, enshrouded, and unburied, simply lying on the ground. It was a most painful sight for ZAIN AL-ABIDIN to pass through the site of the onslaught accompanied by the ladies, all being captives. He was shocked to realize that he could not bury his kith and kin due to his captivity.

Not less heart-rending might have been the event when this pillaged caravan was brought to the court of ZIYAD, governor of KUFA. SAJJAD might have remembered that it was the same town where once his grandfather IMAM ALI IBN ABU TALIB (AS) ruled as caliph and the ladies of the household were the royalty. IBN ZIYAD now rejoiced over his victory as the Prophet's family was brought as captives. But even the, AS-SAJJAD stood as a granite rock, calm and dignified. IBN ZIYAD broke the silence when he asked SAJJAD what his name was. "ALI son of HUSAIN" was the reply. "Was not Ali son HUSAIN slain by Allah?" asked the tyrant. AS-SAJJAD answered by saying that his brother of the same name had been slain by IBN ZIYAD'S soldiers.

The haughty ruler still asserted that ALI was killed by Allah. But AS-SAJJAD again quoted the QUR'ANIC verse: "Allah takes away the souls at death", meaning that God does not kill; He only takes the souls away. The well-argued contradiction maddened furious ruler who ordered his swordsman to execute IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS) immediately. It was then when ZAINAB darted

to cling to her nephew and ask to be put to death along with him. But ZAIN AL-ABIDIN asked her to stay aloof and to let him reply to IBN ZIYAD who was sure that, having witnessed his people being slain, the surviving youth might shudder at the execution order. But the gallant son of dauntless IMAM HUSAIN (AS) sternly replied: "Do you threaten me with death, O IBN ZIYAD? Have you not come to know that to be slain is our tradition and martyrdom is an honor from Allah?". These courageous words forced the tyrant to lower his head in shame, and the death order was withdrawn. It was obvious that even after such a horrifying onslaught, IMAM HUSAIN'S family was not afraid of death.

From KUFA these people were sent to Damascus. When their caravan entered the capital, it noticed how the bazaars were festively decorated and people were embracing each other congratulating. The agony of humiliation suffered by IMAM HUSAIN'S helpless folk was immeasurable, yet ZAIN AL-ABIDIN still stood and carried out IMAM HUSAIN'S mission of guiding the nation. As the prisoners were passing through the market-place, an Umayyad flatterer tauntingly asked AS-SAJJAD: "O son of HUSAIN, who won this battle?" "Wait a little", replied AS-SAJJAD, "you will know who is the victor when the Prophet's name is loudly proclaimed as the prayer call is made". Again, when the captives came before the gate of the grand mosque of Damascus, an aged man looked on and said: "Thank God who destroyed you; Who killed your men and made the country peaceful, granting victory to the caliph YAZID", AS-SAJJAD had perceived that the old man did not know who he was, so he asked him if he had read this verse of the QUR'AN: "Say, O Prophet: 'I ask no compensation for it except that you be kind unto my kith and kin (QUR'AN, 42:23)". The old man answered in the affirmative. AS-SAJJAD then told him that he and the other captives were the kith and kin of the Prophet referred to in that verse, and that they were the ones for whom respect was enjoined upon all Muslims. They are the "relatives" in the verse of KHUMS (QUR'AN, 33:33), AS-SAJJAD continued.

The old man, astonished at such an answer, stood silently for a few moments, then he asked AS-SAJJAD; "In the Name of God tell me are you really those people?" AS-SAJJAD said: "Yes; I declare in the Name of God that we are the persons referred to in these verses". At this, the old man burst into tears, threw his turban away and raised his head to the sky exclaiming; "Bear witness, O God, that I dissociate myself from the enemies of Your Prophet's family". Turning to IMAM AS-SAJJAD, he asked: "Can my penitence be ever accepted?" "Yes, if you repent, your penitence will surely be accepted, and you will be among us". The old man said that he sincerely repented for the impertinence committed through his ignorance. At the courts of IBN ZIYAD in KUFA and YAZID in Damascus, the courageous discourses of AS-SAJJAD (AS) and the forbearance of his family acquainted the world with the purpose behind IMAM HUSAIN'S martyrdom. Thus IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN accomplished that mission which IMAM HUSAIN (AS) had carried on all his life.

AFTER HIS RELEASE

Having been released from confinement in Damascus, IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS) went with his family to Medina to lead a quiet life, but that city was now in revolt against YAZID'S cruel regime. Political parties pressured IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN to join them, but he knew their unreliability and he declined from joining them. So, when YAZID'S army invaded Medina, the invaders did not harass IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN'S family.

Yet he was greatly shocked to see how for three days the invading host, led by MUSLIM IBN UQBA who was charged with invading Medina, tied their horses at the Prophet's mosque, turning the sacred place into a filthy stable, killing hundreds of innocent people and playing havoc with chaste women. YAZID had instructed Muslim to let his troop confiscate all cash or animals or arms they could lay their hands on for three continuous days. It was too intolerable for the Imam who had to practice a great deal of control over his feelings. When different revolutionary parties rose to avenge IMAM HUSAIN'S innocent blood, he wisely kept aloof from them whose uprisings he deemed untimely, and he busied himself in worship and preaching through excellent supplications, setting an example of forbearance and endurance.

No doubt, SULAYMAN IBN SURAD AL-KHUZA'IR AL-MUKHTAR IBN UBAIDA ATH-THAQAFI avenged IMAM HUSAIN'S precious blood. IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS) had compassion for them; he prayed for AL-MUKHTAR'S success and used to often inquire about those who were captured and executed. Certainly AL-MUKHTAR relieved the Imam's wounded heart by punishing the culprits. But the Imam was so cautious that his outward appearance gave the impression that he was indifferent, so much so that the cruel government could not suspect him of any subversion.

His whole life-span was a time of trouble for the Prophet's family and for their supporters. A few years after YAZID'S death, the ruthless Umayyad government put to death a large number of supporters of the Prophet's family at the hands of AL-HAJJAJ IBN YOUSUF ATH-THAQAFI. It kept a constant surveillance over their activities and communications through its undercover agents. Under such circumstances, it was impossible for IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS) to propagate the Prophet's teachings or guide the public in the open, so he lived Islam and made his life an example for others to emulate.

OCCUPATIONS

After the tragedy of KARBALA', the Imam lived 34 years under very odd circumstances. During that entire period of time, patience and fortitude were his main characteristics. Staying away from worldly pursuits, he kept himself busy by either worshipping his Lord or narrating the heart-rending events of KARBALA', thus keeping its memories alive. He wept whenever he remembered his father, and whenever he saw food or water, he reflected upon the thirst and hunger of IMAM HUSAIN (AS) and wept excessively to the extent that his family members thought that his very existence was in jeopardy. Having been asked if there would be an end to sorrow at all, he replied:

"Jacob had twelve sons; the separation of only one of them (Joseph) shocked him so much that he lost his eyesight through weeping. I have seen eighteen members of my family being slain, to whom there was no equal on earth. How can I possibly restrain my tears?"

SECOND IMPRISONMENT

In spite of the quiet life IMAM AS-SAJJAD (AS) was leading, the Umayyad government considered him a potential threat to the regime. ABD AL-MALIK IBN MARWAN ordered the governor of Medina to arrest him and take him into custody to Damascus. There, he remained confined for two or three days, but the Almighty God and the spiritual influence of IMAM AS-SAJJAD (AS) made ABD AL-MALIK ashamed of his cruel behavior and he ordered to have him released and sent back home.

CHARACTER AND VIRTUES

It was characteristic of the Prophet's family, particularly twelve Imams, to personify the excellence of the human perfections. IMAM AS-SAJJAD (AS), the 4th of the noble series of the Infallibles, was a true facsimile of his ancestors. In both KARBALA' and KUFA he displayed extreme patience and courage, and in Medina he proved to be most sore-bearing and forgiving. His pardoning of some ill-tongued foes did not indicate his weakness but rather his firm grace and the greatness of his forbearance. Once an insolent person spoke to IMAM AS-SAJJAD (AS) in an abusive and blaming tone, the serene, high-spirited Imam replied saying, "My God forgive me if you have told the truth or forgive you if you are wrong". The man was impressed by his noble conduct and lowered his head in shame as he said: "In reality, what I said was wrong".

Likewise, when another tried to slander him, he ignored him. The impudent fellow raised his voice saying, "it is you whom I meant". AL-IMAM AS-SAJJAD (AS), with an air of loftiness, replied, "And it is you whom I ignored". The Imam's reply echoed the QUR'ANIC verse in which the Almighty asked the Prophet to "Hold to forgiveness; command what is right, but turn away from the ignorant (QUR'AN, 7:199)". HISHAM BIN ISMA'IL behaved insolently towards IMAM AS-SAJJAD (AS). UMER IBN ABD AL-AZIZ, the Umayyad caliph, came to know about it and he wrote to IMAM AS-SAJJAD (AS) saying that he had all intention to punish the rogue, but IMAM AS-SAJJAD (AS) nobly replied, "I do not like that the man should be harmed on my account".

Service of the nation and generosity thereto were his outstanding traits. In the darkness of dreary nights, he used to carry flour and loaves of bread to the needy. Many of them did not know who the benefactor was. It was only when IMAM AS-SAJJAD (AS) died that those needy people came to know who he was. In addition to all these virtues, even opponents acknowledged his knowledge and admitted that none could match him in jurisprudence and religious sciences. Yet he told people that one should not boast about the nobility of his ancestors. Whenever he went to

another town, he avoided revealing his name or illustrious lineage. When asked about the reason, he humbly said: "it is not fair for me to trace my lineage to the holy Prophet since I do not have his virtues".

His ocean of knowledge was sought by the most distinguished scholars and theologians of the time, and many rose to a lofty status after obtaining such knowledge from him. They came to him from all parts of Arabia, the Middle and Far East's, and from Africa. The list of individuals who benefited from his knowledge and thus became scholars in their circles includes, according to BIHAR AL-ANWAR of ALLAMA MAJLISI: ABU HAMZA ATH-THUMALI, THABIT IBN DINAR, AL-QASIM IBN MUHAMMAD IBN ABU BAKR (grandson of the first caliph), ALI IBN RAFI', AD-DHAHHAK IBN MUZAHIM AL-KHURASANI, HAMID IBN MUSA AL-KUFI, ABU AL-FADL AS-SUDAIR IBN HAKIM AL-SAIRAFI,

ABDALLAH AL-BARQI, the poet AL-FARAZDAQ, FURAT IBN AHNAF, AYYUB IBN AL-HASAN, ABU MUHAMMAD AL-QARSHI AL-SADDI, TAWUS IBN KAISAN AL-HAMADANI, ABAN IBN TAGHLIB IBN RABAH, QAYS IBN RUMMANA, ABU KHALID WARDAN AL-KABULI (of AFGHANISTAN), SA'ID IBN AL-MUSAYYAB AL-MAKHZUMI, UMER IBN ALI IBN AL-HUSAIN and his brother ABDALLAH, JABIR IBN MUHAMMAD IBN ABU BAKR (another grandson of the first caliph), and many, many others. The most distinguished among his followers were names with whom the student of Islamic history is quite familiar: JABIR IBN ABDALLAH AL-ANSARI, AMIR IBN WA'ILA AL-KINANI, SA'ID IBN AL-MUSAYYAB IBN HAZAN, and SA'ID IBN JIHAN AL-KINANI. Among the TABI'IN, the most distinguished were: SA'ID IBN JUBAYR, MUHAMMAD IBN JUBAYR IBN MUT'IM, AL-QASIM IBN AWF, ISMA'IL IBN ABDALLAH IBN JA'FAR, IBRAHIM IBN MUHAMMAD IBN AL-HANAFIYAH and his brother AL-HASAN, HABIB IBN ABU THABIT, ABU YAHYA AL-ASADI, ABU HAZIM AL-A'RAJ, SALAMA IBN DINAR AL-MADANI,

and many other. The most famous of those who narrated HADITH from him were: AL-ZUHRI, SUFYAN IBN UYAINAH, NAFI', AL-AWZA'I, MUQATIL, MUHAMMAD IBN ISHAQ, among others. Authors who quoted the traditions narrated from him were: AT-TABARI, IBN AL-BAY', IMAM AHMED IBN HANBAL, IBN BATTAL, ABU BATTAL, ABU DAWUD, authors of HILYAT AL-AWLIYA, ASBAB AN-NUZUL, AL-TARGHIB WA AL-TARHIB, AL-MUSTAFA, and others. These were certainly not his contemporaries, yet they verified and recorded the traditions he had narrated.

HIS PIETY

His chief quality which earned him the titles of "ZAIN AL-ABIDIN" and "SAYYID AS-SAJJIDIN" was his sincere worship of the Almighty. He was an eye-witness to the tragedy of KARBALA', and the scenes of his near dear ones being slaughtered were always fresh in his memory. Such depressing events naturally make any ordinary person indifferent to all other normal activities of everyday life, but they could not make IMAM AS-SAJJAD (AS) relax his fear of God and His worship. His

complexion faded and his whole frame shook whenever the water for ablution was presented to him, or whenever he stood to say his prayers. When asked about the reason, he explained, "Can you at all imagine in Whose presence I am going to stand?!" It is in the presence of the Lord of lords".

While putting on his pilgrimage garb, intending to utter "LABBAYKA" (I am answering Thy Call, O Lord!), color disappeared from his face. His whole frame shook, so much so that those who saw him inquired what was wrong with him. IMAM AS-SAJJAD (AS) said: "I tried to say 'LABBAYKA' but I feared lest the Lord of the House calls out: 'No admittance for you". Tears flooded his eyes so excessively that he ultimately fainted. When everyone else prostrated before the pomp of haughty Umayyad monarchy, it was IMAM AS-SAJJAD (AS) who demonstrated as to how the King of kings should be worshipped.

AS-SAHIFA AS-SAJJADIYYA

It is also called the ZABUR of Muhammad's family.

The reign of the antagonistic Umayyad rulers never permitted IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS) to deliver discourses and addresses as his grandfather IMAM ALI (AS) did, nor to illustrate the creed as he had done. Later, IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-BAQIR (AS) and IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS), IMAM AS-SAJJAD'S son and grandson respectively, had the opportunity to fathom the depths of religious problems at study circles attended by inquisitive students. But such a favorable atmosphere was not available to IMAM AS-SAJJAD (AS).

He, therefore, adopted a quite different method which no worldly power could obstruct. He suspended all worldly contacts and took to hymns and prayers. The words of those prayers are a treasure-house of theological mysteries and a mirror of the relationship between the Creator and His creation. A collection of these hymns and prayers, known as AS-SAHIFA AL-KAMILA, or AS-SAHIFA AS-SAJJADIYYA, has survived despite all the odds. In the pages of this collection, we can find what we cannot perhaps attain even from reading lengthy addresses and discourses presented in a similarly appealing manner, if such can be found at all.

DEATH

The calm and peaceful life of Imam could not be tolerated by the cruel Umayyad regime. The Syrian monarch WALID IBN ABD AL-MALIK had him poisoned, and the Imam died inside the Medina jail on the 25th of MUHARRAM, 95 A.H. (October 20, 713 A.D.). Imam MUHAMMAD AL-BAQIR (AS) arranged the burial and laid him to rest in the graveyard of JANNAT AL-BAQI' beside IMAM HASAN (AS)

The Fifth Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir Son Of Zain Al-Abidin

PARENTAGE

He was named after his great grandfather Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and his progeny, and he was given the title of "AL-BAQIR" which means "splitter of knowledge". His father is IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS) and his mother is Fatima daughter of IMAM HASAN (AS), the Prophet's grandson. His lineage therefore reaches the Prophet of Islam (P) on both parents' sides. IMAM HUSAIN (AS), the younger grandson of the Prophet, is his grandfather. He has the unique attribute of having inherited the qualities of IMAM ALI IBN ABU TALIB (AS) and Fatima daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (p).

BIRTH

He was born on RAJAB, 1, 57 A.H. (May 10, 677 A.D.), seven years after the demise of IMAM HASAN (AS), and he spent more than three years in the company of his grandfather IMAM HUSAIN (AS). He was an eye-witness to the tragedy of TAFF, and he was contemporary to his father IMAM AS-SAJJAD (AS) during the entire period of his Imamate. The tragedy of KARBALA' was a troublesome and tumultuous period of time for the Prophet's offspring and their SHI'ITES, supporters of AHL AL-BATY (AS). Imam Ali's friends were being hunted, arrested, then hanged. His birth during such a stormy epoch paved the way for his presence in the battle of KARBALA'.

According to AL-IRSHAD of AL-MUFID, AL-FUSUL AL-MUHIMMA of IBN AL-SABBAGH AL-MALIKI, vol. 3 of AL-YA'QUBI'S TARIKH (history), and TADHKIRAT AL-KHAWASS of IBN AL-JAWZI, the great SAHABI JABIR IBN ABDALLAH AL-ANSARI narrates saying: "The Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his progeny, said to me: 'You shall live long enough to meet one of the descendants of HUSAIN who shall be named Muhammad and who shall split the core of knowledge: so, convey my SALAM to him'".

According to IKMAL AD-DIN WAS ITMAM AN-NI'MA, and on p. 252 of SHAYKH AS-SADUQ'S work, JABIR IBN ABDALLAH AL-ANSARI asked the Messenger of God (p) saying: "O Messenger of God, who are the Imams from the descendants of IMAM ALI IBN ABU TALIB (AS)?" He answered: "AL-HASAN, AL-HUSAIN, masters of the youths of Paradise, then the master of the forbearing of his time ALI IBN AL-HUSAIN, then AL-BAQIR Muhammad IBN ALI, and O JABIR! You shall live to see

him! So when you do so, convey my SALAM to him". BIHAR AL-ANWAR, vol. 42, p. 25, and also both A'LAM AL-WARA and KASHF AL-GHUMMA IF MU'RIFT AL-A'IMAM, when IMAM ALI IBN ABU TALIB (AS) was on his death-bed, his will to his oldest son AL-HASAN was: "O son! The Messenger of God (p) ordered me to give you my books and weapons just as he had ordered me to take his books and weapons and to tell you to pass them over to your brother HUSAIN before you die". Then he turned to IMAM HUSAIN (AS) and said: "... and the Messenger of God (p) ordered that you (IMAM HUSAIN (AS) should pass them on to your son MUHAMMAD IBN ALI and to convey to him the SALAM from the Messenger of God and from me".

KARBALA'

For three years, IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) enjoyed the cherished love of his grandfather IMAM HUSIAN (AS), and when he had to leave Medina, AL-BAQIR, too, was one of the family members who made the journey across the desert, IMAM HUSAIN (AS) left for KUFA and his journey terminated at KARBALA'. From the 7th of MUHARRAM, when the Prophet's family was denied access to the water of the Euphrates, IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) suffered from the pangs of thirst till the tragedy was over. Providence, however, intended to preserve the Imamate by safeguarding his life while even a baby such as ALI AL-ASGHAR had already been pierced and killed by an enemy arrow. Like his father IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS), IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) could not physically participate in the battle. The 10th of MUHARRAM of 61 A.H. (October 10, 680 A.D.) brought its hideous events with IMAM HUSAIN (AS) gathering the corpses of his slain warriors all day long, the women wailing, the children crying because of being extremely thirsty, startled and bewildered, then came the last farewell bidden by IMAM HUSAIN (AS), the murder of his baby ALI AL-ASGHAR, the return of IMAM HUSAIN'S horse to his master's tent without his master.... Young IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) witnessed all these events. AL-BAQIR witnessed the tents being burnt, the children reeling in panic, the heartless enemy plundering, and the ladies of the Prophet's family being deprived even of their sheets and scarves. Who can possibly imagine how young IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) felt, or what a permanent impression such scenes had left on his mind?

On the next day, IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) witnessed the ladies of the Prophet's family being shackled with chains, hand-cuffed, then transported as captives by the enemy the entire distance from KARBALA' to KUFA, then to Damascus. He witnessed their journey back to Medina, again passing by KARBALA', after being released. The profoundly sad impressions could never have been erased from the memory of young IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS).

UPBRINING

After KARBALA', IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS) led a very calm life, staying aloof from the pursuits of this materialistic world. Secluded from the society, he spent his time either in weeping as he reminisced on the agonies of his father IMAM HUSAIN (AS), or in worshipping the Almighty, while

the heart of his son IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) was being squeezed painfully as he watched helplessly. In this sad environment, IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) grew up studying the manners of his saintly father and availing himself from his knowledge and noble conduct.

FATHER'S DEATH AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF IMAMATE

IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) was in the full bloom of youth, ascending the heights of physical and spiritual perfection, when his revered father died. On his death-bed, IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS) handed over to IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) a box containing books of religious sciences exclusively known to this illustrious House. Calling together all his offspring, he resigned them to the care of IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS), now named the fifth in the successive series of the successors of the holy Prophet. He was 38 years old then.

ENVIRONMENT

The Umayyad monarchy was heading towards its decline and decay. The cruelties inflicted on the Hashemites, especially the massacre at Karbala', had produced shock waves throughout the Muslims world. Yazid witnessed the aftermath of Karbala' and may have regretted his heinous sins. After a brief rule, he died in 64 A.H., and his son Mu'awiya abdicated.

The later Umayyad rulers, therefore, were fully aware of the battles waged by "Harakat At-Tawwabin", movement of the penitents, led by Sulayman Ibn Surad Al-Khuza'i and later by Al-Mukhtar, led to a powerful uprising against the Umayyads and to the call to avenge the holy blood of Imam Husain (AS) and those who defended the Prophet's family. That movement ruffled the peace of the ruling despots and shook the foundation of their government. The good result was that Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (AS) had the opportunity to free himself from the clutches of the tyrannical government. He had at that time better chances to peacefully guide the Muslim nation to the Right path.

THE KARBALA' RECITATIONS

Imam Al-Baqir (AS) had witnessed the tragedy of Karbala'. He had also studied the occupations of his father who mourned Imam Husain (AS) continuously. He was agonized by the fact that his father had to freedom to convey his personal feelings about the gruesome event to the others, or to ask them simply to recite the saddening tales of the tragedy. As a result of these feelings, and due to the lack of freedom of speech, the Imam paid a special attention to such recitations. He used to convene these gatherings, and call Al-Kumait Ibn Zaid Al-Asadi, a follower of Ahl Al-Bayt (AS) and the poet of his time, to compose and recite verses on those occasions. This was the beginning of the "Majalis" (mourning assemblies) which flourished a great deal particularly during the days of Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (AS).

STATUS OF KNOWLEDGE

The torrent of a river can be blocked by a dam, but when the dam breaks, its water gushes forth with full force. The Imams, the Prophet's leading offspring had rivers of knowledge in their bosoms which were blocked by the oppressing government and thus their waters could not moisten the lips of the thirsty. In the days of IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS), when the grip of the oppressive government loosened a little bit, the confined river of knowledge gushed forth. Irrigating the fields of faith-seeking hearts. Having displayed his great skill in solving tough religious problems, he was called AL-BAQIR (AS) reached thousands. Many others, belonging to different schools of thought such as IMAM AZ-ZUHRI, IMAM AL-AWZA'I, ATTA IBN JARIH, or HAFIZ IBN GHYATH the judge, who all are considered a outstanding traditionalists of the SUNNI seeks, came to seek knowledge from him and are counted among his students.

Volume 3 of MANAQIB ALI ABI TALIB states that ABDALLAH son of the second caliph UMER IBN AL-KATTAB was asked once for the solution of a complex theological problem, and he could not provide one. "Go to that young boy", son of UMER said to the person who raised the question, pointing to IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS), "Ask him and tell me what his answer will be". The inquirer approached IMAM BAQIR (AS) , obtained the answer, and went back to the son of 'UMER IBN AL-KHATTAB to tell him what treasures of knowledge he had just acquired, and ABDALLAH commented: "They are a family immersed in knowledge".

AL-IRSHAD by AL-MUFID, in a chapter on the Imamate of AL-BAQIR (AS), and in HILYAT AL-AWLIYA' and TADHKIRAT AL-KHAWASS, "ABDALLAH IBN 'ATA' AL-MAKKI says: "I never saw scholars shrink as I saw them in the presence of ABU JA'FAR MUHAMMAD IBN ALI IBN AL-HUSAIN. And I saw AL-HAKAM IBN UYAINHA, despite his greatness, looking like a young boy before his teacher". One of the testimonies to the excellence of his political thought is his advice to the renowned UMAYYAD caliph UMER IBN ABD AL-AZIZ in which he said: "I advise you to regard young Muslims as your sons, the adults as your brothers, and the elderly as your parents; therefore, be kind to your sons, stay in touch with you brothers, and be generous to your parents".

One of his students, MUHAMMAD IBN MUSLIM, is quoted in vol. 46, as saying, "Every time I face a complex (theological problem), I had to seek its solution from ABU JA'FAR, till I asked him about thirty thousand questions". One of his companions, JABIR IBN YAZID AL-JU'IF, may God be pleased with him, said one, as quoted in the same references which also quoted AL-IKHTISAS, saying, "ABU JA'FAR narrated to me as many as seventy thousand traditions". Advising JABIR IBN YAZID AL-JU'IF, he said:

"I admonish you regarding five things: If you are wronged, do not commit wrong-doing to others;

if you are betrayed, do not betray anyone; if you are called a liar, do not be furious; if you are praised, do not be jubilant; if you are criticized, do not fret and think of what is said in criticism; if you find in yourself what is criticized about you, then your falling down in the eyes of God when you are furious about the truth is a much greater calamity than your falling down in the eyes of people, and if you are the opposite of what is said (in criticism) about you, then it is a merit you acquired without having to tire yourself in obtaining it".

DISSEMINATING THE KNOWLEDGE OF AHL AL-BAYT

The dissemination of religious and scientific knowledge of AHL AL-BAYT (AS) was achieved by IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-BAQIR (AS). Out of the benefits gained from such a high-ranking mentor, the students wrote several books on various branches of knowledge. Here is a brief description of some of his disciples and their works which reflects the extent of Islamic learning imparted by the Imam:

1- ABAN IBN TAGHLIB. He was the famous lexicographer and reciter of the holy QUR'AN who wrote the work GHARA'IB AL-QURAN, the first book explaining the intricate diction of the holy QUR'AN. He died in 141 A.H (758 A.D.).

2- ABU JA'FAR MUHAMMAD IBN AL-HASAN IBN ABI SARH AL-RAWASI, the famous scholar of recitation, syntax and exegesis, KITAB AL-FAISAL and MA'ANI AL-QUR'AN are two among five books which he authored. He died in 101 A.H. (720 A.D.).

3- ABDALLAH IBN MAIMUN, ABU AL-ASWAD AL-DU'ALI, a biography of the holy Prophet and another book ex-pounding on Paradise and Hell are among his works. He died in 105 A.H. (723 A.D.).

4- 'ATIYYA IBN SA'ID AL-AWFI. He wrote an exegesis of the holy QUR'AN in five volumes. He died in 111 A.H. (729 A.D.).

5- ISMA'IL IBN ABD AR-RAHMAN AS-SADDI AL-KABIR, the well-known author of TAFSIR. He is frequently referred to by all Muslim writers of TAFSIR books as AS-SADDI. He died in 127 A.H. (745 A.D.).

6- JABIR IBN YAZID AL-JU'IF. He committed to memory 50.000 (or 70.000 according to some biographers) traditions which he had heard from IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS). He is quoted in MUSLIM'S SAHIH. He wrote several volumes on tradition, TAFSIR and jurisprudence. He died in 128 A.H. (746 A.D.). 7- 'AMMAR IBN MU'AWIYA AL-WAHNI. A book on jurisprudence is his contribution. He died in 133 A.H. (752 A.D.).

8- SALIM IBN ABI HAFSAH (ABU YOUSUF) AL-KUFI. He is the writer of a book on jurisprudence. He died in 137 A.H. (754 A.D.).

9- ABD AL-MU'MIN IBN AL-QASIM (ABU ABDALLAH) AL-ANSARI. He is the writer of a book on jurisprudence. He died in 147 A.H. (764 A.D.).

10- ABU HAMZA AL-THUMALI. He wrote a book on TAFSIR (exegesis) of the holy QUR'AN. KITAB AN-NAWADIR and KITAB AZ-ZUHD are among his works. He died in 150 A.H. (767 A.D.).

11- ZURARA IBN A'YUN, a high-ranking SHI'AH scholar who wrote several books on tradition, jurisprudence and KALAM. He died in 150 A.H (767 A.D.).

12- MUHAMMAD IBN MUSLIM. He was a great scholar who recorded 30.000 traditions which he learned from IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS). He wrote many books, including the "Four hundred problems of HALAL and HARAM". He died in 150 A.H. (767 A.D.).

13- YAHYA IBN AL-QASIM (ABU BASIR) AL-ASADI. He was a revered scholar who wrote KITAB MANASIK AL-HAJJ and KITAB YAWMUN WA LAILAH. He died in 150 A.H. (767 A.D.).

14- ISHAQ AL-QUMMI. He has a book on jurisprudence.

15- ISMA'IL IBN JABIR AL-KHASHIAMI AL-KUFI. He wrote many volumes on HADITH (tradition) and one on jurisprudence.

16- ISMA'IL IBN ABD AL-KHALIQ. He was a high ranking jurist and had a book to his credit.

17- BARD AL-ASQAF AL-AZDI. He authored a book on jurisprudence.

18- AL-HARITH IBN AL-MUGHIRA. He authored a book on the problems of jurisprudence.

19- HUDHAIFA IBN MANSUR AL-KHUZA'I. He had a book on jurisprudence.

20- HASAN IBN SIRRI AL-KATIB. He authored one book.

21- HUSAIN IBN SAUR IBN ABI FAKHITTA, author of KITAB AN-NAWADIR.

22- HUSAIN IBN MUHAMMAD AL-ABIDI AL-KUFI. He is author of one book.

23- HUSAIN IBN MUS'AB AL-BAJALI. He has a book to his credit.

24- HAMMAD IBN ABI TALHA. He wrote one book.

25- HAMZA IBN HAMRAN IBN A'YUN. He was nephew of ZURARA and was author of one book.

These are but a few of the many scholars, traditionalists and jurists who learned the arts of AHL AL-BAYT (AS) from IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-BAQIR (AS) and preserved them in their books. Later, in the days of the Imam's son, IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ, hundreds of volumes were written - the sources from which such valuable collections of HADITH as AL-KAFI, MAN LA YAHDARUHU AL-FAQIH, TAHDHIB AL-KHASA'IL, AL-ISTIBSAR, etc. were compiled which now form the fundamentals of SHI'AH learning. In addition to these, you may read about him, his biography, and the AHADITH he narrated in AT-TABARI'S TARIKH, AL-BALADHIRI, AL-SALAMI, AL-KHATIB, ABU DAWUD'S SUNAN, AL-ASFAHANI, AL-ZAMAKHSHARI, and in others.

CHARACTER AND VIRTUES

His moral excellence was admired even by his foes. A Syrian lived in Medina and used to come to IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) frequently declaring that he was opposed to the Household. Yet, despite his prejudice, he admitted that, "The high morality and eloquence of IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) are too attractive to resist'.

TUHAF AL-UQUL quotes IMAM AS-SADIQ (AS) saying: "I entered the house of my father once and found him doling out eight thousand DINARS as SADAQA to the poor, then he freed eleven slaves who belonged to one of the families'. In a chapter on the merits of IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-BAQIR (AS) in vol. 3 of MANAQIB ALI ABI TALIB, and in vol. 46 of BIHAR AL-ANWAR, SULAYMAN IBN QARAM is quoted saying: "ABU JA'FAR MUHAMMAD IBN IMAM ALI (AS) used to give us as much as five or six hundred or even a thousand DIRHAMS, and he never tired of visiting his brethren".

AS COUNSELOR TO THE GOVERNMENT

To rule and administer the Muslim world was certainly the right of the Prophet's progeny, but as the common people succumbed to the temporal power, the Imams had to lead calm and quiet lives. As such, they could have refused to counsel the government. But the moral height of these noble souls rose above the standard of commoners. Like IMAM ALI IBN ABI TALIB (AS) who cooperated with his contemporary caliphs and offered sound counsel concerning the affairs of the Muslims, all the Imams followed the same example and never hesitated to give well-balanced pieces of advice to their contemporary rulers. IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) was no exception. The Umayyad government had till then no currency of its own. The Byzantine currency of the eastern section of the then Roman Holy Empire were the valid tender in Damascus as well. But during the reign of AL-WALID IBN ABD AL-MALIK, there rose a rift between him and the Byzantine ruler when the latter decided to stamp a new currency with a phrase which AL-WALID considered to be

derogatory to the holy Prophet.

This created suspense among Muslims. AL-WALID convened a committee in which prominent Muslim scholars participated. IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) expressed his opinion that the Muslim government ought to strike its own currency on one side of which it should stamp the statement "LA ILAHA ILLA ALLAH" and on the other the statement "MUHAMMAD RASUL ALLAH", (There is no god but Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah). The opinion was unanimously approved and new Islamic coins were minted.

It was only during the caliphate of UMER IBN ABD AL-AZIZ the Umayyad caliph, that the Prophet's progeny enjoyed a brief period of peace which lasted for only two years and five months which is the period of UMER'S government. He lifted from them a great deal of atrocities and prohibited the cursing of IMAM ALI IBN ABU TALIB (AS) on the pulpits on Friday, substituting it with this verse of the holy QUR'AN: "God commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that ye may receive admonition". [QUR'AN, 16:90 AN-NAHL]

When the Imam met the caliph UMER IBN ABD AL-AZIZ, he found him weeping for the injustice inflicted by his predecessors upon their subjects. The Imam admonished him with pieces of wisdom till the caliph sobbed, knelt down and begged for more. Then the Imam told UMER what wrong- doing he came to ask him to rectify, and it was none other than FADAK which the Messenger of God (p) had left as inheritance to his daughter Fatima and her descendants. According to vol. 4 of BIHAR AL-ANWAR, UMER took some writing material and wrote: "In the Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. This is what UMER IBN ABD AL-AZIZ had handed back to MUHAMMAD IBN ALI to rectify the wrong-doing: FADAK".

HARASSED BY THE Umayyad GOVERNMENT

HISHAM IBN ABD AL-MALIK succeeded UMER IBN ABD AL-AZIZ, and he was a stone-hearted, immoral miser and a racist. His prejudice against non-Arab Muslims caused him to double the taxes they had to pay, and his reign was a replay of the bloody days of YAZID IBN MU'AWIYA and AL-HAJJAJ IBN YOUSUF ATH-THAQAFI. It was then that the revolution of ZAIN IBN ALI broke out as a continuation of the revolution of IMAM HUSAIN IBN ALI BIN ABU TALIB (AS), but HISHAM was swift in putting it out. Dr. HASSAN IBRAHIM HASSAN, in his work TARIKH AL-ISLAM (History of Islam), quotes contemporary historians testifying that HISHAM ordered to crucify ZAIN IBN ALI and then burn his corpse and throw the ashes in the Euphrates.

Although IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) never expressed any interest nor participated in political matters except when the rulers invited him, since his peaceful way of living was devoted to people's spiritual guidance, he was not tolerated by the government. HISHAM IBN ABD AL-MALIK wrote to

his governor over Medina instructing him to send IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) together with his son JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) to Damascus, intending to insult them. So when they reached Damascus, he kept them waiting for three days. On the fourth day, he called them in his presence. He sat on a throne surrounded by his nobility, fully armed. In the center of the courtyard, a target was set on which the elite were shooting arrows on bet. Immediately the Imam entered, HISHAM bluntly asked him to shoot arrows with others.

IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) tried to evade HISHAM'S order, but the latter kept insisting and he planned to ridicule the Imam. Since the Imam led a secluded life, HISHAM thought he might not have any connection with martial arts. He did not know that each descendant of the Prophet had inherited the might of IMAM ALI (AS) and the courage of IMAM HUSAIN (AS). He could not realize that their calm and quiet life was lived in fulfillment of the demands of Divine Providence.

Compelled by HISHAM, IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) took the bow. Hiding it skillfully, he shot a few arrows continuously, all sitting straight in the very heart of the center. A shout of praise burst from the throats of the astonished elites standing right and left. HISHAM, thus outwitted, began to discuss the problems of Imamate and the virtues of AHL AL-BAYT (AS). Now he clearly saw that the Imam's stay in Damascus might lead to popular respect of AHL AL-BAYT (AS), so he permitted the Imam to return home to Medina. Inwardly, his enmity of the Prophet's family had increased. HISHAM harassed not only the Prophet's family but also their followers, dignitaries and scholars. He issued an order to execute JABIR IBN YAZID AL-JU'IF, the most distinguished among the Imam's scholars, but the Imam foiled his attempt by advising JABIR to feign madness as the only way to escape execution.

DEATH

The more the Umayyad government learned about the Imam's prestige and popularity, the more intolerable his existence became. At last they resorted to the same soundless weapon, poison, which used to be applied by those cunning monarchs quite often to eliminate their opponents or suspects. A saddle was presented to the Imam in which poison was applied most skillfully. When he mounted on it, poison affected his whole body. After passing a few days in painful ailment, he expired on the seventh of DHU AL-HIJJA, 114 A.H. (January 28, 733 A.D.). According to his will, he was shrouded with three pieces of cloth. These included a YEMENI sheet which he used to put on for Friday prayers and a shirt which he always wore. He was laid to rest underneath the same dome in JANNAT AL-BAQI' where IMAM HASAN (AS) and IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS) already lay.

The Sixth Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (A.S)

NAME AND PARENTAGE

His name is JA'FAR. He is also known as AS-SADIQ and ABU ABDALLAH. He is son of IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-BAQIR (AS) son of IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS) son of IMAM HUSAIN (AS). His mother was UMMU FARWAH daughter of AL-QASIM son of Muhammad son of ABU BAKR who was one of the seven most prominent jurists of Medina. Thus, the sixth Imam has an impressive historical background of lineage.

BIRTH

He came to this world on RABI' AL-AWWAL 17, 83 A.H. (April 20, 702 A.D.), the same lunar date when his great grandfather, the holy Prophet, was born. At his birth, his father, IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS), was 26, and his grandfather IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS) was still alive. The Prophet's family joyfully welcomed this auspicious addition.

UPBRINGING

Up to the age of twelve, JA'FAR was brought up under the guidance of his grandfather IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS) whose main concern was to worship his Maker and reflect on the tragic events of KARBALA. Twenty-two years had lapsed since then, yet the remembrance of that shocking tragedy was still quite fresh in his memory. So, as soon as JA'FAR gained understanding, he was profoundly impressed by the continuous grief of his grandfather, so much so that he felt as if he himself was present during that tragedy. He also contemplated on the presence of his father, IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-BAQIR (AS), although only three years old, at that gruesome scene. JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) considered it as his duty to convene the recitation gatherings (MAJALIS) about that sorrowful event.

He was twelve years old when his grandfather IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS) expired. Thence up to the age of 31 he passed his time under the supervision of his father IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS). It was the time when the Umayyad politics were tottering and Muslims were approaching IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-BAQIR (AS) in thousands. JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) was one of them, but he was a student devoted to worships and learning. Whether at Medina or in travels, he was always with his father. When HISHAM son of ABD AL-MALIK summoned IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-BAQIR (AS), JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) accompanied him, as stated above.

IMAMATE

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In 114 A.H. (732 A.D), IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-BAQIR (AS) died, and the responsibilities of Imamate devolved on the shoulders of IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS). HISHAM IBN ABD AL-MALIK was ruling in Damascus and political disturbances were afoot. The passion of taking revenge on BANI UMAYYA was strong and several descendants of IMAM ALI (AS) were preparing themselves to overthrow the regime. Most prominent among them was ZAID, the respected son of IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS). His religious zeal and piety were known throughout Arabia. He was a well versed HAFIZ of the holy QUR'AN and he had taken the field against the tyranny of the UMAYYADS.

This was a precarious juncture for IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS). As regarding hatred of the UMAYYADS, he agreed with his uncle ZAID for whom he had a great deal of respect. Since his far-sighted judgment could clearly see that his rising against the well-organized royal forces was of no avail; therefore, he did not join him for all practical reasons. But he was compassionate towards him and sympathetic to his cause, and he asked him to be judicious. As a great host of Iraqis had sworn their allegiance to him, ZAID was now quite optimistic. He gave gallant battle to the royal forces but was killed in the end. The vengeful enemies were not satisfied with ZAID'S death. They exhumed his dead body from the grave, severed his head, sent it as a trophy to HISHAM and hanged the body at the gate of KUFA where it remained for several years. One year after ZAID'S martyrdom, his son YAHYA gained the same ancestral honor. IMAM JA'FAR was surely moved by these pathetic events, but he was destined to carry out the duties of spreading the religious sciences of AHL AL-BAYT (AS).

REVOLUTION

The last days of the UMAYYADS were ruffled by political disturbances. Changes in government were many and IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) witnessed the rise and fall of many kings. After HISHAM, AL-WALID IBN YAZID IBN ABD AL-MALIK, then YAZID son of AL-WALID, then IBRAHIM IBN AL-WALID, then MARWAN AL-HIMAR came to the throne. The capture and death of the latter terminated the monarchy of tyrannical UMAYYADS. When the internal disorders and disintegration shake the foundations of a cruel government, those who are oppressed usually turn against the cruel oppressors. Only those who are above such fiery sentiments can control their passion. Usually those who seek revenge are heedless of all consequences. This is a weak point of the human nature from which only the selected few can be exempted.

During the last phase of tottering UMAYYAD rule, HASHEMITES were actively engaged in their anti-UMAYYAD activities. The ABBASIDES took advantage of their efforts and secretly formed an association, the members of which had pledged the oath to transfer the government from UMAYYADS to the HASHEMITES who really deserved it. It is clear that to rule the Islamic world was not the job of every HASHEMITE. It was the right of those divinely appointed descendants of

the holy Prophet and IMAM ALI (AS) whom God had chosen to lead humanity. But these high-thinking souls never wished to take undue advantage of the situation with the aid of cunning tactics. In short, the Imams, the descendants of Imam Ali (as), never tried to acquire power through political trickery. But the ABBASIDES, who too were HASHEMITES. No doubt took the opportunity by the forelock. Availing themselves of the silence shown by the Imams, and of the compassion the people had for the HASHEMITES, they ABBASIDES saw their chances to rise to power. And when they established themselves on the throne, they became enemies of Imam Ali's posterity in the same degree or more than that which had been adopted by the heartless Umayyads. Details of this will be narrated in the biographies of later Imams.

The first to start the movement among the ABBASIDES was MUHAMMAD IBN ALI IBN ABDALLAH IBN AL-ABBAS who sent his agents throughout Persia to secretly obtain the oath of allegiance to the HASHEMITES' cause from the Persians. On Muhammad's death, his son IBRAHIM succeeded him. Meanwhile, the martyrdom of ZAID and his son YAHYA had fanned the flames of revolt against the Umayyads. The ABBASIDES took advantage of it and increased their influence in Iraq through ABU SALAMA AL-KHALLAL. Slowly but steadily, their power base increases. Through the sincere support of ABU MUSLIM AL-KHURASANI, all Western Persia and KHURASAN came under their control and the Umayyad governor had to flee. The name of the Umayyad ruler was dropped from Friday sermons, having been replaced by that of IBRAHIM IBN MUHAMMAD.

The Umayyad government till then was under the impression that the disturbances were merely local protests, but now the spies reported that it was a full-fledged movement initiated by IBRAHIM IBN MUHAMMAD IBN ABBAS who was residing at JABULQA. Soon IBRAHIM was arrested, imprisoned and killed ruthlessly. His family escaped the royal rage with other ABBASIDES and sought quarters with ABU SALMA in Iraq. When the news reached ABU MUSLIM AL-KHURASANI, he sent an army to Iraq which defeated the Umayyad forces and annexed Iraq.

ABU SALAMA AL-KHALLAL, dubbed as the Minister of the Prophet's Progeny, was especially compassionate towards Imam Ali's offspring. He wrote letters to the prominent heads of this Household inviting them to accept and share the royal power. One of such letters was addressed to IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS). In political struggles, such opportunities are considered golden, but the Imam, who was the embodiment of selflessness and self-respect, declined the offer and remained devoted to his duty of imparting knowledge. The supporters of the ABBASIDES cause and the followers of ABU MUSLIM AL-KHURASANI then took the oath of allegiance at the hand of ABU AL-ABBAS AS-SAFFAH. On RABI' II 14, 132 A.H. (November 30, 749 A.D), he was acknowledged as the ruler and caliph of the Muslim world. Establishing themselves in Iraq, they advanced towards Damascus. MARWAN assembled his forces and confronted them, but soon his army was defeated. He had to flee for his life but was later captured in Egypt and slain while fighting for his life. Then followed a reign of terror: the Umayyads were massacred publicly; the dead bodies of the monarchs of their dynasty were exhumed and treated in a most shocking

manner; thus, the revenge upon the oppressors, the law of nature, was implemented through the ABBASIDES. In 136 A.H., AS-SAFFAH, the first ABBASIDE caliph, died. He was succeeded by his brother ABU JA'FAR AL-MANSUR, commonly known as AD-DAWANIQI.

ATROCITIES ON THE SAYYIDS

It has already been indicated that the ABBASIDES took advantage of the popularity of the SAYYIDS (descendants of HASHIM, grandfather of the holy Prophet of Islam, peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny). They made it their slogan to stand and protect the rights of AHL AL-BAYT (AS). They had gathered the public around them on this very pretext, and it was their war-cry as well. So when they came to power and destroyed the Umayyads, they naturally feared lest the world should be disappointed and disillusioned with them, or lest a movement should start demanding that the caliphate must be vested upon the descendants of Imam Ali (as) and Fatima instead of the ABBASIDES. ABU SALAMA was leaning towards the descendants, and he was a candidate to support such a movement. Therefore, in spite of all the favors he had done to the ABBASIDES, he was the first to fall a victim to their ingratitude. He was put to death during the reign of AS-SAFFAH. Persia was under the control of ABU MUSLIM AL-KHURASANI. AL-MANSUR arranged to have him murdered most treacherously. AL-MANSUR was no longer apprehensive of the interference of any influential person in his government. He, therefore, turned all his tyranny against the SAYYIDS themselves. SHIBLI AL-AYSAMI writes this in his book SIRAT AL-NU'MAN:

"On mere suspicion, AL-MANSUR began to destroy the SAYYIDS. The prominent among them were subjected to atrocities. Muhammad son of IBRAHIM, who was the most handsome among them and was therefore called 'the silken', was walled alive. The narration of such lengthy series of atrocities demands a stone-heart to tell".

IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) was sadly touched by those events. When once the descendants of IMAM HASAN IBN ALI (AS) were all fettered, shackled and banished from Medina, he watched their plight with a saddened heart from the roof-top of his house. With flooded eyes he was heard saying: "Oh! Medina is no more a sanctuary or a place of peace..." Then he expressed his sorrow for the inactive descendants of the ANSARS thus: "The early MEDENITES (ANSARS) had invited the holy Prophet to Medina under the oath that they would protect him and his descendants just as they would protect their own kith and kin. But today the descendants of those very ANSARS act as silent onlookers and none stands up to protect the Prophet's offspring".

Having said these words, he returned to his house and fell ill, unable to move from bed for twenty days. Among the aforesaid prisoners was the aged ABDALLAH AL-MAHD, son of IMAM HASAN IBN ALI (AS) who had to suffer the hardships of a prolonged imprisonment. His son Muhammad (THU AN-NAFS AZ-ZAKIYYA) rose against the oppressive government and fell fighting near Medina in 145 A.H. The head of the young warrior was sent to his aged father in prison a shocking sight

which the worn out old man could not bear, and he died shortly thereafter. Another son of ABDALLAH AL-MAHD, named IBRAHIM, also fought against MASUR'S army and fell fighting near KUFA. In the same way, ABDALLAH son of THU AN-NAFS AZ-ZAKIYYA, were all killed mercilessly. Many SAYYIDS were used alive as part of the building materials of walls.

MALTREATMENT OF IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS)

In spite of all these atrocities which have been described very briefly here, IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) went on silently propagating the teachings of AHL AL-BAYT (AS). As a result, even those who did not acknowledge him as the Imam nor knew his prestige and lineage, bowed before his knowledge and prided in being counted among his students.

AL-MANSUR wanted to decrease or remove the esteem in which IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) was held by the people. He tried to bring persons to compete with him who all proved incapable of arguing with his own students. These fellows admitted that their counterparts had acquired the religious learning from the Prophet's Progeny. The haughty ruler, therefore, ignored them but continued to undermine the popularity of the Imam. Failing in all his efforts, he decided to harass, arrest or murder him. In every town and city, hired agents were posted to monitor the activities of the SHI'AHs so that anyone suspected of supporting the Imam would be arrested. AL-MU'ALLA son of KHUNAIS was one of the many SHI'AHs who were thus arrested and murdered in cold blood.

The Imam himself was summoned from Medina to the royal palace five times, each time being in one way or another nothing but harassment. AL-MANSUR, however, could never find sufficient grounds to order his imprisonment or assassination. On the other hand, the consequent stay of the Imam in Iraq only expanded the circle of those who wanted to learn the teachings of AHL AL-BAYT (AS) from him. Perceiving this, AL-MANSUR ordered him to be sent back to Medina. Even there, he was not spared from persecution. Through saboteurs, his house was once set on fire but Providence soon put it out and nobody was harmed.

CHARACTER AND VIRTUES

IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) was one of those Infallible souls who were created by the Almighty to be models of moral excellence. The character and conduct of all those sages in different stages of their lives was the standard of excellence. The particular virtues of IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) which were recorded by the historians included hospitality, charity, the helping of the needy in secrecy, the fair treatment of the relatives, forgiveness, patience and fortitude. Once a pilgrim visiting the Prophet's mosque in Medina fell asleep there. On waking up, he hurriedly searched his belongings and found out that his purse containing one thousand DINARS was missing.

Looking around, he saw IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) saying his prayers in a corner of the mosque. Bewildered and ignorant of the greatness of the Imam, he accused him of having picked his purse. The Imam asked about its contents and was told that it contained one thousand DINARS. The Imam asked the stranger to follow him to his house where he paid him the amount from his own money. When the stranger came back to the mosque satisfied, once more he checked his property and found his purse intact in bundle. Greatly ashamed of his conduct, he came to the Imam's house, apologized and asked him to take his money back. The Imam appeased him with these words: "We never take back what we once give away". Another event of the Imam's trust in God, the Sustainer, deserves mention here. During the days of scarcity, one naturally tries to hoard up as much provisions as might suffice his needs for a long time. Once on such an occasion, the Imam said to his household manager TRENCHAB: "The price of corn is rising day by day.

How much corn is there in our warehouses?" TRENCHAB said that the Imam should have no reason to worry since there was a large quantity of it to sustain them over a long period of time. The noble Imam then ordered: "Sell out all the corn today and let us face the situation along with others". Then he directed: "Pure wheat flour shall not be used in my kitchen. Let it be mixed with an equal quantity of oat flour. We must share the misfortune with the needy as long as it takes".

He used to respect the poor more than the rich and esteem their hard work. Trade was his occupation and he liked to do manual work in his gardens too. One day while wielding the spade and sweating profusely from top to toe, someone offered to do the work for him, but the labor-loving leader said: "It is no insult to bear the heat of the summer sun for the sake of my household".

To be kind to the slaves and maids was the main characteristic of this Progeny. SUFYAN ATH-THAWRI'HAS narrated a surprising event in this regard: "One I went to pay him a visit. I saw his complexion fading. On my asking him the reason, the Imam explained: 'I had forbidden my folk from ascending the stairs to the roof-top. Just now, as I entered the house, I saw a nursing maid with my babe in her arms ascending the stairs. She was so much frightened that she became nervous, and the baby fell down and died. I do not grieve on the death of the baby as much I grieve on her fright". Then he prepared to arrange for the shrouding and burial of the baby.

DISSEMINATING KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING

His profound knowledge of religious and other sciences was famed throughout the entire Islamic world. People came from distant regions to learn from him. The number of his students reached once four thousand. Among them were scholars of jurisprudence, TAFSIR (exegesis), HADITH, etc. Heads of other religions also came there to expostulate with his students. When they went away vanquished and defeated, the Imam used to explain to his students their own weak points so that they might be careful in the future.

Sometimes he himself argued with the opponents especially the atheists. Apart from religious sciences, he used to teach some students mathematics, chemistry, medicine, etc. JABIR IBN HAYYAN of TARUS, the famous pioneer of physics, chemistry and mathematics, was his disciple who wrote about four hundred treatises based on his mentor's instruction. The jurists who learned from him and authored several volumes of books on jurisprudence can be counted by the hundreds.

DEATH

Such a great and scholar can never be ambitious for power. But the government considered his popularity to be a constant threat, even though the monarchs knew that this Progeny really deserved to rule the Islamic worlds. Exhausting all its efforts, the ruling class could not find any grounds to take action against the Imam. It finally resorted to the use of their soundless weapon, poison. The governor of Medina was directed to offer him poisoned grapes, the efficacy of which ended his life on fifteenth of SHAWWAL of 148 A.H (December 4, 765 A.D.) at the age of 65. His funeral was arranged by his son successor IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS) who led the burial prayers. He was laid to rest in that compound of JANNAT AL-BAQI' where IMAM HASAN (AS), IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS) and IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) lay buried.

The Seventh Imam Musa Al-Kazim (AS)

NAME AND PARENTAGE

His name is MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS) and ABU AL-HASAN are his titles. He is usually called MUSA AL-KAZIM. IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) was his father whose lineage, by five generations, reaches the holy Prophet (p). His mother HAMIDA KHATUN was a North African Berber.

BIRTH

He was born on SAFAR 7, 128 A.H. (November 8, 754 A.D.). The knowledge of his father, IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS), saturated the Islamic world. Although two elder sons, ISMA'IL and ABDALLAH, had already illuminated the house, the addition of the new-born brought unparalleled happiness to the household, probably because the Providence had decided to maintain the continuity of Imamate through him.

UPBRINGING AND INSTRUCTION

Twenty years of his age passed under the supervision of his father IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS). It may be said that the student or trainee, i.e. MUSA, was a gifted one while the teacher was the Imam who displayed an exalted character which reflected the moral excellence of holy Prophet. It was due to these virtues and to the propagation of the teachings of the Prophet that the SHI'AHs are called "JA'FARIS", taught by IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS). It is clear that the capable son might have fully availed himself of his father's excellent tutoring during his boyhood and youth.

The scholarly achievements of IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS) were so conspicuous that the world acknowledged them and IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) appointed him as his successor. It is proved by this act that Imamate does not, as a rule, go to the eldest son or be inherited. It is the blessing bestowed by the Divine Providence upon the Infallibles who are gifted with celestial learning. The principle is further established by the fact that this enormous responsibility had once before passed from IMAM HASAN to his brother IMAM HUSAIN (AS), and not to HASAN'S descendants. The Imamate of MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS), therefore, illustrates that Imamate is based on personal perfection, not necessarily on direct descent.

IMAMATE

In 148 A.H. (765 A.D.), upon the death of IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS), the responsibilities of Imamate devolved on MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS). This was during the reign of AL-MANSUR AL-DAWANIQI, the tyrant who ordered the slaying of countless SAYYIDS. The number of those imprisoned, oppressed thrown into the dark cells of prisons or bricked up in the walls alive was known only to God. IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) himself had been subjected to harassment, tyranny and intrigues, the last of which was poison which ended his life.

In these circumstances, IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) on his death-bed foresaw that the life of his successor, too, would be ended in the same way. In order to divert this danger, he nominated, in his will, five trustees to look after his family. AL-MANSUR the ABBASIDE ruler was one of them. The other four were MUHAMMAD IBN SULAYMAN, the then governor of Medina, his own son ABDALLAH AL-AFTAH MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS), and their respected mother HAMIDA KHATUN. IMAM JA'FAR'S prediction was correct. When the news of his death reached AL-MANSUR, the latter made a show of grief by thrice repeating these words: "INNA LILLAHI WA INNA ILAIHI RAJI'UN", (that is, "We are God's and unto Him is our return"). He also said: "Who can be JA'FAR'S equal now...?" But secretly he wrote to the governor of Medina saying: "If JA'FAR, by way of a will, appointed any trustee, put him to death immediately". The governor replied: "He had appointed five trustees, the first of whom is your majesty". Having read this reply, AL-MANSUR remained silent, since the sanctity of a will cannot be violated. Then, pondering over the situation, he said:

"In this case, these persons cannot be slain".

According, for the next ten years, AL-MANSUR did not try to harass MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS) who carried out the duties of Imamate peacefully. AL-MANSUR was, moreover, preoccupied with building the new capital of Baghdad which he completed just one year before his death. He had, therefore, little time to think of harassing IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS).

PERSECUTION

AL-MANSUR AL-DAWANIQI died in 158 A.H.(775 A.D.) and was succeeded by his son AL-MAHDI. In the beginning, AL-MAHDI did nothing to humiliate or dishonor IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS), but later he fostered the old enmity against Imam Ali's descendants. In 164 A.H. (781 A.D), when he performed the HAJJ, he took the Imam with him from Mecca to Baghdad where he imprisoned him. For one year the Imam suffered the hardship of imprisonment. Then the ruler realized that he was mistreating a descendant of the Prophet (p), and he released the pious soul. In 169 A.H., AL-MAHDI died and was succeeded by his brother AL-HADI who ruled for only 13 months. On his death, HARUN AL-RASHID came to the throne. The latter's attitude towards IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS) was very antagonistic and it caused AL-KAZIM (AS) to die in imprisonment.

CHARACTER AND VIRTUES

IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS) was one of the illustrious Imams whom the Almighty God had set as a paragon of moral excellence. Each member of this illustrious family possessed cardinal virtues. Naturally in some individuals a particular virtue is dominant and more conspicuous. The Seventh Imam excelled in tolerance and forgiveness, so much so that he was titled AL-KAZIM (AS), the suppressor of fury. Never was he heard speaking roughly or sternly. Even in the most unpleasant situations, he wore a smiling face. This was in accordance with the saying of his ancestor IMAM ALI IBN ABU TALIB (AS) that the faithful keeps his grief confined in his heart with a smile on his face.

One government official of Medina was a persistent source of harassment to IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS). He even used abusive language regarding Imam Ali (as). But the Imam always directed his followers not to abuse him. When his malicious conduct became too rude to be tolerated, they sought permission to retaliate against him. The Imam appeased them, promising to decide the matter himself.

Pacifying his followers thus, he went to the fellow on his farm and treated him with such noble benevolence that the man felt ashamed of his conduct and subsequently changed his attitude and altered his conduct. Explaining this policy to his followers, the Imam asked: "Was my behavior better than the methods you suggested?" They admitted that it certainly was. He thus carried out

the instruction of his great ancestor Imam Ali (as) which is recorded in NAHJ AL-BALAGHA to subdue the enemy with benevolence since it is more effective than vanquishing him with force. No doubt this requires a correct judgment of the enemy's nature. Imam Ali (as) has, therefore, warned not to use this policy with the vile and the mean, or they will be encouraged to do more mischief.

To vanquish foe with goodness certainly requires the foresight the Imam possessed. Strictness is permissible only when the enemy's continuous vile conduct justifies retaliation or the use of force. If not, these dignified souls preferred to deal with him gently, so as to have a valid pretext against the opponent and leave no ground for him to justify his aggression.

This was the noble method usually adopted by this House of Prophet-hood. Imam Ali (as), even on his death-bed, behaved liberally with IBN MULJIM who had dealt him a mortal blow only the day before. IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS) showered his generosity on MUHAMMAD IBN ISMA'IL who carried out the orders of the ABBASIDE caliph to put an end to the Imam's life. It was IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS) who aided him for his journey with a grant of 400 DINARS and 1,500 DIRHAMS although he undertook this journey to poison the ears of the caliph against him. IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS) had to undergo hard times. The academy of learning which his father IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) established could not longer be maintained. Other means to disseminate knowledge were beyond his reach. It was only his noble personal behavior which was able to introduce the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (p) and his Progeny (AS) to the public.

He used to observe silence at gatherings or seminars, and he never spoke unless somebody put up some scientific problem to him. Nor did he ever initiate a conversation. In spite of this, he was regarded with an awe of respect by friend and foe alike. All acknowledged his knowledge and noble bearing. In view of his excessive worship at night, he was called "AL-ABD AS-SALIH", i.e., the pious worshipper of God. No less famed was his generosity. He used to help the beggars and destitute secretly. After the morning prayers, he used to lower his forehead in prostration and remain in that position till the sun declined. His recitation of the holy QUR'AN was attractive; he wept as he recited, and his audiences were deeply wowed.

HARASSMENT OF IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS)

In 170 A.H. (787 A.D.), HARUN AR-RASHID succeeded as the caliph. His ancestors' traditional cruelty towards the descendants of Imam Ali (as) and Fatima was well in his view. He knew quite well the plans of his father against IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) as well as his own intentions to do away with the Imam's successor. On one hand, the sagacious and wise will of IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS), whose moral obligations had rendered AL-MANSUR'S designs futile, safeguarded IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM'S life; on the other hand, the building of the new capital of Baghdad totally absorbed the attention of his antagonist. But HARUN had no such obstacles or

engagements. The only plan he could think of was to secure his power and abolish the academy of spiritual excellence which stood in the HASHEMITES' center in Medina. However, the calm and cautious policy of IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS), as well as the internal problems of government, did not allow HARUN to harass the Imam openly.

Meanwhile, the revolt of YAHYA IBN ABDALLAH IBN AL-HASAN took place. Violating all agreements and covenants, HARUN first threw YAHYA into the choking dark dungeons and then slew him. IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS) was in no way connected with YAHYA'S uprising. He had, instead, advised him against opposing the government. But YAHYA'S action served to intensify the enmity which HARUN bore towards Imam Ali's descendants including, of course, IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS). To make the matters even worse, the Prime Minister YAHYA IBN KHALID AL-BARMAKI poisoned HARUN'S ears by pointing out that JA'FAR IBN AL-ASH'ATH (tutor of HARUN'S son AL-AMIN and a political rival of YAHYA) was a SHI'AH of the Imam who planned to bring the Imam to power. Although YAHYA IBN KHALID intended just to enrage HARUN against JA'FAR IBN AL-ASH'ATH, his plan proved to be fatal to IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS). In the same year, HARUN came to Mecca to perform the HAJJ, and so did IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS). Here HARUN watched with jealous eyes the sublime popularity which numerous Muslim multitudes showed for that sage. It was sufficient to flare up his rage. MUHAMMAD IBN ISMA'IL'S opposition worsened the situation.

To understand these complications, let us ponder on the following: ISMA'IL, Muhammad's father, was the eldest son of IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS), and he was expected to succeed his father as the Imam. But he died during the lifetime of the Imam. The common notion was thus shattered. Yet some simpletons still held the view that IMAM JA'FAR'S successor should be one of ISMA'IL'S offspring. MUHAMMAD IBN ISMA'IL and his followers, therefore, never acknowledged the Imamate of MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS). Since his followers were a small minority, he outwardly expressed his loyalty to the family. To discuss all possible means of annihilating IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS), HARUN consulted YAHYA AL-BARMAKI whom he instructed to collect complete reports about the Imam through one of the descendants of Imam Ali (as). YAHYA, an avowed foe of the Prophet's Progeny, recommended Muhammad IBN ISMA'IL as the person who would supply all the details correctly. Accordingly, he was summoned to Baghdad.

When MUHAMMAD IBN ISMA'IL received the caliphs' letter, he considered it a passport to power and prosperity, and he resolved to go to Baghdad. But he was penniless and unable to prepare for the journey. He was, therefore, obliged to approach the same generous saint who demonstrated benevolence to friend and foe alike. He told the Imam that he intended to go to Baghdad. The Imam knew well the motives behind the journey. He nevertheless inquired about its purpose. Muhammad explained that he was having hard times, being deeply in debt, and that he thought that the journey might bring his prosperity. The Imam said: "You need not go there; I promise to pay off all your debts and provide adequately for your sustenance".

But Muhammad would not change his decision to go to Baghdad. Upon leaving, he paid the Imam a visit and requested a useful piece of advice. IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS) remained silent. On his repeated request, the Imam said: "Please see that you do not become a party in slaying me, and please do not be the cause for making my children orphans". Muhammad tried to turn from the point and asked for some appropriate advice. But the Imam refused to say anything more. When he got up to depart, the noble soul granted him 450 gold DINARS and 1,500 silver DIRHAMS for the journey.

The result was exactly what the Imam had foreseen. MUHAMMAD IBN ISMA'IL reached Baghdad and stayed at the house of YAHYA, the Prime Minister who introduced him to HARUN who surrounded him with honors HARUN inquired about the pace of events in Medina. Muhammad stated the circumstances most incorrectly, adding; "I never saw or heard that a country is ruled by two kings". On being asked to explain, he asserted: "As you are ruling here in Baghdad, MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS) rules there in Medina. From every town, revenues are delivered to him, and he claims to be your own equal in power". These were the words YAHYA AL-BARMAKI had instructed Muhammad to say to HARUN who felt very much provoked. He sent Muhammad back after granting him ten thousand DINARS. But God wished that Muhammad should not avail of this wealth. On that very night, he suffered pain in his throat, and when the day dawned, the darkness of death closed on him. HARUN heard the news and ordered to retrieve the cash. Muhammad's statement was not erased from HARUN'S memory and he was resolved to put an end to the Imam's life.

When in 179 A.H. (795 A.D) HARUN went to Mecca and Medina, he stayed in the latter city for a day or two after which he sent his men to arrest IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS). The Imam was not at home when the caliph's men came, so they went to the Prophet's tomb where he used to say his prayers. Totally disregarding the sanctity of the Prophet's grave, they arrested his descendant there and brought him before HARUN. It was on the 20th of SHAWWAL of 179 A.H. that the Prophet's pious son was being fettered and taken prisoner while not even one MEDENITE dared to raise a finger against the tyrant. This lethargy of the unfeeling Muslims had also been witnessed on several occasions before that incident.

Being apprehensive of any attempt which might be made to rescue the Imam, HARUN ordered two camel-domes to be prepared in one of which he seated the Imam and sent him to Basra escorted by a sizeable military detachment. The other empty dome was sent to Baghdad with an equal number of soldiers in order to confuse any prospective rescuers and distract the attention of people by keeping the place of imprisonment unknown. Was it not a shocking event that the Imam's family could not even see the Imam or bid him farewell? They only received the news that he had been imprisoned by the government. They were distressed to hear it and the Imam, too, was equally grieved for being separated from his loved ones without being able to bid them

farewell. But his power of endurance welcomed his dilemma.

Nobody knows what a zigzag route was followed that the journey to Basra took full 47 days. There the Imam remained in confinement for one year. The city's governor was 'ISA IBN JA'FAR, a cousin of HARUN. In the beginning he carried out HARUN'S orders. But he often wondered about the reasons for the imprisonment of the pious descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (p). He therefore, became curious about the Imam's life, character and attributes. The more he studied them and noticed his forbearance, the more he was impressed by his noble conduct.

He conveyed his views to HARUN In good faith, but the latter only became suspicious of the intentions of his own cousin. He therefore ordered that the imam must be transferred to Baghdad where he put him under the custody of AL-FADL IBN AR-RABI'. Having come to know that FADL was inclined towards SHI'ISM, he put the Imam under the custody of YAHYA AL-BARMAKI, the notorious enemy of AHL AL-BAYT (AS). It seems that the Imam's sacred personality impressed everybody and the tyrant thought it necessary to change his jailers.

DEATH

The imam was finally imprisoned in the dungeon under the charge of AS-SINDI IBN SHAHIK who was the ruthless and stone-hearted Chief of Police of HARUN AR-RASHID. He died on the 25th of RAJAB 183 A.H. (September 2, 799 A.D.) at the age of 55. No honor was shown at the burial either. Rather, the corpse was borne to the grave-yard by men who were announcing his death in degrading tones. By this time the people felt depressed about the fate of the elevated Imam and they accompanied the coffin with full display of respect. They buried him in a suburb of Baghdad now bearing his name as KAZIMIYYA, city of IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS) where his magnificent mausoleum now houses a reputed school of theology.

The Eighth Imam 'Ali Ar-Rida (AS)

NAME AND PARENTAGE

His name is 'ALI IBN MUSA. AR-RIDA (AS) and ABU AL-HASAN are his titles. His mother was the pious lady UMM AL-BANIN AT-TAHIRA.

BIRTH

He was born on the 11th of THU AL-QI'DA 148 A.H. (December 29, 765 A.D.). His grandfather IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) died one month before the birth of the Imam to-be ALI BIN MUSA AR-RIDA (AS). The family may have been consoled by his birth which took place after such a great loss.

UPBRINGING

He was brought up and instructed by his affectionate father under whose supervision he passed his boyhood and youth. He availed himself of the instruction of his learned parent for thirty-one years till the latter was taken to Baghdad to suffer the hardship of imprisonment for four years till his death.

SUCCESSION

IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS) could foresee that the hostile government would not to allow him to live peacefully and circumstances would take such a turn that his followers would not be able to see him or inquire about his successor prior to his death. So while free and undisturbed in Medina, he felt the need to introduce his successor to his followers. He, therefore, assembled seventeen prominent dignitaries from the descendants of Imam Ali (as) and proclaimed that IMAM ALI IBN MUSA AR-RIDA (AS) would succeed him. He also wrote his will on which 60 respected elders of Medina signed as witnesses. Such elaborated arrangements were never made by any other Imam, and they proved to be most appropriate due to controversy about the Imamate which ensued after the death of IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS).

IMAMATE

IMAM AR-RIDA (AS) was 35 when his father died and the responsibilities of Imamate devolved on him. At the time, HARUN AR-RASHID was the absolute ruler of Baghdad and the descendants of Imam Ali (as) were passing through trials and tribulations because of him. Yet IMAM AR-RIDA (AS) carried on the responsibility of administering the Divine Law of SHARI'AH.

PROFOUND KNOWLEDGE

All the Imams who descended from the Prophet of Islam (p) achieve the highest among of knowledge; they therefore were revered by friends and respected by foes. But some members had better chances to propagate the divine teachings than others. After IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS), IMAM AR-RIDA (AS) was blessed with the most conducive environment for this purpose. IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS) used to exhort the whole family to refer all religious problems to his son IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) whom he saw to be the most learned among the descendants of the

Prophet, instructing them to confine to memory whatever Imam Ali (as) said. Similarly, all Muslim scholars came to him seeking solutions to delicate theological problems. MUHAMMAD IBN MUSA AL-QUTAINI states that only the written questions to which he replied in writing numbered 18,000.

VARIOUS PHASES OF LIFE

After putting an end to the life of IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS), HARUN lived for ten years. He had less tolerance for the existence of IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) than he did for that of his revered father. But the government had already lost face due to its prolonged maltreatment and eventual assassination of IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS), or perhaps the tyrant felt the stings of conscience which kept him from harassing IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS). It is said that once YAHYA IBN KHALIK AL-BARMAKI, in order to gain the ruler's favor, informed HARUN that IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) claimed Imamate in the same way his father had done. HARUN coldly replied: "We have already inflicted cruelties on his father; do you expect me to annihilate this family altogether?"

Still, HARUN was antagonistic towards the Prophet's progeny and he persisted in mistreating them; therefore, the local officers who wished to please the ruler could not afford to be fair to AHL AL-BAYT (AS). People could not visit IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) freely to seek his knowledge, and he had little chance to publicly disseminate the true Islamic teachings.

The last years of HARUN'S life were embittered by the political rivalry of his sons AL-AMIN and AL-MA'MUN. AL-AMIN was his elder son by ZUBAIDA, the granddaughter of ABU JA'FAR AL-MANSUR AL-DAWANIQI, He had, therefore, the support of all Arab nobility. AL-MA'MUN was born of a Persian maid, so the Persian nobility supported his cause. The struggle between the two brothers chafed his soul. In order to settle the dispute, he divides the kingdom between the two: Baghdad and the territories surrounding it, Syria, Egypt, what is now Saudi Arabia, and Yemen, he put under AL-AMIN'S rule.

AL-MA'MUN was put in charge of ruling the eastern provinces of Persia, KHURASAN and Trans-Saxony This settlement could have worked had the two brothers respected the principle of "Live and let live". In the present tussle, hissed the dragon of rivalry. The ABBASIDES, who were accustomed to inflicting atrocities on the Progeny of Imam Ali (as), had learned gladiator at home. They were bound to strike each other since they never knew the qualities of compassion, sacrifice and the public good which characterized the conduct of Imam Ali descendants and for which they gave up their own rights quite often. So immediately after HARUN'S death, civil war flared up. After strife and bloodshed which continued for four years, AL-MA'MUN got the upper hand. AL-AMIN was killed in MUHARRAM of 198 A.H. (September 813 A.D.) and AL-MA'MUN now ruled the whole ABBASIDE empire.

THE POLITICAL DILEMMA

After AL-AMIN'S murder, AL-MA'MUN acceded to the throne, but, as already stated above, he was half Persian on his mother's side, while AL-AMIN was of full Arab blood. AL-AMIN'S slaying had annoyed the Arab elite. Those ABBASIDE regime from time to time and were slain, imprisoned or exiled. This group, however weak, was also opposed to the ABBASIDE monarchy.

In Persia, things had taken a different turn. About seventy years prior to that era, ABU MUSLIM AL-KHURASANI had created hatred there against the Umayyads by telling the stories of atrocities meted by them to IMAM HUSAIN (AS) and to the rest of Imam Ali's descendants. The Persians, therefore, had compassion for the latter. But when the tables were turned on the Umayyads, the Abbasides took advantage of the situation and seized the government, depriving the descendants of Imam Ali (as) in whose name their coup was brought about. But by and by, the Persians were gradually disillusioned. They had a full view of this political jugglery. AL-MA'MUN might have heard of the Persians' sympathy for the Prophet's Progeny. Along with the danger of revolt of the Arab nobles, caused by AL-AMIN'S slaying, AL-MA'MUN also feared an uprising in Persia. He, therefore, considered it a political necessity to outbalance the Arabs by pleasing the Persian element and to patronize the Descendants of Imam Ali (as) by giving them a towering position in the government. In order to conceal these political designs, he wrapped them up in the sacred cloak of "love for the Prophet's Progeny" and tried to prove that he sincerely wished to hand over the power to IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS).

ASH-SHAikh AS-SADUQ writes that in order to display his honesty of purpose, AL-MA'MUN propagated the story of the odds he had faced. There are his own words:

"When I was struggling against AL-AMIN and was in a precarious situation, the people of SISTAN and KIRMAN revolted. There was unrest in KHURASAN. My treasury was empty, so I could not rely on my soldiers whom I did not pay. In such perilous circumstances, I prayed to God, taking the oath that if I overcame all those odds and acceded to the throne, I would hand the caliphate over to its real and rightful master, i.e. the most suitable among Imam Ali's descendants. It was after taking such an oath that my affairs began to improve".

AL-MA'MUN might have related this story to demonstrate that his actions were based on sincerity. As regarding the rightfulness of the Descendants, everybody knew the fact that they deserved to wield the authority by the dint of their own virtues. But merely this knowledge is not sufficient to label one as SHI'AH. It rather demands the obedience and love of the Prophet's Progeny. Some writers say that despite all the pretensions AL-MA'MUN made, he did not really intend to obey the word of the Imam; rather, he persisted in imposing his will on him. Proclaiming that he had appointed IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) as his heir-apparent, he summoned him from Medina. At best, this appointment was a political pressure exerted by the ruling monarch on the

Imam.

DEPARTURE FROM MEDINA

IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) had to comply with AL-MA'MUN'S orders and leave Medina just as his father was summoned according to the order of AL-MA'MUN'S father twenty-one years ago. His sorrow and grief knew no bounds. At the eve of his departure from the Prophet's tomb site, his woe was the same as that of IMAM HUSAIN (AS) when the latter had to leave that sacred place never to return again. The onlookers saw that in his desperate dismay, he went into the tomb several times, complained of the community with wailing, then he came with the intention of going home, but he reentered the tomb and clung to his ancestor's grave. This happened many times. An eye witness later sated that when he went near the Imam, the Imam complained to the Almighty saying: "O Lord! I am being torn forcibly away from my ancestor's tomb. I shall never have the chance to come back".

In 200 A.H. (815 A.D.), IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) started his journey, leaving all his family members including his son MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS, who was only five years old, in Medina. When he reached MARW, AL-MA'MUN'S capital at that time, he was entertained for a few days as AL-MA'MUN'S guest. Then AL-MA'MUN normally asked the Imam to take over the caliphate, but the Imam refused. AL-MA'MUN then asked him to agree to be his heir-apparent. The Imam, who knew the purpose of AL-MA'MUN, refused that offer too. But now AL-MA'MUN insisted most sternly, explaining that another refusal might entail his own death.

For the members of this illustrious Family, death was always welcome, provided it guaranteed to safeguard the dignity of Islam: otherwise, the Divine Law of SHARI'AH directs to preserve one's life. At this juncture the Imam said: "Since I am being compelled, I accept the offer but I shall not handle the administration. I shall, however, give counsel if I am consulted".

The offer was indeed nothing more than a diplomatic jugglery which might have served some political purpose. The Imam's position in those days was the same as that of his ancestor IMAM ALI (AS), who during the regimes of the first three caliphs, gave wise counsel when consulted. Neither of the conduct of these two Imams endorses the legitimacy of the government. IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) did accede to AL-MA'MUN'S wish but kept himself aloof from the administrative policies of that government.

The ABBASIDES did not approve AL-MA'MUN'S scheme, and they tried to undermine it. But when AL-MA'MUN asked them to recommend someone else better than IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS), they could not meet the challenge. Some expostulations, too, took place, but who could vie in knowledge with the learned Imam? AL-MA'MUN was determined to make his decision public. None could make him change his mind.

AS HEIR-APPARENT

On the first of Ramadan, 201 A.H. (March 23, 817 A.D), a meeting for the purpose of naming the heir-apparent was convened. The occasion was marked with full pomp and decoration. First of all, AL-MA'MUN required his son to take the oath of allegiance. Then others were instructed to do likewise. Gold and silver coins were thrown over the Imam's head according to the tradition of the time. All the nobles and attendants received awards. AL-MA'MUN ordered that the currency be struck with the Imam's name on it. DINARS and DIRHAMS were accordingly struck and circulated throughout the country. His name was proclaimed during the Friday sermons.

THE IMAM'S CONDUCT

Usually, the destitute and the poor who cannot afford to enjoy the pleasures of life are held with contempt or tolerated with patience, but those who assume a hermit's simple austerity in spite of wealth and power are the real saints. The Prophet's Progeny adopted a peculiar policy. Those whose means were limited dressed nicely because otherwise the enemies would taunt them as destitute which would injure the dignity of their piety;

but blessed are those who by chance become wealthy, and who assume simplicity and austerity so that their simple life becomes a source of consolation for the poor and a model of the rich. This can be illustrated by the life of IMAM ALI BIN ABU TALIB (AS). For five years, he ruled the Muslim world as caliph. He ate and dressed himself as a hermit would. IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS), too, led a simple life, although he was heir-apparent of that vast empire compared to which the Roman Empire or the Persian territories would certainly not be a match - a vast chain of countries whose caliph, upon watching a passing cloud, would haughtily assert: "Go and pour your waters anywhere you please; the revenues of that land shall ultimately be brought to us".

The appointment of IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) as heir-apparent demonstrated to the world how the saints fare when the treasures of the world are put at their disposal. He felt he was orally bound to abandon riches and pomp. History repeated itself, and the austerity of IMAM ALI BIN ABU TALIB (AS) once more shone in the calm and content personality of IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS). He did not like to decorate his dwelling with costly carpets; instead he covered its floor with rough mats during the winter and grass mats during the summer. When food was served, he called all his servants including the gate-keepers and the grooms, to sit and eat with him, the prince that he was.

ALLAMA AL-MAJLISI mentions on p. 101 vol. 49, of his BIHAR AL-ANWAR, that the Imam insisted on eating his meal only after the entire members of the family, young and old, and the servants and grooms, were present. One day someone who was more fond of royal formalities than the

fraternity of Muhammad's religion, suggested that it would be better to make separate eating arrangements for the servants. The Imam replied: "All are created by God, Adam is their father and Eve is their mother. Everyone will be dealt with by God according to his deeds; why should there be any discrimination in this world?".

RAJA' IBN ADH-DHAHHAK accompanied the Imam during his entire journey from Medina to MARW. He is quoted on p. 18, vol. 2, of 'UYUN AKHBAR AR-RIDA and by AS-SADUQ as saying: "I was with him the whole time from Medina to MARW. By God I have never seen a man more fearful of God than him, or remembering God more during all times. In the early morning he performs the prayers, then he sits praising God, pronouncing HAMD and TAKBIR and sending blessing unto the Prophet till sunrise. Then he prostrates till late in the morning. Then he comes to people to narrate HADITH and preach to them till time of non prayers approaches". On p. 258 of AL-FUSUL AL-MUHIMMA of IBN AL-SABBAGH AL-MALIKI, AL-MA'MUN described IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) thus: "His excellences are surpassing, his knowledge is vast, his piety is quite obvious, his asceticism is well-known, his renunciation of the world is apparent...; put simply, he is unique".

Within a few decades, the ABBASIDE rulers had grown so haughty and cruel that people began to realize that they had exceeded the Umayyads in their atrocities. They based their right to rule upon the basis of their blood relationship to the Prophet. But such monarchs never cared to be pious or to do their duty as caliphs. IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) was living in this luxurious environment yet he never indulged himself in it. He repeatedly asserted that mere relationship or lineage was nothing to pride in. It is personal good conduct that matters. It was not a display of humbleness on the part of IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) but a challenge to the anti-Islamic mentality of arrogant ABBASIDE rulers. These demonstrations of simple, compassionate, humane ways of life were very effective as they were now made by an important member of the empire.

IMAM ALI AR-RIDA'S life contains countless anecdotes of this sort. Once a man said to him: "By God, there is none who is superior to you in the nobleness of ancestry". The Imam said to him: "My ancestors are honored merely for their Godliness, piety and worship". Another fellow once declared: "By God, you are the best in the world". The Imam checked him by saying: "Don't you declare an oath. Any man who is more pious than me can be better than me". IBRAHIM IBN AL-ABBAS once related that he heard IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) saying: "I do not consider myself better than this black slave only on account of my relationship with the Prophet. It is only when I do good deeds that I become better in the eyes of God".

Short-sighted people may ascribe this behavior to the Imam's natural humbleness. But the sagacious and learned head of the ABBASIDE Empire surely knew that the Imam's silent behavior and its logic was a fatal blow to the wayward and arrogant ABBASIDE monarchy. He had proclaimed him his heir only as a political measure which he took just to strengthen his regime. Now he felt that if the Imam lived long enough, his life would bring about a popular revolution

which may result in the fall of the empire.

PROPAGATION OF INCIDENTS OF KARBALA'

IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) had now the chance to recite the narration of IMAM HUSAIN'S events. This tradition was initiated by IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-BAQIR (AS) and IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS). But during their time, only those who came to their gatherings respected them as Imams or scholars. IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) was respected both as Imam and heir-apparent. MARW, the capital and central town of Persia, was the meeting place of people from all walks of life and corners of the earth. As soon as the crescent of MUHARRAM was sighted, KARBALA, seminars began. Everybody was expected to recite the sad events that befell the Prophet's descendants and maintain a serious atmosphere of sorrow. He further declared that those who were sympathetic towards the Prophet's Progeny would rise on Doomsday with a composed heart.

It was IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) who called these KARBALA' seminars "MAJALIS". He himself convened those MAJALIS in which he sometimes was the speaker and sometimes as one of the audience. ABDALLAH IBN THABIT and DI'BIL AL-KHUZA'I were the poets whom he ordered to recite poems narrating the tragic events. At the end, he bestowed on DI'BIL a costly shirt. The high-spirited poet refused to accept that precious gift, requesting that the Imam be gracious to grant him his used shirt instead. The good-natured saint insisted on granting him both shirts. This incident proves two things: first, that the speaker must not decide or demand any payment for his address; second, that if the convener presents something as a gift or payment, the speaker may accept it.

DEATH

AL-MA'MUN'S expectation did not materialize. A report says that he decided to put an end to IMAM ALI AR-RIDA'S life by applying the same soundless weapon which had so often been used against these saintly persons. Poisoned grapes were offered to the Imam which ended his life on the 17th of SAFAR 203 A.H. (August 24, 818 A.D.). AL-MA'MUN put on a show of grief and ordered that IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) be buried with the great pomp near the tomb of his own father.

In the sacred city of MESHHEED, the mausoleum of IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) is now a center of religious studies and a mausoleum where kings and commoners come to pay homage. In the same vicinity lies HARUN AR-RASHID, the most distinguished ruler of his time. The visitors do not know who he was nor where his corpse now rests.

The Ninth Imam Muhammad At-Taqi (AS)

NAME AND PARENTAGE

His name is MUHAMMAD; ABU JA'FAR, AT-TAQI and AL-JAWAD are his titles. He is sometimes called ABU JA'FAR II, the first being IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-BAQIR (AS). His father's name is IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS); his respected mother is known as SUBAIK or SUKAINA. He was born in Medina on the 10th of RAJAB 195 A.H. (April 8, 811 A.D.). At that time, AL-AMIN son of HARUN was the monarch of Baghdad.

UPBRINGING AND INSTRUCTION

It is sad story that IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS) had to face series of misfortunes since his early boyhood. For only a very brief peaceful period, he enjoyed the love and availed himself of the teachings of his father. He was five years old when IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) was forced to leave Medina for KHURASAN. The sire never saw his son again since then, for IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) died in MARW three years after this separation. The world duly thought that the young boy would never reach the peaks of knowledge once graced by IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) and sealed by his forefathers, and that the pedestal of knowledge would remain vacant. But the astonishment of people knew no bounds when a few years later, they saw the boy arguing and expostulating with the renowned scholars of FIQH, TAFSIR, and KALAM, and subduing them all in the presence of AL-MU'MUN. They had to confess that God-gifted knowledge never depends on material resources, nor on age.

FIRST JOURNEY TO BAGHDAD

Political exigencies had compelled AL-MA'MUN to cultivate relations with the descendants of IMAM ALI (AS) and Fatima in order to win the support of the SHI'AHs. After all, being a HASHEMITE himself, he was related to them though remotely. So he was aware of the political need of maintaining close relations with them; therefore, at one of the gatherings of heir-apparentship, he married his sister UMM HABIBA to IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) and betrothed his daughter UMM AL-FADL to the son of IMAM AR-RIDA (AS) MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS). He thought those steps would enable him to win over IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) completely.

But AL-MA'MUN soon realized that IMAM AR-RIDA (AS) continued to lead the same simple and saintly life which characterized the descendants of the Prophet. The pattern of his true Islamic life, which was bound to spread the spirit of fraternity and equality, was obviously harmful to AL-MA'MUN monarchy, especially when IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) was now a member of the royal

family. It was at this point that he decided to put an end to the Imam's life. But as he thought it expedient to keep the SHI'AHs and particularly the Persians on his side, he expressed extreme sorrow at IMAM ALI AR-RIDA'S death. This was also necessary to prove that he had no hand in killing him. In order to isolate himself from any suspicion though remote, he summoned AR-RIDA'S son MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS) from Medina to Baghdad to marry him to his daughter UMM AL-FADL although she was already engaged.

OPPOSITIONS

The appointment of IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) as heir-apparent had been an intolerable affair for the ABBASIDES; so, when IMAM AR-RIDA (AS) died, they sighed in relief. They also succeeded in causing AL-MA'MUN to appoint his son Trencherman as his successor who later came to be known as Caliph AL-MU'TASIM BILLAH. During the time of IMAM AR-RIDA'S heir-apparent-ship, the color of the caliph's court and royal robes had been changed from black to green. After the Imam's death, they changed it again to black which signaled the restoration of ABBASIDE traditions. All these steps undertaken by AL-MA'MUN sufficiently satisfied the ABBASIDES who thought that he was acting in accordance with their own desires. But when AL-MA'MUN proclaimed that he was going to marry his daughter to the son of IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS), their tribal attitude was stimulated. They could no longer hide their feelings, and they approached AL-MA'MUN in the form of a delegation. They complained in most obvious words that the favors showered on IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) had grieved them, and that they tolerated it because the Imam could be respected in view of his age, learning and other virtues, and that he deserved those honors only to an extent.

But elevating his son—a raw lad—so much as to prefer him over all other dignitaries and learned scholars did not befit the caliph. Furthermore, the marriage of AL-MA'MUN'S sister the IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) did not prove prosperous. Why did the caliph then wish to offer the hand of the princess to AR-RIDA'S son anyway? AL-MA'MUN told them that AR-RIDA'S son Muhammad was no doubt a boy of tender age, but he had inherited his father's virtues and qualities in full; the learned scholars of the Islamic world could not vie with him, and that if they doubted, they could put the said boy to test. This reply, though totally said in jest, amounted to a challenge. Impulse by AL-MA'MUN'S taunt, they consented to judge the boy's knowledge in contest with the most learned authority of Baghdad then, namely YAHYA IBN AKTHAM. AL-MA'MUN convened a magnificent gathering for this open expostulation. There was anxiety to see this unequal match where a boy of eight was to contend with the seasoned and renowned Chief Justice of the land. People crowded from every quarter. Historians have recorded that apart from dignitaries and nobles, 900 seats were reserved only for scholars. AL-MA'MUN'S reign was described as the golden age of learning; experts of every trade and profession had assembled in that great capital from every corner of the world.

AL-MA'MUN had a carpet laid by the side of his throne to seat IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS). In front of him was accommodated the Chief Justice YAHYA IBN AKTHAM. There was pin drop silence among the audience who waited to hear the arguments. Silence was broken by YAHYA who said: "Will His Majesty allow me to put some questions to MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI?" AL-MA'MUN answered; "You may seek that permission from MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI himself. YAHYA (to MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI): "Do you allow me to put some problem?" MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI: "Yes you may ask whatever you please". YAHYA: "What is the atonement for a person who hunts a game while he is dressed in the pilgrimage garb?" The question itself indicated that YAHYA underestimated the scholarly attainments of his opponent. During with the pride of position and knowledge, he thought that the young boy might well be aware of simple daily routine problems of prayer or fasting, but the possibility that he might be totally ignorant of the statues of pilgrimage or of the atonements of the sins or mistakes committed by a pilgrim never entertained his mind.

The sagacious, young Imam was clever enough for the old seasoned inquirer. Instead of giving a general or a vague reply, he analyzed the different aspects of the problem so dexterously that the audience immediately had a true estimate of the Imam's knowledge and of YAHYA'S shallow-mindedness. YAHYA, too, was puzzled and felt humiliated when the Imam addressed him thus:

"Your question is utterly vague and lacks definition. You should first clarify whether the game killed was outside the sanctified area or inside it; whether the hunter was aware of his sin or did so in ignorance; did he kill the game purposely or by mistake; was the hunter a slave or a free man; was he adult or a minor; did he commit the sin fro the first time or had he done so before; was the hunted game a bird or something else; was it a small animal or a big one; is the sinner sorry for the misdeed or does he insist on it; did he kill it secretly at night or openly during daylight; was he putting on the pilgrimage grab for HAJJ or for the 'UMRA?! Unless you clarify and define these aspects, how can you have a definite answer?" Whatever YAHYA'S knowledge might have been, he was undoubtedly a well-read man in jurisprudence. While the Imam was unfolding all such details of the problem, he had judged that he was no match for his ingenious opponent. His lips were sealed and he made no reply. AL-MA'MUN fully assessed his condition and thought it was useless to put any further pressure on him. He, rather, requested IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS) to solve all the aspects of the question one by one so that the listeners might gain knowledge. The Imam, in spite of his young age, explained the various aspects of the question. YAHYA, silent and puzzled, gazed at the Imam. But AL-MA'MUN was bent on carrying the matter to its very extreme. He, therefore, requested the Imam to put some questions to YAHYA if he liked. The Imam accordingly said; "May I ask you a question?" Disillusioned YAHYA who now had a correct estimate of the Imam's capacity and had now no misunderstanding about himself, said in a humble tone: "Your grace can ask; I shall reply if I can or I shall get it solved by your own self". Then the Imam put up a question in reply to which YAHYA admitted his ignorance. The Imam explained it too. AL-MA'MUN'S joy knew no bounds. What he had asserted came true. Addressing

the audience, he said: "Did I not tell you that this Progeny has been gifted by God with limitless knowledge? None can cope with even the children of this elevated House".

The excitement of the gathering was great: all unanimously exclaimed that AL-MA'MUN'S guess was correct and that IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS) was a matchless person. AL-MA'MUN then thought it advisable to marry his daughter to IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS) there and then. The Imam recited the marriage sermon in person. This address, as a remembrance, is being recited at weddings everywhere throughout the Muslim world ever since. Overjoyed at this auspicious occasion, AL-MA'MUN displayed his full generosity, giving away millions in charity to the poor. Common people were favored with regards to the grants.

RETURN TO MEDINA

For one year after the marriage, IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS) lived in Baghdad. Then AL-MA'MUN allowed him to return to Medina with his daughter UMM AL-FADL surrounded with great pomp.

CHARACTER AND VIRTUES

IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS) occupied the highest position in human virtues and moral attainments as this was the marked feature of the Prophet's family. To meet everyone humbly, fulfill the needs of the poor, maintain Islamic equality and simplicity, help the destitute secretly, treat even the foes fairly, extend hospitality, impart knowledge to the scholars of religion and the like were all the occupations that marked his saintly life - in full conformity with other members of this sacred series of Infallibles.

Common people who could not appreciate such heights of moral excellence, might have thought that the new relationship; i.e. to become son-in-law of the most influential monarch of his time, must influence the pattern of life of the Imam and change his manners altogether. AL-MA'MUN, too, might have thought on the same lines because spiritualism which was the chief characteristic of this Progeny was against the practices of worldly rulers. Neither the Umayyads nor the Abbasides had any personal grudge against the Prophet or his progeny, but they were at war with the moral standards set by them. They always tried to destroy that center of moral excellence and human values which shone as the polar star of ideal spiritual perfection, overshadowing their royal glory.

In order to uphold their imperialistic and luxurious norms of life, these monarchs wanted to do away with these Godly saints who demonstrated righteousness, compassion, faith, piety, fraternity and justice as the main teachings of Islam. Yazid's demanding obeisance from Imam Husain (AS) or Al-Ma'mun's appointment of Imam Ali ar-Rida (AS) as his heir-apparent were

two different aspects of the same phenomenon. The procedures were different but the purpose was the same. IMAM HUSAIN (AS) did not bow to pay homage, so he was slain in the battlefield. IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) did not serve the cause of ABBASIDE imperialism, so he was silenced with poison.

AL-MA'MUN, however, took it as a great opportunity to serve his objectives to patronize IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS), a lad of eight who was separated from the parental care three years earlier. The political sagacity suggested that it would be by far easier to cast a young boy into the desired mould and thus it would be possible to demolish the center of the Prophet's teaching in Medina which, although working silently, was dangerous to the imperialistic designs of the antithesis called Muslim monarchy.

No doubt IMAM AR-RIDA (AS) did not conform to AL-MA'MUN'S designs, nor to his desires, but this could not disappoint him. AR-RIDA'S mature way of thinking and simple norm of life could not be changed. But there was the hope that in all probability a tender boy, who was brought up in the luxurious atmosphere of a royal palace, would grow into an ambitious, merry-making prince - altogether against his ancestral ways and views. With the exception of a few enlightened persons, everybody would think on the same lines. But the world stood aghast to see that the young son-in-law of the most distinguished monarch of his time refused to stay in the royal palace and lived instead in a rented house, thus maintaining his ancestral anti-monarchical manners of a simple and humble life.

It is usually seen that if the bride's people are comparatively rich, they wish that the groom might live with them; if not in the same house, at least in the same town. The will-power of the Imam can be judged from the fact that he lived in a separate dwelling. And after one year, when AL-MA'MUN perceived that his son-in-law was not pleased with staying in Baghdad, he had to allow the Imam to go to Medina with UMM AL-FADL. On his return to Medina, he maintained the same ancestral, unimposing behavior: no body-guards, no pomp, no restrictions, no visiting times, no discrimination. He spent most of his time sitting at the Prophet's Mosque, where Muslims came to avail from his preaching. The narrators of HADITH and other students of theology came to inquire about religious sciences, and the Imam guided them by explaining every complicated matter. All the world saw that IMAM JA'FAR'S successor, seated on the same mat, was guiding the people towards faith and piety.

IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS) allowed the same amount of freedom to his wife UMM AL-FADL and imposed the same restriction on her as his ancestors had done in the case of their wives. He did not care much about the fact that UMM AL-FADL was a princess. Although she lived with him, he married another lady who was a descendant of AMMAR IBN YASIR. God had intended to continue the line of Imamate through her, and she gave birth to IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS), the tenth Imam. UMM AL-FADL complained about this to her father. Surely this would have

passed heavily on AL-MA'MUN'S heart but he could not interfere in the matter and he wrote back to his daughter saying; "Do not make such complaints to me in future. I cannot stop IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS) from those things which God has made lawful".

There are precedents, no doubt, that in view of the high personal virtues of a woman, her husband does not marry another lady. For example, while KHADIJA lived, the holy Prophet did not marry any other wife. Similarly, Imam Ali (as) married no other woman during the life-time of FATIMA AZ-ZAHRA'. But the same distinction could not be given to the daughter of a king because it was against the spirit of Islam which the Prophet's descendants were to preserve.

PUBLIC GUIDANCE

IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI'S speech was very charming and effective. Once during the HAJJ season he addressed a gathering of Muslims and stated the commandments of the Divine Law of SHARI'AH. The audience included learned scholars who admitted that they had never heard such a comprehensive speech.

During the days of IMAM AR-RIDA (AS), there was a group which believed that the Imamate had come to an end with IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS). They were called the WAQFIYYA. IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS) instructed them so nicely that they gave up their wrong beliefs. Nobody of that creed persisted in adhering to such beliefs as long as the Imam lived. Many scholars came to learn the teachings of AHL AL-BAYT (AS). A collection of brief and wise saying is also left by him, resembling and ranking in wisdom next to the saying of his ancestor IMAM ALI IBN ABU TALIB (AS). Some profound discourses on theology and monotheism are also to his credit.

JOURNEY TO BAGHDAD

AL-MA'MUN died in 218 A.H. (833 A.D). He was succeeded by his brother MU'TAMAN, the second heir-apparent after IMAM AR-RIDA (AS). He came to be known as AL-MU'TASIM BI ALLAH AL-ABBASI. His niece UMM AL-FADL now began to send him more complaining letters than she did during the days of her father. As AL-MA'MUN had given her in marriage to IMAM AT-TAQI (AS) in spite of the opposition by all the tribe, he paid no attention to her letters. Rather, he silenced her with disappointing replies. But AL-MU'TASIM was jealous of IMAM AR-RIDA (AS). He had also led the opposition in the matter of IMAM AT-TAQI'S marriage with his niece.

AL-MU'TASIM now got a chance to settle his difference in this matter. IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI'S fame as a great scholar and people's gathering around him, as well as the fame of his world-renown noble character, annoyed him. The failure of the political tactics, too, intensified his resentment. All these factors irritated him into enmity. In the second year of his reign he summoned IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS) from Medina to Baghdad, writing to the governor

of Medina expressly in this regard. IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS) was compelled to set out for Baghdad leaving his son IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) with his mother in Medina.

DEATH

For one year after IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI'S arrival in Baghdad, AL-MU'TASIM inflicted no harm on him. But the Imam's stay in Baghdad was a forcible act which can be called plain custody. Thereafter he was killed with the very same soundless weapon which was quite frequently used against his ancestors. He died of poison on the 29th of THU AL-QI'DA 220 A.H. (November 24, 835 A.D.) and was buried near his grandfather IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS). It is due to these two saints' tombs that the place is called KAZIMAIN (the two KAZIMS, enduring ones).

RADAWI SAYYIDS

It is a fact all the SAYYIDS known as RADAWI are actually TAQAWI. IMAM AR-RIDA (AS) had no son other than IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS). Had he had other sons, their offspring would call themselves RADAWIS. IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS) being his only son, his offspring ought to be called TAQAWIS. But as IMAM AR-RIDA (AS) had been famous as the heir-apparent of AL-MA'MUN, his descendants wish to be introduced as RADAWIS.

The Tenth Imam Ali An-Naqi (AS)

NAME AND PARENTAGE

His name Ali is usually suffixed by his titles ABU AL-HASAN and AN-NAQI. As both IMAM ALI AL-MURTADA and IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) were also called ABU AL-HASAN, IMAM ALI AN-NABI is known as ABU AL-HASAN III. His mother's name is SUMANA KHATUN.

BIRTH AND UPBRINGING

He was born on the 5th of RAJAB of 214 A.H. (September 8, 829 A.D.) in Medina. He enjoyed the love of his father IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS) for only six years because his father had then to leave for Baghdad where he died on the 29th of THU AL-QI'DA 220 A.H. (November 24, 835 A.D) and the responsibilities of Imamate devolved on his young son's shoulders. Providence was the only tutor and instructor that reared and raised him to the extreme height of learning.

CHANGES OF REGIME

IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) was still young when the ABBASIDE ruler AL-MU'TASIM died. He was succeeded by AL-WATHIQ BI ALLAH who died in 236 A.H. Then came to the throne AL-MUTAWAKKIL, the most cruel and deadly enemy of AHL AL-BAYT (AS). He died in 250 A.H. (864 A.D.) and AL-MUNTASIR BI ALLAH assumed the caliphate. He reigned for any six months. On his death, AL-MUSTAIN was enthroned. The latter had to pant with his crown as well as his head when he was beheaded in 253 A.H. (867 A.D.). He was succeeded by AL-MU'TAZZ BI ALLAH during whose regime IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) died.

HARDSHIPS AND MISFORTUNES

AL-MU'TASIM remained preoccupied with was against the BYZANTINIANS and also with the troubles created by the ABBASIDE tribesmen in Baghdad. Anyway, he did not harass the young Imam who carried out his responsibilities peacefully. After him, AL-WATHIQ BI ALLAH too, treated him fairly. But when the latter was succeeded by his brother AL-MUTAWAKKIL son of AL-MU'TASIM, the period of persecution and misfortune began on full scale. This ruler exceeded all his predecessors in bearing animosity towards AHL AL-BAYT (AS).

During the 16 years of his Imamate, IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) had become famous throughout the Islamic world. Those who loved to learn the teachings of AHL AL-BAYT (AS) always flocked around him. In the 4th year of AL-MUTAWAKKIL'S reign, the governor of Medina, ABDALLAH IBN HAKIM, started harassing the Imam. After persecuting him personally, he sent hostile reports against him to Baghdad. He wrote the central government saying that he Imam was assembling apparatuses of kingdom and that his followers were in such numbers that he could rise against the government whenever he wished.

IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) became aware of such antagonism in sufficient time. In order to counteract, he too wrote a letter to AL-MUTAWAKKIL explaining the personal enmity the lying governor had borne against him. As a political step, AL-MUHAWAKKIL was quick to dismiss the governor. At the same time he sent a regiment under the command of YAHYA IBN HARTHAMA who explained to the imam in a friendly way that the caliph wished him to stay in the capital for a few days and then go back to Medina.

The Imam knew well the motives behind this request. He knew that the polite invitation actually meant his banishment from his ancestral city. But to refuse was useless, as it would involve a forcible departure later. Leaving the sacred city was as painful to him as it had been for his respected forefathers viz. IMAM HUSAIN (AS) IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS), IMAM ALI AR-RIDA (AS) and MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS). This type of harassment had almost become a heritage. Still

the observers stated that leaving that native place was so heavy on his heart that friends and followers were shocked to see his plight. AL-MUTAWAKKIL'S letter to the Imam was full of respect and endearment. The military detachment sent to escort him as retinue or body-guards was actually a deceitful show.

So when the Imam reached SAMARRA (SURRA MAN RA'A), and AL-MUTAWAKKIL was informed, he neither arranged for his reception nor for his stay. He ordered to accommodate him in a wilderness where the city's beggars usually dwelt. Although the Prophet's descendants gladly associated with the poor and the destitute, and they did not covet luxurious living, AL-MUTAWAKKIL meant to thus insult the Imam who stayed there for three days; thereafter, AL-MUTAWAKKIL handed him over to the custody of his secretary RAZAQI, and prohibited his meeting with others.

It has been seen that during the imprisonment of IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS), his moral charm had softened the stone hearts of the guards. In the same way, RAZAQI also was impressed by the greatness of IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) and he began to provide for his comfort. This leniency could not remain hidden from AL-MUTAWAKKIL who transferred the Imam to the custody of SA'ID, a cruel and ruthless man in whose imprisonment he spent full twelve years. In spite of all the hardships he had to suffer there, he passed all his time worshipping his Maker. He fasted during the day and prayed during the night. Although confined within the four walls of a dark dungeon cell, his fame was on the wing. It was known in every house of SAMARRA', rather throughout Iraq. Millions hated the cruel who had put such a man of noble character in prison.

AL-FADL IBN KHAQAN, a lover of the Prophet's Progeny, had risen to the post of Minister in the cabinet of AL-MUTAWAKKIL solely by virtue -of his intellectual and administrative merits. On his recommendation, AL-MUTAWAKKIL ordered that the Imam's imprisonment be changed to house arrest. He granted him a piece of land and allowed him to build his house and live in it. But he was forbidden from leaving SAMARRA'. SA'ID was directed to keep a close watch on his movements, contacts and correspondence.

During this period, too, IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) set an admirable example of trust in God, ignoring all worldly gains. In spite of permanent residence in the capital, he neither made a protest to the caliph, nor did he ever ask him for a favor. The same worshipping and hermit-like life that he led during his imprisonment was passed in confinement as well. The tyrant had changed his behavior but the saint had maintained his own. Even in such circumstances, he was not allowed to live peacefully. He was not harassed physically but psychologically. His house was searched for arms or dissenting correspondence undermining the position of the government. Such an act is certainly painful for a man of an innocent and noble character.

To top all this, the Imam was once summoned to the royal palace where the cups of wine were in

rotation. Surrounded by his courtiers, AL-MUTAWAKKIL was very much given to merry-making, so much so that in the excess of vanity and lewdness, that arrogant and shameless ruler handed the cup of wine to the Imam and asked him to drink. This order was surely more painful than a thousand strokes of the sword, but the guardian of faith said with unruffled dignity: "Spare me this order, for the flesh and blood of my forefathers and my own have never mixed with wine". Had there been a slight sense of faith in AL-MUTAWAKKIL,

he would have been impressed by the dignity of this saintly reply. But he was dead to such a feeling; he therefore said: "Well, if you do not like it, then sing a song for us". The Imam replied: "I do not know that art, either". At last the haughty monarch said: "You shall have to recite a few verses of poetry, then, in any tone you like". This crude and ridiculous behavior would have maddened any ordinary person, but the dignified Imam remained undisturbed and sought to do what he was compelled to. He turned the ruler's order for recitation of poetry into an opportunity for preaching, and he recited the following verses with a firm and impressive tone:

The glories of our blood and stat,
Are shadows, not substantial things.
There is no armor against the fate;
Death lays its icy hand on kings.
Scepter and crown
Must tumble down.
And in the earth be equal made
With the laborer's scythe and spade.
No fortress on the mountain peak
Could save the kings from the jaws of death.
Their pomp and power proved too weak;
The cold earth asks them in contempt;
"Whither is the robe, the crown, the throne?!"
"Did cruel Death thy beauty exempt?!"
"Did it respect thy royal blood and bone?!"
The grave replies
With sorrowful sight:
"Those beautiful forms
"Are but food for the worms!"

Having heard these lines recited by the Imam so profoundly, the gathering became spell-bound. The drunkards making merry just a moment before now burst into tears. Even the proud king began to weep and wail. As soon as he recovered a bit, he allowed the Imam to go home.

Another event that caused a great deal of unrest to him was the oppressive order of AL-

MUTAWAKKIL forbidding the public from visiting KARBALA, and NAJAF. Throughout his territories ran the order that people should not go to visit the tombs of Imam Ali (as) and IMAM HUSAIN (AS). Anybody disobeying this order would do so under the penalty of death. He further ordered that the buildings in NAJAF and KARBALA' be leveled to the ground, that all the mausoleums be razed and all the land around IMAM HUSAIN'S tomb be ploughed. It was not, however, possible to stop the fond lovers of AHL AL-BAYT (AS) from visiting those holy shrines. They disobeyed, and thousands of them were put to death indiscriminately. No doubt the Imam was as sorry for each one of them as he could have been on the death of a near relative of his. Due to this oppressive and choking environment, he could not even preach or convey to the faithful the necessary instructions. This sorrowful situation lasted till AL-MUTAWAKKIL'S death.

In the court of AL-MUTAWAKKIL, IMAM ALI IBN ABU TALIB (AS) was mimicked and mocked by the buffoons while AL-MUTAWAKKIL and his courtiers burst into laughter. It was such an insulting scene that once AL-MUTAWAKKIL'S son could not help protesting and saying: "It was somewhat tolerable if you spoke ill of Imam Ali (as) yourself, but since you yourself say that he was related to you, how do you suffer these wretched buffoons to mock him?" instead of being sorry, AL-MUTAWAKKIL jested with his son and composed two couplets abusive of his mother which he instructed the singers to sing. They used to sing those lines while AL-MUTAWAKKIL laughed heartily.

Another event of those wretched times is equally painful. IBN AS-SAKKIT of Baghdad, the acknowledged scholar of lexicography and syntax, was the tutor of AL-MUTAWAKKIL'S son. One day the cruel ruler asked him: "Are my two sons more respectable than HASAN and HUSAIN (AS)?" IBN AS-SAKKIT was a lover of AHL AL-BAYT. On this question, he could not control his feelings and flatly replied: "Not to speak of HASAN and HUSAIN (AS), Imam Ali's slave QANBAR is more respectable than both of your sons". Hearing these words, AL-MUTAWAKKIL flew into a passion and ordered that IBN AS-SAKKIT'S tongue be cut off. The order was carried out immediately leading to the death of one of the lovers of the Prophet's Progeny. IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) was not physically connected with these events.

But each of these was like a blow of the sword, not striking his neck but torturing his soul. AL-MUTAWAKKIL'S cruelties caused common hatred and even his own children set their hearts against him. One of them, AL-MUNTASIR, conspired with his chief slave BAQIR AR-RUMI to murder AL-MUTAWAKKIL while the latter was asleep, using his own sword, thus the world heard a sigh of relief; the death of the tyrant and the caliphate of AL-MUNTASIR were proclaimed. After assuming the throne, AL-MUNTASIR revoked the unjust orders of his father. Visiting the shrines of NAJAF and KARBALA' was permitted without any restriction. The tombs received minor repairs. AL-MUNTASIR'S conduct towards IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) was fair. But his life proved to be short and he died after a brief rule of only six months. After him, AL-MUSTA'SIM too displayed no maltreatment of the Imam.

As stated, IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) had built a house in SAMARRA' and did not go back to Medina either out of his own free will or under the orders of these rulers. Due to his continued stay there and the lack of interference by the regime, the students of the teachings of AHL AL-BAYT (AS) thronged around them. This alarmed AL-MU'TAZZ who put an end to his life.

CHARACTER AND VIRTUES

IMAM ALI AN-NAQI'S conduct and moral excellence were the same as those displayed by each and every member of this sacred series of Infallibles. Imprisonment, confinement or freedom, in every case these sacred souls were engaged in worship and in helping the poor. Totally refraining from desire, greed or worldly ambitions, they lived dignified in misfortune; to deal fairly even with the foes and to help the destitute were the qualities making their conduct. The same virtues were reflected in the life of IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) as well.

During imprisonment, the Imam had a grave dug ready by the side of his prayer-mat. Some visitors expressed their apprehension or surprise. The Imam explained: "In order to remember my end, I keep the grave before my eyes". Be it so, but in reality it was a silent, un-worded protest against those cruel rulers who wanted the Imam to give up his pure Islamic teachings. It was a negation of their demand of obeisance. It showed that the worldly rulers who can frighten common men with death can never bend a saint who is himself ready to embrace death at any moment. In spite of this fearlessness, he never took part in any secret or subversive activity against the government. Living permanently in a capital where daily conspiracies were sapping the roots of the ABBASIDE regime, he could never be accused of treason by the strong secret intelligence of those kings.

Can you imagine the extent of the political turmoil of those unstable days? AL-MUTAWAKKIL was opposed by his own son AL-MUNTASIR and he ended in being slain by his own slave BAQIR AR-RUMI. After AL-MUNTASIR'S death, the court nobility decided to take away the government from the ruling dynasty. The regime of AL-MUSTA'IN was troubled by the uprising of YAHYA IBN UMER IBN YAHYA IBN ZAID AL-'ALAWI in KUFA, and by the occupation of TABARISTAN by HASAN IBN ZAID (titled DA'I AL-HAQQ) and his establishment of a permanent government there; the revolt of the Turk slaves in SAMARRA' and AL-MUSTA'IN'S flight to Baghdad to take refuge in its fort, and in the end his compulsory abdication and his murder by AL-MU'TAZZ; the BYZANTINE aggression during the reign of AL-MU'TAZZ who feared the danger of his own brother; MUAYYAD'S demise; MUWAFFAQ'S imprisonment in Basra - it was a continuous chain of chaos of which an opportunist could easily take advantage.

But IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) could not be suspected even of taking part in any of these temporal struggles for power. A common opportunity seeker, excited by greed or revenge will always take

arms against a regime which not only harassed him but also exiled, insulted and imprisoned him. Yet, these sacred souls considered it below their spotless honor and mountain-high dignity to partake in those vainglorious bids for power. They looked down upon all these struggles and always rose above the vile level of temporal temptations, declaring that all such acts were below them and their standard of virtue.

DEATH

The Imam died during the reign of AL-MU'TAZZ BI ALLAH in SAMARRA' on the 3rd of RAJAB 254 A.H. (June 28, 868 A.D.). He was attended only by his son IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI who led the funeral prayers and arranged his burial, laying him to rest in his personal apartment. Now high stands his mausoleum which is being visited daily tens of thousands of pilgrims from all over the world.

The Eleventh Imam Hasan Al-'Askari (AS)

NAME AND PARENTAGE

His name is AL-HASAN, ABU MUHAMMAD. Being a resident of 'ASKARI, a suburb of SAMARRA', he is titled AL-'ASKARI. His father was IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) and his mother was SALIL KHATUN, an ideal woman in piety, worship, chastity and generosity. He was born in Medina on the tenth of RABI' AL-AKHIR, 232, A.H. (December 4, 846 A.D.)

UPBRINGING AND INSTRUCTION

He lived under the care of his respected father up to the age of 11. Then his father had to leave for SAMARRA' and he was to accompany him and thus share the hardships of the journey with the family. At SAMARRA', he passed his time with his father either in imprisonment or in partial freedom. He had, however, the chance to benefit from his father's teaching and instruction.

IMAMATE

His father died in 254 A.H. (868 A.D.) when he himself was twenty-two. Four months before his death, the father declared his son to be his successor and executor of his will, asking his followers to bear witness to the fact. Thus the responsibilities of Imamate were vested upon him which he

fulfilled even in the face of great difficulties and hostile environment.

BEHAVIOR OF CONTEMPORARY KINGS

As stated above, it is peculiar to IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS) that he partook in all misfortunes and hardships suffered by his father, whether imprisonment or confinement. In the early days of his Imamate, AL-MU'TAZZ AL-ABBASI was the caliph. When the latter was deposed, he was succeeded by AL-MUHTADI. After his brief reign of only eleven months and one week, AL-MU'TAMAD came to the throne. During their regimes, IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS) did not enjoy peace at all. Although the ABBASIDE dynasty was involved in constant complications and disorders, each and every king thought it necessary to keep the Imam imprisoned.

One of the holy Prophet's traditions ran that the Prophet would be succeeded by twelve princes, the last of whom would be the MAHDI, QA'IN ALLI MUHAMMAD. The ABBASIDES knew well that the true successors of the Prophet were these very Imams. AL-HASAN (AS) being the eleventh of this series, his son would surely be the 12th or the last. They, therefore, tried to put an end to his life in such a way which would ensure that there would be nobody to succeed him. Therefore the simple confinement inflicted on IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) was considered inadequate for IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS),

so he was imprisoned, away from his family. No doubt the revolutionary intervals between two regimes gave him brief periods of freedom. Yet as soon as the new king came to the throne, he followed his predecessor's policy and imprisoned the Imam again. The Imam's brief life, therefore, was mostly spent inside dungeon cells.

The hardship of imprisonment reached its extremity during the reign of AL-MU'TAMAD, although the latter knew the rank and righteousness of the Imam as did all other preceding rulers. Once during a devastating drought, a Christian hermit was able to demonstrate that he could bring rain whenever he prayed to God. This led many Muslims to convert to Christianity. In order to save Islam from this calamity, IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS) was brought out of jail. He noticed how that Christian hermit raised his hands in prayers, and how as soon as he did so rain started pouring down. Approaching him, the Imam opened the Christian's hand and took away from it a piece of bone the hermit was holding. Turning to the crowd, the Imam explained that it was that piece of bone,

not the Christian that caused the rain to pour. He told them that that piece of bone belonged to the corpse of one of the Prophets of God, and he proved his point upon raising it himself in his hand, and upon doing so, lo, rain started pouring down again, as if the skies were weeping for the prophet. The Imam thus removed the common doubts from the hearts of the people and kept them firmly on Islam. AL-MU'TAMAD was so impressed that he felt too ashamed to send the

Imam back to prison; so, he put him under house arrest instead. Complete freedom, however, was not granted.

APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTIES

Under all circumstances, the Imams carried out their duties of guiding the people. IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS) was subjected to numerous restrictions, so much so that those who sought to learn the teachings of AHL AL-BAYT (AS) and their SHI'AH point of view could not reach him. In order to solve this problem, the Imam appointed certain confidants as his deputies in view of their knowledge of jurisprudence. These persons satisfied the curiosity of inquirers as much as they could. But if they could not solve certain theological problems, they would keep them pending the acquisition of their solutions from the imam whenever they got the opportunity to see him. Of course the visit to the imam by a few individuals could be allowed by the government but certainly not by groups who wished to see the Imam on a regular basis.

The KHUMS (1/5 of total savings) which was being paid to the Imams by the believers who cherished these Imams and regarded them as representatives of the Divine Law was spent by these sacred saints on religious matters, and to sustain the Prophet's descendants. This KHUMS was now secretly collected by these deputies who spent it according to the directives of the Imam. They accordingly were in constant danger of being identified as such by the government's secret intelligence service. In order to divert this danger, UTHMAN IBN SA'ID and his son ABU JA'FAR MUHAMMAD, two prominent deputies of the Imam in the capital Baghdad, ran a big shop trading in oils. This provided them with free contact with the concerned people. It was thus that even under the very thumb of the tyrant regime that those devotees managed to run the system of the Divine Law unsuspected.

CHARACTER AND VIRTUES

IMAM HASAN AL'ASKARI (AS) was one of that illustrious series of the immaculate Infallibles each member of whom displayed the moral excellence of human perfection. He was peerless in knowledge, forbearance, forgiveness, generosity, sacrifice and piety. Whenever AL-MU'TAMAD asked anybody about his captive IMAM HASAN AL'ASKARI (AS), he was told that the Imam fasted during the day and worshipped during the night, and that his tongue uttered no word but remembrance of his maker. During the brief periods of freedom and stay at home, people approached him hoping to avail from his benevolence, and they went back well rewarded. Once when the ABBASIDE caliph asked AHMED IBN ABDALLAH IBN KHAQAN, his Minister for Charities (AWQAF), about the descendants of Imam Ali (as), he reported: "I do not know anybody among them who is more distinguished than HASAN AL-ASKARI.

None can surpass him in dignity, knowledge, piety and abstinence, nor can anybody match him in

the point of nobleness, majestic grandeur, modesty and honesty".

When his father IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) died and the family was busy arranging his burial, some servants stole certain articles, thinking that none would notice it. When the burial was over, he called the servants and said: "I ask you about some items; if you tell me the truth, I shall pardon you; but if you speak falsely, I shall get all those items from your possession and punish you fully". Then he asked each for the items he had stolen. When they confessed their guilt, he got the articles back from them and spared them the penalty.

AS CENTER OF LEARNING

IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS) had a brief span of life, only twenty-eight years, but even in this short period, which was ruffled by a chain of troubles and tribulations, several high ranking scholars benefited from his ocean of knowledge. He also stemmed the flood of atheism and disbelief which ensued from the philosophers of that age, winning conspicuous success over them. One of those was ISHAQ AL-KINDI. He was writing a book on what he called "self-contradictions" in the holy QUR'AN. When the news reached the Imam, he waited for an opportunity to refute and rebut him. By chance, some of ISHAQ'S students came to him. The imam asked them: "Is there anyone among you who can stop ISHAQ from wasting his time in this useless effort fighting the holy QUR'AN?" The students said: "Sir, we are his students; how can we object to his teaching?" The Imam urged that they could at least convey to their teacher what he had to tell them. They replied that they would be ready to cooperate as much as they could in that respect.

The Imam then recited a few verses from the holy QUR'AN which the philosopher thought as contradictory of one another. He then explained to them thus: "Your teacher thinks that some of the words in these verses have only one meaning. But according to the Arabic tongue, these words have other meanings too which, when taken into consideration, indicate no contradiction in the overall meaning. Thus, your teacher is not justified for basing his objections and claim of contradictions on the premises of the 'wrong meaning' he himself selects for such verses". He then put up some examples of such words before them so clearly that the students conceived the whole discussion and the precedents of more than one meaning.

When these students visited ISHAQ AL-KINDI, and after routine talk, reproduced the disputed points, he was surprised. He was a fair-minded scholar and he listened to his students' explanations. Then he said: "What you have argued is above your capacity; tell me truly who has taught you these points?" The students said that it was their own reflection, but when he insisted that they could never have conceived those points, they admitted that it was explained to them by ABU MUHAMMAD IMAM AL-'ASKARI (AS). The instructor said: "Yes, this level of knowledge is the heritage of that House, and only that House". Then he asked the students to set fire to all such

works of his. This and so many other religious services were performed silently by the Prophet's descendants. The ABBASIDE dynasty, which unfairly claimed to be "the defender of the faith", was deeply drunk with lustful merriment. Had it ever come to its senses, it would not have thought that those sincere and saintly souls were a "danger" to its power. Therefore, it gave orders to put some more restrictions on them. IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS), that mountain of dignity, bore all this with determined fortitude.

IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS) was a reliable authority for traditionalists who have recorded several traditions in their collections on his own authority. One tradition about drinking runs thus: "The wine drinker is like an idolater". It has been recorded by IBN AL-JAWZI in his book TAHRIM AL-KAMR (prohibition of wine drinking) with continuous chain of references tracing its narrators. ABU NA'IM FADL IBN WAKI states that the tradition is true as it has been narrated by the Prophet's descendants and some of his companions such as IBN ABBAS, ABU HURAYRA, ANAS, ABDALLAH IBN 'AWF AL-ASLAMI and others.

SAM'ANI in his KITAB AL-ANSAB states that "ABU MUHAMMAD AHMED IBN IBRAHIM IBN HASHIM AL-'ALAWI AL-BALATHIRI heard many traditions in Mecca from the Imam of AHL AL-BAYT (AS) IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS) and recorded them". The names of some of his prominent students who, availing of his discourses, speeches and addresses, became authors of some books, are given here:

1- ABU HASHIM DAWUD IBN AL-QASIM AL-JA'FARI, one of the deputies of the imam, was a scholar of advanced age. He acquired learning from IMAM AR-RIDA (AS), his son IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS), his son IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) and his son IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS).

2- DAWUD IBN ABU ZAID AL-NAYSHABURI. He often visited IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) and IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS).]

3- ABU TAHIR MUHAMMAD IBN ALI IBN BILAL.

4- ABU AL-ABBAS ABDALLAH IBN JA'FAR AL-HUMAIRI AL-QUMMI. He was a scholar of a high caliber. He authored many books including QURB AL-ASNAD which is a major source of AL-KAFI, etc.

5- MUHAMMAD IBN AHMED IBN JA'FAR AL-QUMMI was the Imam's chief deputy.

6- JA'FAR IBN SUHAIL SAIQAL was one of the most distinguished deputies.

7- MUHAMMAD IBN AL-HASAN AS-SAFFAR AL-QUMMI. He was high ranking scholar, author of several books including BASA'IR AD-DARAJAT, a famous book. He sent written inquiries to the

Imam and received their answers from him.

8- ABU JA'FAR HAMANI AL-BARMAKI; he obtained written answers to his questions in jurisprudence from the Imam and compiled a book.

9- IBRAHIM IBN ABU HAFS ABU ISHAQ AL-KATIB is a companion of the Imam and author of a book.

10- IBRAHIM IBN MEHR-YAR. He has a book to his credit.

11- AHMED IBN IBRAHIM IBN ISAM'IL IBN DAWUD IBN HAMDAN AL-KATIB AL-NADIM. He was an authority on literature and lexicography, author of many books, and a confidant of the Imam.

12- AHMED IBN ISHAQ AL-ASH'ARI, ABU ALI AL-QUMMI was an acknowledged scholar and author of several books including HILAL AS-SAWM, etc. These are but a few names; the details of all the students and companions' would require a whole volume. ABU ALI AL-HASAN IBN KHALID IBN MUHAMMAD prepared a commentary of the holy QUR'AN which should be considered the work of the Imam himself. The Imam used to dictate its contents and ABU ALI went on writing down his dictation. Scholars indicate that the book consisted of 1,920 pages.

Unfortunately, these storehouses of knowledge are not available. A book recently published under the title TAFSIR AL-HASAN AL-'ASKARI is a separate work which was traced and rendered to the 4th century A.H. SHAIKH AS-SADUQ MUHAMMAD IBN ALI IBN BABAWAIH AL-QUMMI says it was actually dictated by the Imam. But the SHAIKH'S sources from which he copied are obscure. The biographers are not, however, sure in ascribing it to the Imam and we are inclined to think that it is not the Imam's dictation. A considerable collection of his wise sayings, discourses and speeches, and a lengthy letter to ISHAQ IBN ISMA'IL AL-ASH'ARI have been preserved in the book TUHAF AL-'UQUL' AN 'AL AR-RASUL, an excellent source of knowledge for the seekers of enlightenment.

These are the details of the Imam's scholarly attainments, a wonderful performance when one reflects on the fact that he died at the young age of twenty-eight, having served as Imam for only six years, a period constantly disturbed by the troubles already stated above.

DEATH

A busy man who is engaged in the service of religion and scholarship usually does not have time for politics or subversive activities. But the Imam's spiritual supremacy and his increasing popularity made him intolerable to his contemporary monarchs. AL-MU'TAMAD, the ABBASIDE ruler, administered his poisoning and the Imam martyred on the 8th of RABI' AL-AWWAL, 260 A.H. (January 1, 874 A.D.) and was buried in SAMARRA' by his father's side. His mausoleum in spite of

hostile circumstances has been a sacred shrine for his admirers ever since.

The Twelfth Imam Sahib Al-'Asr Wa Al-Zaman

AL-HUJJAH AL-MUNTAZAR, AL-MAHDI (AS)

NAME AND PARENTAGE

Muhammad son of HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS) is a facsimile of his name-sake and great ancestor the holy Prophet Muhammad (p) in form and manners. His mother was NERJIS KHATUN, granddaughter of the contemporary Byzantine king who was a descendant of Prophet SHAM'UN (trustee of Jesus Christ, p). He was born on the 15th of SHA'BAN 255 A.H. (July 29, 869 A.D.). His father IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS) instructed his pious sister HALIM KHATUN to tutor this child in the Divine Law

TITLES

He is usually called by his titles rather than his first name. These are numerous, second in number to those of IMAM ALI IBN ABU TALIB (AS). Famous among them are:

1- AL-MAHDI: this is the title which has got the status of a name to which reference is made in the prophecies of the holy Prophet (p) and the Imams (as). Hence, the concept of AL-MAHDI, the Guided One, AL-MUNTAZAR, the Awaited One, is commonly acknowledged by Muslims. No doubt, there are some differences of opinion among scholars in his regard, but these deal with his life events or qualities. The belief in the reappearance of IMAM AL-MAHDI (AS) is entertained by all Muslims. "AL-MAHDI" means "the guided one". It indicates that God is the real Guide, all the creatures are guided by Him. In the same sense, the Prophet and all Imams are MAHDIS, but in reality this title is exclusively used for the 12th Imam.

2- AL-QA'IM. This title is based on some traditions (AHADITH) where the Prophet Muhammad asserts that "this world will not come to its end unless there rises a QA'IM from my offspring who will fill it with equity and justice after being filled with injustice and oppression".

3- SAHIB AZ-ZAMAN (master of the time). This is in view of the fact that he is the real guide of our time.

4- HUUJAT ALLAH. Every Prophet or Imam is the "proof" or "sign" of the Mercy of the Creator; he fulfills the responsibility of guiding humanity, thus leaving for people no excuse to do wrong. As in our time the responsibility of guiding the world is fulfilled by the 12th Imam, he will be called HUUJAT ALLAH till Doomsday.

5- AL-MUNTAZAR (the expected or awaited one). All Muslim scholars have been repeating the prophecies regarding the appearance of IMAM AL-MAHDI (AS). Not only the Muslim but even people of other religions too believe in a "comer" to come in the last days. Names may be different but the coming of such a person is universally accepted.

He was expected before his birth, and after birth and disappearance. Now his reappearance is awaited, hence his title.

AL-MAHDI IN THE HOLY QUR'AN

Those who deny AL-MAHDI (AS) base their denial on the incorrect claim that there is no reference to AL-MAHDI in the holy QUR'AN. There are two considerations to be borne in mind while studying the holy QUR'AN:

FIRST: names of individuals are not always stated explicitly. For example, the holy Prophet of Islam (p) is mentioned by name only four times; Muhammad, Ahmed, TAHA and YASIN; whereas he is mentioned implicitly throughout the entire holy QUR'AN. SECOND: scholars of the holy QUR'AN tell us that there are at least four meanings for each QUR'ANIC verse: "MA'NAZHAR" an apparent or explicit meaning, "TANZIL", revelation (the circumstances under which that particular verse was revealed), and "AT'WIL", interpretation. In order to fully comprehend a verse, we have to fathom all these four meanings; otherwise, our understanding of it will be extremely shallow, and "little knowledge is a dangerous thing".

The following references are all quoted from the most reliable SUNNI sources:

On p. 443 of YANABI' AL-MAWADDAH, the HANAFI HAFIZ SULAYMAN AL-QANDUZI quotes JABIR IBN ABDALLAH AL-ANSARI narrating a lengthy HADITH in which a Jew named JANDAL IBN JUNADA IBN JUBAIR accepted Islam at the hands of the Prophet and the new convert asked the Prophet who his WASIS were. The Prophet counted them for JANDAL till he said: "... and after him (i.e. IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS) his son Muhammad, who shall be called AL-MAHDI and AL-QA'IM and AL-HUJJA. He shall occult, then shall he come back. When he comes back, he shall fill the world with justice and equity just as it was filled with injustice and iniquity; blessed are those who persist in their love for them, who persevere during his occultation (GHAYBA, or absence); blessed are those who persist in their love for them, for they are the ones whom God described in His book saying: in it guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear God, who believe in the Unseen

(GHAYB)' (QUR'AN, 2: 2-3)"

On p. 505 of the same work, the author, who belongs to the major Sunni sect the HANAFI, quotes MUHAMMAD IBN MUSLIM who cites IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) explaining the meaning of verse 155 of the same SURA which states; "We shall test you with something of fear and hunger; some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere" (QUR'AN, 2:155)

IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) indicated that there would be signs indicating the coming (reappearance) of AL-MAHDI (AS) which are means whereby God tests the faithful:

"something of fear" is a reference to masses perishing by contagious diseases; "hunger" is a reference to high prices of foodstuffs;

"some loss in goods" is reference to scarcity and famines;

"lives" is reference to mass destruction (of human lives, probably due to global wars);

"fruits" is reference to lengthy periods of droughts; so when all that happens, then "give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere".

"this is its interpretation", continued the Imam, quoting verse 7 of ALLI 'IMRAN (QUR'AN, 3:7), which indicates that only those who are "firmly grounded in knowledge" are capable of interpreting the verses of the holy QUR'AN, adding, "We (AHL AL-BAYT) are the ones firmly grounded in knowledge".

On p. 321 of same work, the author quotes IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) interpreting verse 83 of Chapter III of the holy QUR'AN and commenting thus; "When the QA'IN, AL-MAHDI, reappears, there will be no land on earth where the SHAHADA (LA ILAHA ILLA ALLAH MUHAMMADUN RASULULLAH) is not said".

This could be a reference to the fact that by the time AL-MAHDI reappears, all continents of the world will have Muslim populations. They already do. At the end of vol. 2 of FARA'ID AL-SIMTAIN, and on p. 269 of IBN KHALDUN'S Introduction, IBN ABBAS, may Allah be pleased with him, is quoted saying that the Messenger of God (p) said: "IMAM ALI IBN ABU TALIB (AS) is the Imam of my nation and my successor therein after me, and among his offspring is the awaited QA'IN who shall fill the world with justice and equity as it was filled with injustice and iniquity. By the One Who sent me in truth a bearer of glad tidings, and a Warner, I swear that those who persist adhering to his Imamate even during his GHAYBAT (occultation) are more rare than red sulfur". JABIR IBN ABDALLAH AL-ANSARI stood then and asked the Messenger of God: "O Messenger of God! Will there be a GHAYBA for that QA'IM among your offspring?" He (p) answered: "Ay by my God! (then he quoted this verse): 'God's objective is to purge those that are true'. O JABIR! This is one of God's orders and a secret of His own which is obscure from His servants: therefore, beware

of doubting, for to doubt the order of God, the Mighty and the Sublime, is apostasy (KUFRA).

On p. 507, the HAFIZ AL-QANDUZI states in his YANABI' AL-MAWADDAH the explanation of verse 89 of chapter 6 (AL-AN'AM) quoting MUHAMMAD IBN JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) saying: "The person implied in this verse is the QA'IN AL-MAHDI, who is safeguarded by God; even if all people perish, God will bring him and his companions about, for they are the ones who are entrusted by God and who do not disbelieve therein".

Another author, who follow the SHAFI'I sect, and who enjoys the title 'ALLAMA, is AL-SHIBLINJI, author or NUR AL-ABSAR. He quotes ABU JA'FAR (AS) explaining verse 86 of chapter 11 (HUD) in a lengthy HADITH in which the Imam says: "When he (AL-MAHDI) reappears, he shall lean on the KA'BA, and three hundred and thirteen men of his companions shall join him there, and the first statement he shall utter will be: 'That which is left for you by God is best for you (QUR'AN, 11:86)'. Then he shall say: 'I am what is left for you by God, His vicegerent (a descendant of Adam), and His Proof (HUJJAT ALLAH) over you'; so whenever someone greets him, he says: 'Peace be with you. O the one left for us by God'".

The SHAFI'I FAQIH ABD AR-RAHMAN IBN ABU BAKR AL-SEYUFI, quoting the SUNAN of ABU DAWUD, cites ABU SA'ID AL-KHUDRI on p. 50, vol. 6, of his AD-DURR AL-MANTHUR, saying that the Messenger of God (p) had said; "The Hour shall not come till AL-MAHDI takes charge on earth on my own behalf; he shall have a high forehead, a straight nose, and he shall fill the world with justice and equity after being filled with injustice and iniquity".

He also indicates that IMAM AHMED IBN HANBAL (founder of one of the four Sunni sects, i.e. the HANBALI) quotes ABU SA'ID AL-KHUDRI quoting the Messenger of God saying: "I bring you the glad tidings of AL-MAHDI; God shall send him to my nation, in time quite different from your own, and after series of earthquakes, and he shall fill the world with justice and equity as it was filled before with injustice and iniquity, and all the residents of the world shall be pleased with him, and he shall distribute the wealth equitably".

'ALLAM AL-BAHRANI, quoting the SHAFI'I FAQIH IBRAHIM IBN MUHAMMAD AL-HAMAWAYNI who in turn quotes ABDALLAH IBN ABBAS (cousin of the Prophet p), on p. 692 of GHAYAT AL-MARAM saying that the Messenger of God (p) had said; "My successors, WASIS and HUJAJ (proofs) are twelve: the first of them is my brother and the last is my son". He was asked; "O Messenger of God! Who is your brother?" He answered: "ALI IBN ABU TALIB". Then who is your son?" "AL-MAHDI who shall fill the world with justice and equity after being filled with injustice and iniquity. By the One Who sent me in truth a bearer of glad tidings and a Warner. I swear that if there is only one day left in this world, God will prolong that day till my son (descendant) AL-MAHDI reappears, and the Spirit of God Jesus son of Mary shall say his prayers behind him (then he quoted verse 69 of chapter 39); 'And the earth will shine with the glory of its Lord' and his

domain shall encompass the East and the West".

PROPHECIES

Before the Imam's birth, predictions regarding him were put forth by the holy Prophet and the Infallible Imams. Several scholars of the Sunni School of Muslim Law have written volumes exclusively on this topic. For example, HAFIZ MUHAMMAD IBN YUSUF AL-KANJI ASH-SHAFI'I has compiled AL-BAYAN IF ADHBAR SAHIB AZ-ZAMAN (the clear evidence regarding the tidings of the Master of Age). HAFIZ ABU NA'IM AL-ISFAHANI has written NA'T AL-MAHDI (title of AL-MAHDI). ABU DAWUD AL-SIJISTANI has devoted one complete chapter titled "KITAB AL-MAHDI" in his SUNAN, and AL-HAKIM in his MUSTADRAK. One tradition recorded by MUHAMMAD IBN IBRAHIM AL-HAMAWI (of HAMA, Syria ASH SHAFI recorded in his work FARA'ID AS-SIMTAIN says: "IBN ABBAS heard the Prophet saying: 'I am the chief of the Prophets, and Ali is the chief of the Trustees (WASIS). My trustees (or successors) after me are twelve: the first of them is Ali and the last is AL-MAHDI'".

JABIR IBN ABDALLAH AL-ANSARI narrated that FATIMA AZ-ZAHRA had a tablet on which the names of all the succeeding Imams were written down; three of them were named Muhammad and four of them were named Ali all being her offspring, and the last was named AL-QA'IN. SHAIKH AS-SADUQ MUHAMMAD IBN ALI BIN BABAWAIH AL-QUMMI records in his IKMAL AD-DIN WAS ITMAM AN-NI'MA this tradition on the authority of IMAM AR-RIDA (AS) who narrated it from his ancestors. It states that IMAM ALI (AS) addressed his son IMAM HUSAIN (AS) once saying; "The ninth from your descendants shall rise defending the truth; he shall protect the faith and promote justice".

AS-SADUQ in his IKMAL AD-DIN also quotes the Prophet saying: "When the ninth among the descendants of my son HUSAIN is born, God will extend his life-span during the period of absence (occultation) and will project him at the appointed time".

IMAM HUSAIN (AS), the chief of martyrs, is quoted saying: "The ninth of my descendants is the Imam who will rise with the truth. God will grant life to earth through him after its death. The true faith will supersede all religions through him. His absence shall be lengthy during which multitudes would go astray. Only a few will be on the Right Path. They shall suffer pains. People will pressure them, saying: 'Let us know when this promise is fulfilled!' Those who will bear the pains and denials patiently will get the same rewards as those who accompanied the Prophet during his expeditions for JIHAD. IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS) has said: "Of us one will be born whose birth will remain secret, so much so that people will say that he was not born at all". IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-BAQIR (AS) is quoted by AL-KAFI of AL-KULAYNI as saying: "Nine Imams after HUSAIN are destined; the last of them will be AL-QA'IM". IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) is quoted in 'ILAL AL-SHARA'I' saying; "The fifth descendant of my son MUSA will be the QA'IM, a descendant

of the Prophet".

As recorded in IKMAL AD-DIN of SHAIKH AS-SADUQ, IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS) was asked once: "Are you the QA'IM with the truth?" the Imam replied: "I also rise truthfully, but the real QA'IM is he who will remove the enemies of God from earth and will fill it with justice. He shall be my fifth descendant. His absence will be lengthy during which multitudes will turn away from the faith while only a few will uphold it". When DI'BIL the poet recited his poem to IMAM AR-RIDA (AS) which included these lines:

"The Riser will appear, I do confess,
With grace he will rise, blessed and good;
Will deal with faithful and faithless,
Distinguish between truth and falsehood;

IMAM AR-RIDA (AS) wept. Then, raising his head, he said: "O DI'BIL, these lines have been inspired to you by Gabriel. Do you know who this Riser (QA'IM) is and when he shall rise?" DI'BIL said that he did not know the details, but that he had been hearing that there would come an Imam who would purge the world from evils and fill it with justice. The Imam explained; "O DI'BIL, my son Muhammad will come when I am gone. After him will come his son AL-QA'IM. He will be awaited during his absence. When he appears, the world shall bow down before him".

IMAM MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS) has said: "The QA'IM will be from amongst us, the third of my descendants".

IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) has said: "My successor is my son IMAM HASAN; but what will be your condition during the reign of IMAM HASAN'S successor?" Those who were present asked: "Why, what do you mean by that?" IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) said: "You will not have the chance to see him; later, you will not be allowed even to mention his name". Then he was asked as to how they should mention him. He said: "You may say the last of Muhammad's (Infallible) descendants".

Some people asked IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS): "Your revered forefathers have said that the earth would never be without a Sign of Allah (HUJJAT ALLAH) till Doomsday, and he who dies without knowing the Imam of his time will die the death of the days of ignorance" IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS) said that that was as true as the shining day. They inquired as to who would be the Imam and who would be the Sign of the Mercy of God after his death. IMAM HASAN explained: "He will be my son, the namesake of the holy Prophet. He who dies without knowing him will die the death of the days of ignorance. His absence will be so lengthy that the ignorant would wander puzzled and would surely stray; the false will fall into eternal destruction. Those who will foretell the exact date of his appearing will be wrong.

All these predictions were recorded since the time of the holy Prophet who prophesied the advent of the MAHDI. The anecdote of DI'BIL demonstrates that the concept was quite common. History tells us that friends and foes of AHL AL-BYAT (AS) knew the fact, and sometimes tried to take wrong advantage thereof. For example, one of the ABBASIDES named Muhammad had assumed the title of AL-MAHDI. Muhammad son of ABDALLAH AL-MAHD, an offspring of IMAM HUSAIN (AS), too, was considered by some people as the MAHDI. The KAISANIS had attributed the same to MUHAMMAD IBN AL-HANAFIYYA.

But these suppositions were refuted by the Imams who condemned them and explained the qualities of the true MAHDI and asserted his absence. The aforementioned events clearly indicate that the idea about the advent of the MAHDI was unanimously acknowledged. Besides, the traditions of the holy Prophet continuously affirmed that he would be succeeded by 12 persons. This number itself sufficed to refute the claims of the false pretenders. But when the eleventh IMAM AL-HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS) had come, people keenly awaited AL-MAHDI who was sought even prior to his birth with same eagerness as he is now awaited since his absence.

BIRTH

The awaited Imam at last came into the world on the 15th of SHA'BAN 255 A.H. (July 29, 869 A.D.). His father IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS) gave away loaves of bread and meat as charity and sacrificed several goats for 'AQIQAH, birth celebration.

UPBRINGING AND INSTRUCTION

Precedents already existed that many of the Imams got no outward opportunity for education; still, Providence Divine made arrangements to adorn them with learning and moral accomplishments elevated them to Imamate. For example, IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) was six years old when his father MUHAMMAD AT-TAQI (AS) died. IMAM AT-TAQI (AS) was eight years old at the time of the death of his father IMAM AR-RIDA (AS). Outwardly, a boy of this age cannot be proficient in learning. But once we acknowledged that God had specially gifted the Prophet's Progeny, the question of age stands no more. If Jesus Christ could speak in his cradle and assert his prophet-hood (see QUR'AN, 19:24 and 19:30-33), a believer cannot think that the childhood of IMAM AL-MAHDI (AS) would negate or render his Imamate faulty. IMAM AL-MAHDI (AS) could enjoy his father's love and instruction for a very short period of time because he was only five years old when his father died in 260 A.H. (874 A.D.). Even at that young age, Providence crowned him with Imamate.

GOVERNMENT'S INQUISITION

When the pharaoh of Egypt heard the prophecy that a child would soon be born who would

destroy his kingdom he tried his best to obstruct the child's birth or kill him after his birth. Likewise, the ABBASIDE ruler had learnt that a child would be born to IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS) who would destroy his unjust kingdom. He, therefore, made every possible arrangement that the child would not be born, keeping IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS) in continuous imprisonment and away from his wife. But even the greatest worldly power cannot fight Providence. In spite of all the efforts of pharaoh, Moses was born; similarly, in spite of the efforts of the ABBASIDE government, the awaited Imam came into the world.

His birth and upbringing were kept secret and as Providence so wished, it remained so. Only a few moments did he appear in public. It was the time when his father's coffin was ready for the funeral prayers. All the prominent SHI'AHs were present. The ranks had been formed. IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI'S brother JA'FAR had stepped forward to lead the prayer and was at the point of reciting the TAKBIR when suddenly a boy came out from behind the curtains, passed the ranks quickly and took hold of JA'FAR'S robe and said: "Get back uncle; I am more than you worthy of leading the funeral prayer for my father". JA'FAR at once withdrew and the boy led the prayer. Having performed this duty, the boy went back. It was not possible that the ABBASIDE ruler could remain ignorant of the fact. The search for him was carried out more seriously than ever before in order to arrest and slay the boy. Some may ask: "How can a boy lead the funeral prayer in the capacity of an Imam?" The question is provided by the holy QUR'AN. These are referred to research the holy QUR'AN to see how another boy, namely YAHYA (John the Baptist), became a Prophet of God even while being a young boy. See verse 12 of chapter 19 (SURAT MARYAM)

THE MINOR OCCULTATION

The Prophet and the Imams had predicted AL-MAHDI'S occultation (disappearance and absence) as has already been narrated. His occultation is divided into two periods. The first period is known as the minor occultation and it extends from 260 A.H. to 329 A.H. (874-941 A.D.) when extremely pious persons nominated by the Imam himself acted as his deputies. Their duty was to convey to the Imam all problems of the SHI'AHs, get their solutions from the Imam or solve them themselves according to their own discretion, collect ZAKAT and KHUMS and spend them in the proper way, and convey the Imam's instructions to the trusted persons. The persons so deputized were the most pious and learned, and they were the trusted confidants. They were four in number:

1- ABU AMR UTHMAN IBN SA'ID IBN AMR AL-AMRI AL-ASADI. He was a deputy of IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS), then of his son IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS). Having performed the same duty for a few years for IMAM AL-MAHDI also, he died in Baghdad and was buried there.

2- ABU JA'FAR MUHAMMAD IBN UTHMAN IBN SA'ID AL-AMRI (son of the above). IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS) foretold his being deputized. Then his father, at the time of his death, proclaimed

under the orders of the Imam his appointment as deputy. He died in JUMADA AL-'ULA 305 A.H. (November 917 A.D.) 3- AUB AL-QASIM HUSAIN IBN RUH IBN ABI BAKR AN-NAW-BAKHFI. A member of the famous NAW-BAKHFI family, he was distinguished for his knowledge, philosophy, astrology and KALAM. He was a top ranking scholar and a pious man. Under the directions of IMAM AL-MAHDI, ABU JA'FAR Muhammad IBN UTHMAN appointed him as his successor. After having served for fifteen years in that capacity, he died in SHA'BAN of 320 A.H.

4- ABU HASAN ALI IBN Muhammad AL-SAMARI. He was the last deputy, succeeding HUSAIN IBN RUH as directed by the imam. He performed this duty for nine years only and died on the 15th of SHA'BAN of 329 A.H. (May 15, 941 A.D.). Having been asked on the deathbed as to who would succeed him, he replied; "Providence now wishes to give the matter another shape the duration of which is known by God Alone".

After ABU AL-HASAN there was no deputy. In this sorrowful year, i.e. 329 A.H. (941 A.D.), ALI IBN BABAWAIH AL-QUMMI, the revered father of SHAYKH AS-SADUQ, and Muhammad IBN YA'QUB AL-KULAYNI, the learned compiler of AL-KAFI, also expired. Besides these sad events, an extraordinary phenomenon was also witnessed. In the sky so many stars did shoot that it seemed as if Doomsday had come. That year was, therefore, named "the year of the dispersal of the stars". After this followed a dark period because none was left to approach IMAM AL-MAHDI (AS)

THE MAJOR OCCULTATION

The period since 329 A.H. (941 A.D.) is called "the major occultation" because there is none deputized by the Imam. It was for this period that IMAM AL-MAHDI (AS) directed "to refer to those who know our traditions the lawful and the unlawful matters because they will guide you on our own behalf". It is in view of this advice that the scholars and MUJTAHIDS are called the Imam's successors. But this succession rather means general guidance of the people and is in no sense by the way of personal nomination. They are, therefore, quite different from the deputies who served as such during the minor occultation.

The predictions about these occultation had been made by the Infallibles. The holy Prophet affirmed: "He will have an occultation in which many groups will wander astray; in this period, the number of those who believe in and follow him will be meager". IMAM ALI IBN ABU TALIB (AS) said: "The QA'IM will have a long period of absence (occultation). The scene is full in my view when the friends of AHL AL-BAYT (AS) will wander during his absence as animals wander in search of a meadow". Another tradition says that "He will reappear after such a long period of absence during which only true and sincere believers would uphold their religion". IMAM AL-HASAN (AS) said: "God will prolong his life-span during his absence". IMAM AL-HUSAIN (AS) said: "He will remain absent during which period so many parties will go astray". IMAM Muhammad AL-BAQIR (AS) said; "His absence will be so lengthy that many would go astray".

IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) said: "AL-MAHDI will be the fifth descendant of the seventh Imam. He will remain unseen to your eyes". On another occasion, he said that SAHIB AL-'AMR (the master of command) will have an occultation during which everybody must remember God, do good deeds and uphold his religion.

IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM (AS) said; "His person will remain unseen to the eye but the believers will never forget him; he will be the Twelfth of our line".

IMAM AR-RIDA (AS) predicted that he would be awaited during his absence. IMAM Muhammad AT-TAQI (AS) explained: "AL-MAHDI is he who will be awaited during his absence and will be obeyed upon his reappearance".

IMAM ALI AN-NAQI (AS) clarified: "The Master of Command will be the one about whom people would say: 'He has not been born yet". IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS) said: "My son's absence will cause doubts and disbeliefs in the minds of people, except those whom Allah guides". IMAM Muhammad AL-BAQIR (AS) had also explained that the QA'IM of ALLI MUHAMMAD would have two periods of absence, a very lengthy one and a relatively short one. IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ (AS) too had predicted in a similar way: "One of the two periods of absence will be quite lengthy". It was due to these predictions that after the death of IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS), his followers and sincere believers had no doubts. Instead of acknowledging the Imamate of some present false claimant, they only believed in IMAM AL-MAHDI, the Absent, the Occulting.

Although absent and unrepresented, IMAM AL-MAHDI still guides people and defends the faith. Even-though unseen, he supervises the world's affairs and guides it. This curtain will exist as long as Providence deems it necessary; the time will come soon (though "soon" may occur to many too late) when the curtain of absence will be removed, IMAM AL-MAHDI will reappear and fill the world with justice and equity, discarding all the prevailing injustices and iniquities. May God Almighty bring about his early reappearance and ease his coming, ALLAHOMMA AAMIN.