



**A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF
IMAM ALI AN NAQI (A.S)**

BY
M. M. DUNGERSI (Ph.D.)

**A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF
IMAM ALI BIN
MUHAMMAD (A.S.)**

BY:

MOHAMED RAZA DUNGERSI, Ph.D.

Published by:
Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania
P.O.Box 20033
Dar es Salaam – Tanzania



ISBN 9976 620 17 5

First Edition 2001
Second Edition 2012

Published and Printed by:
Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania
P.O.Box 20033
Dar es Salaam – Tanzania

CONTENTS

Preface . . . 1

Chapter 1: Childhood and Earlier Manhood . . . 2

Chapter 2: Imam Ali Bin Muhammad's (a.s.) migration to
Samarra . . . 8

Chapter 3: Major historic events during the Imamat of Imam Ali
Naqi (a.s.) . . . 18

Chapter 4: Imam Ali Bin Muhammad: His Character . . . 30

Chapter 5: Imam Ali Bin Muhammad: His Miracles . . . 40

Chapter 6: Imam Ali Bin Muhammad (a.s.): His Sayings . . . 44

Chapter 7: Imam Ali bin Muhammad (a.s.) His Family . . . 46

Questions . . . 48

PREFACE

Finally, with the Grace of Allah, I have completed this short biography of our Tenth Imam, Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) for those readers who need to have a brief overview of the life of this divinely appointed Imam.

There is so much information on the life of our Tenth Imam that in the initial stages I had no clue as to where to start and where to end this daunting endeavour that I had agreed to undertake on behalf of the Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania. The more I thought of this project, the more discouraged I felt, until when I learnt that there were quite a few people who had read the short biography that I had written on the other Imams and who were inquiring from the Bilal Muslim Mission for explanations as to why I had not written on the life of our Tenth, Eleventh and the Twelfth Imams. This inquiry encouraged me once more, to pull myself together and apply my energies towards this unfinished task. The result of this effort is the short sketch depicting the highlights of the life of our Tenth Imam, Hazrat Ali Naqi (a.s.).

Every time I went through this work when it was in draft form, I felt that it was not worth printing as it did not encompass even the most basic about the life of this illustrious personality. I ended up making massive alterations. Finally, I came to the conclusion that if I were to follow my instincts, this work would never be completed. We therefore now have this brief work for my readers. My prayer to my Creator is that He may forgive me for the deficiencies that may have remained unveiled in this book.

I take this opportunity to thank all those who have in one way or another helped me in my efforts to undertake and complete this task. My special sentiments are for Fidahusein Abdullah Hameer, the Publisher, who tolerated my tardiness and constantly reminded me of my obligations to complete this work.

Mohamed Raza Mohamed Husein Dungersi, Ph.D.
New York, USA
March 11, 2001
Dhul Hijja 15, 1421

CHAPTER 1

CHILDHOOD AND EARLY MANHOOD

INTRODUCTION

Imam Ali bin Muhammad (a.s.) is the tenth Imam from the progeny of the Prophet Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.w.w.). Like the preceding nine divinely appointed Imams from the progeny of the Prophet, Imam Ali bin Muhammad (a.s.) was a 'Masoom.' (He did not commit any mistakes or sins). He was the representative of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and Allah on this universe. To his followers, he is known more by his titles Naqi (the pure one) and Hadi (the guide) than by his actual name. His other titles include Nuseh (the counselor), Ameen (the trustworthy), Faqeeh (the jurist), Tayyib (the holy one) and Murthadha (the pleased one). Because he spent the last twenty years of his life more or less as a prisoner of the Abbasid kings in the army barracks, he is also known as Askari (the one from the barracks).

Imam Ali bin Muhammad was born on 15th of Dhul Hijja 212 AH (828 AD) at a place called Surya, which was in the vicinity of Medina, the city of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.). The Abbasid ruler of the time was Mamoon Rashid, the one responsible for the martyrdom of Imam Ridha (a.s.).

His father was Imam Muhammad bin Ali (a.s.). His mother was Samanah. She was of the same ethnicity as Ammar Yasir, the famous companion of the Prophet. Suffice it to say that her status in the presence of Allah was such that she was chosen to be the mother of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.).

Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) spent very little time with his father. This was because of two reasons. First, his father passed away very young, at the age of twenty-six. At that time Imam Naqi (a.s.) was only seven years old. Secondly, during that short period of six years, Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) was kept away from his family by the

orders of first Mamoon Rashid, and then his successor Mu'tassim Billah. Though this meant a personal loss to the Imam (a.s.) himself, having been deprived of the warmth of his father's love, the message of Allah did not suffer because the young Imam (a.s.) served this cause despite the restraint.

LIFE WITH HIS FATHER

Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.)'s stepmother, Ummul Fadhl, was one of the daughters of Mamoon Rashid. She wished to live the life of extravagance, contrary to the teachings of Islam. Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) was not willing to follow her ways. For example, she wanted him to live in the king's palace and take part in the un-Islamic activities that were being practiced there. The Imam (a.s.) refused to do so and chose to rent his own modest apartment and live a simple life. She did not love the Imam (a.s.) and used to complain against the Imam (a.s.) to her father. Once she almost got her husband killed by Mamoon.

Ummul Fadhl became very angry when she learnt that Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) had married Samanah. She considered her and her child, Imam Naqi (a.s.) as enemies. Mamoon was not prepared to harm his son-in-law and tarnish his own image for the simple reason that he had married a second woman, a marriage that was legal in Islam. Imam Taqi (a.s.) and Imam Naqi (a.s.) therefore had time to stay together, during the last years of Mamoon's reign. On his death in 218 AH, as soon as Mu'tassim became the King, Ummul Fadhl started complaining against the Imam (a.s.) to him. From the beginning Mu'tassim was against Imam Taqi (a.s.) being welcomed in the Abbasid court, but couldn't do anything so far as Mamoon was alive. Now that Mamoon was gone, Ummul Fadhl's complains were a good excuse for Mu'tassim to harass the Imam (a.s.) and his family. The first move that he took was to separate Imam Taqi (a.s.) from his second wife and his son Imam Naqi (a.s.). He therefore ordered Imam Taqi (a.s.) and Ummul Fadhl alone to go to Baghdad.

Ismail bin Mihran reports that when Imam Taqi (a.s.) was about to leave for Baghdad, the former (Ismail bin Mihran) feared that the Imam (a.s.) would not return and expressed his fears to the Imam (a.s.) asking the Imam (a.s.) to name his successor. The Imam (a.s.) assured Ismail that he would return safe from his journey, and he did. However, soon after his return, again he was summoned to Baghdad in the year 220 AH. This time Imam Taqi (a.s.) tearfully announced to Ismail that he would not be able to come back and therefore he named Imam Naqi (a.s.) his successor. Imam (a.s.) left for Baghdad and he left this world on the year 220 AH.

Despite the short period of time that Imam Naqi (a.s.) had with his father, he learnt a lot from him and was ready to take over from him in 220 AH when his father passed away in Baghdad.

CHILDHOOD AND EARLY MANHOOD: LIFE IN MEDINA

The tenth Imam's total life span was 42 years. The first 20 years were spent in Medina, the remaining 22 years in Surre-man-raa (what is known as Samarra today). When the ninth Imam passed away in Baghdad in 220 AH (835), Imam Naqi (a.s.) was only seven years old and he assumed the responsibilities of a divinely appointed Imam. So that there should be no misunderstanding amongst the followers, Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) had taken the pain of introducing the tenth Imam to his followers on several occasions.

For example, Shehr Ibne Ashub mentions in his *Manaqib* that when Imam Taqi (a.s.) was leaving for Baghdad not to come back, he insisted that his agent, Muhammad Bin Al-Faraj, hand over the revenue collected as khums to Imam Naqi (a.s.). This was a way of letting the followers know who was to be their next Imam.

As a result, the majority of followers of Imam Taqi (a.s.) accepted Imam Naqi (a.s.) as their Imam despite the young age of the Imam (a.s.).

Soon, the Imam's fame began to spread throughout the Muslim Empire and students from all over began to come to Medina to learn from the Imam (a.s.). In the following chapter we shall explain in detail the reasons why Mu'tassim and his successor Wathiq did not pay much attention to Imam's activities in Medina. For 16 years the Imam (a.s.) was left more or less undisturbed in his efforts to serve the Muslim community in general and the Shias in particular.

When the governor of Medina noticed the growing fame of the Imam (a.s.), he came up with a clever plan to undermine the Imam's fame. His plan was to appoint a teacher for the Imam (a.s.). This would send a signal that the Imam (a.s.) was himself in need of education, let alone to be a teacher for others. Secondly, whatever knowledge came through the Imam (a.s.) would be considered as that which he learnt from his teacher!

A famous tutor, by the name of Abdullah al-Junaid was named as the teacher of Imam Naqi (a.s.). Al-Junaid was known to harbour enmity towards the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and his progeny; this was another reason why he was appointed to "supervise" the Imam (a.s.). He was given instructions to be very strict with the Imam (a.s.) and to keep him away from those seeking his company for knowledge. However, the Imam (a.s.) impacted Al-Junaid in a way that made him admit to his masters: "Do not call him a Hashimate boy; call him the Hashimate Chief. Even in his childhood he is more knowledgeable than I am. Whenever I prepare lessons to teach him, from them unfold venues of knowledge unknown to me, and he teaches them to me. People may think I am his teacher, but the truth is he is my teacher. It is beyond my capacity to teach him anything. By Allah, he has not only memorized the Quran by heart, he is also the master of its surface and deeper meanings. He is the best of all those who live on this earth and in the heavens."

HIS ROLE IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WIKALA

Besides being the centre of knowledge and learning, the Imam

(a.s.) also helped the cause of Islam by bringing to the peak and strengthening the institution of WIKALA that was started by Imam Sadiq (a.s.) and was continually being built by the 7th, 8th and 9th Imams (a.s.). To understand Imam Naqi's contribution in this field we need to examine very briefly the Institution of WIKALA.

Readers are required at this point to refresh their memories about the facts learnt in the earlier booklet when we discussed about the decline of the Umayyad and the rise of the Abbasids. The Abbasids had risen to power by using the name of Ahlul-Bayt, thereby getting support of the followers of Ahlul-Bayt. The Abbasid founding rulers, Saffah and Mansoor, were fearful of the fact that the followers of Ahlul-Bayt may rise to overthrow them for their duplicity. Therefore, these Abbasid rulers were determined to kill anyone whom they suspected as sympathizers of the Ahlul-Bayt. In face of such a situation, Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) had to devise a means to be in touch with his followers without the knowledge of the rulers and their spies. The Imam (a.s.) therefore started an underground means of communication called the WIKALA.

The main feature of this underground movement was that the Imam (a.s.) would communicate with his followers through some trustworthy agents who were prepared to undertake this dangerous job, which could earn them instant death. These agents were spread out throughout the Muslim Empire. They had several functions to perform that included:

- To spread the true message of Islam through traditions learnt from the Imams of the House of the Prophet, the Ahlul-Bayt. Through these traditions the faithful would be guided to remain on the right path and not be misguided and misled by the enemies of Islam who were now in power.
- To collect khums, zakat and other dues and gifts from the followers endowed with means and to funnel them to the Imam of the time or use it in accordance with the instructions of the Imam (a.s.).

- To assist the followers in meeting their day-to-day economic, social and religious requirements; the revenues collected as khums, zakat, etc. were used towards this end. Also to make sure that the followers received help from the government, the wikala prepared and pushed into government service their agents. Ali ibne Yaqtin is one such example. Jafar ibn Mohammed al-Ashath and his son Abbas become governor of Khurasan and Waddah served in the government mail.

This wikala system was given further impetus by Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.), Imam Ridha (a.s.) and Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.). It is important to note that Imam Taqi (a.s.) used the wikala to inform his followers who his successor was to be. Imam Naqi (a.s.) added a new dimension to this movement. Up to this point in time, the wikala was more or less dependent on the direct supervision of the Imam. Imam Taqi began to prepare the wikala for that period when the Imam himself would not be available all the time to give personal attention and when this role would be played by the community leaders themselves.

Jassim Husain in his book *The Occultation of the Twelfth Imam* argues that the growing strength of the 'wikala' network might have been one of the reasons that prompted the governor of Medina, Abudullah Bin Hakim, to write to Mutawakkil, the caliph at Samarra, complaining that the Imam (a.s.) was secretly plotting to overthrow the government. This was the beginning of Imam's second phase of life: his migration to Samarra.

CHAPTER 2

IMAM ALI BIN MUHAMMAD'S (A.S.) MIGRATION TO SAMARRA

INTRODUCTION

Imam Ali Naqī's (a.s.) period of Imamatus following the martyrdom of his father started at the time when there were major administrative changes taking place in Baghdad. The caliph, Mu'tassim, was in the process of shifting his capital and seat of government to Samarra, a newly founded city, about 70 miles North of Baghdad. This move was a result of Mu'tassim's distrust of the Arabs to run his military force. Instead, he wanted only the Turks to be in the army. Also, he wanted them to be his personal bodyguards and form the police force. It is important to note that his mother was a Turkish slave. He spoke the Turkish language more often than Arabic and at the time of assuming the Caliphate, his entire guard of 3000 men was Turkish.

This change posed two problems. First, the Arabs who had enjoyed a privileged position during the times of the previous Abbasid Caliphs were very angry with Mu'tassim and became his potential enemies. Second, the Turks began to behave in a very irresponsible manner, having no respect or regard for the public. Instances are mentioned by Tabari when the soldiers would ride full-speed on their horses in busy bazaars, knocking down any person, regardless of his/her gender or age. The public was therefore outraged. They began to retaliate. Tabari mentions an incident when a Turkish general was ambushed and killed by a local person. The government's endless efforts to track down the culprit went unheeded by the public who refused to cooperate. Mu'tassim's reaction was to move his seat of government to Samarra.

Mu'tassim's priority was to complete the project as fast as he could. He therefore had only a few moments to think of the Imam (a.s.). During this period, as we saw in chapter one, the Imam (a.s.) had ample time to convey the message of Allah with least interruption.

Mu'tassim's successor, Wathiq, inherited his father's problem: The Turks. He was pre-occupied with his strategy to shake his administration free of the Turks, by playing one group of Turks against another. Second, he started waging war against the opponents of Mu'tazalites, who had been given privileged treatment by Mamoon and Mu'tassim. Wathiq also had to deal with the palace intrigue against him, centred on his ambitious brother, Abu Jafar, later to be known as Mutawakkil. This was again an advantage to Imam Naqi (a.s.) as he was left to continue his educational work in Medina with least distractions or interference.

On the death of Wathiq in 232 AH after a rulership of almost 5 years, Mutawakkil came to power, after a "mini" palace coup. In the first four years of his reign, he was busy eliminating those who had sided with Wathiq in keeping him (Mutawwil) away from power. Again, the Imam (a.s.) had opportunity to carry out his functions as the Imam of his times without any restrictions. Unfortunately, this phase of "peaceful coexistence" for the Imam came to an end in fourth year of Mutawakkil's reign. Abudullah bin Hakim, the Governor of Medina wrote to Mutawakkil accusing Imam (a.s.) of carrying out anti-government activities at underground level.

MUTAWAKKIL "INVITES" THE IMAM TO SAMARRA

Imam knew about the governor's letter which was sent to Mutawakkil. In his own defence, the Imam (a.s.) too, wrote a letter, stating his innocence. Mutawakkil used the same diplomacy that Mamoon had used in calling Imam Ridha (a.s.) to Marv. Mutawakkil wrote a lengthy letter to the Imam (a.s.) accepting Imam's innocence, but "inviting" the Imam (a.s.) and his family to Samarra as royal guests.

On the surface, this was a letter of invitation, leaving it entirely on the Imam (a.s.) to accept it or turn it down. But in reality it was an order for the Imam (a.s.) to leave for Samarra. For this letter was not sent to the Imam (a.s.) through the ordinary or the royal

mail; it was hand-delivered by an army officer by the name of Yahya bin Harthama, who had come with a strong force of soldiers. The message was clear: The, army had come to take the Imam (a.s.). The Imam (a.s.) had better go willingly else he would be taken by force, the way his grandfather, Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) was taken away by the army of Haroon Rashid some 57 years prior. The Imam (a.s.) therefore “accepted” the invitation to go to Samarra.

In 236 AH, the Imam (a.s.) bade farewell to his kith and kin and his followers living in Medina, and left, never to return again.

LIFE IN SAMARRA

After a long and arduous journey of 1200 miles the Imam (a.s.) reached Samarra. The true intention of calling the Imam (a.s.) to Samarra now began to unfold. Imam (a.s.) received a very cold reception. For his living quarters, the Imam (a.s.) was given a cubicle at Khawan-us-Saalik where only the destitute and the homeless lived. Mutawakkil made no effort even to meet the Imam (a.s.) whom he had in his letter of invitation thus addressed “I feel more love and affection for you than anybody... To me the honour of meeting you personally would be much more valuable than the riches of the world...” This was the beginning of the era of harassment and hardship for the Imam (a.s.) for the remaining part of his life of 18 years. The Imam (a.s.) faced this harsh and inhuman treatment with calmness.

A man by the name of Saleh bin Saeed visited Imam (a.s.) at the cubicle at Khawan-us-Saalik. When he saw the angry surroundings to which the Imam (a.s.) was made to live, he could not help but show his sympathy to the Imam (a.s.). The Imam (a.s.) consoled his friend, showing him how the Imam (a.s.) could convert the ugly surroundings into heavenly beauty with the permission of Allah. But the Imam (a.s.) chose to face life’s hardships as they unfolded to him without any complain.

Having kept the Imam (a.s.) at Khwah-us-Saalik for three

consecutive days, Mutawakkil then put the Imam (a.s.) in detention, under the supervision of Zarraqi, the Hajib or personal secretary of Mutawakkil.

LIFE OF DETENTION UNDER ZARRAQI

Zarraqi was known for his complete loyalty to the Abbasid cause and he was a trusted servant of Mutawakkil. He had instructions to treat the Imam (a.s.) as severely as he could. Zarraqi did as he was told to, but soon he came to realise that what he was doing was wrong. After a short time, he became a true devotee of the Imam (a.s.). Instead of being harsh, he was very gentle and tried to provide the Imam (a.s.) with all means of comfort and convenience. But this remained a secret from Mutawakkil.

During this period one of the followers of Imam (a.s.), by the name of Safra bin Abi Dalf, who also happened to be a friend of Zarraqi, paid the latter a visit. Safra's main purpose of this visit was to get news about the Imam (a.s.) but he pretended that he was visiting only Zarraqi. Zarraqi wanted to know if Safra had come to inquire about the Imam (a.s.). Safra, fearing for his life, denied this. Zarraqi disclosed to Safra his own sentiments for the Imam (a.s.). Zarraqi then admitted Safra to Imam's presence.

Safra reports that he saw the Imam (a.s.) seated on a mattress next to an open grave. Safra showed concern for the Imam's welfare. The Imam (a.s.) assured him that no harm would come to him at that time and that the open grave reminded him the inevitability of death, and therefore arose in him fear of Allah and humility to his creation.

Soon after this event, Mutawakkil came to know of Zarraqi's changed attitude towards the Imam (a.s.). Considering the high status of Zarraqi, Mutawakkil could not punish him. However, he removed Imam (a.s.) from his detention and instead assigned this task to another of his trusted Turk officer, Saeed.

In this detention, Imam (a.s.) spent eight years of his life. Imam's main occupation was to read the Quran, pray day and night and spend his days fasting.

Very few people could visit him. One such person was Ibne Adooma. He reports that by the special permission of Saeed he went to meet the Imam (a.s.). The Imam (a.s.) was confined in a dark cell and an open grave dug in front of him.

IMAM (A.S.) UNDER HOUSE-ARREST

Some relief came for the Imam (a.s.) with the appointment of Fateh bin Khaqan as the Prime Minister in place of Muhammed Bin Zayyat. Fateh was believed to be a Shia but because of his great skills and competence, he was chosen to be Prime Minister. He could not at once ask for the freedom of the Imam (a.s.). An opportunity to do so arose when Fateh was assigned to plan for the further development of Samarra. Fateh suggested to Mutawakkil that land be allocated to people of means in Samarra with the understanding that they would put up residential structures at their own expenses. Consequently, the city would expand without costing the government anything. Mutawakkil approved this plan. Fateh ensured that amongst those offered land under this plan was the Imam (a.s.). The Imam (a.s.) therefore constructed his own house and began to live in it, though under constant surveillance of government spies and Saeed. Saeed used to go for inspection to Imam's house twice a day, to see who visited the Imam (a.s.) and for what reason.

Over and above that, on slight suspicion, Mutawakkil would order for spot checks on the Imam's house at very odd hours. On one such occasion, Saeed was ordered in the middle of the night to take a contingent of soldiers, march into the Imam's house and seize all the wealth and ammunition that could be found hidden in the house. Saeed narrates that he took with him thirty soldiers and went to Imam's residence. They climbed the roof, and were trying

to enter the house that way. But it was very dark. Soon the Imam (a.s.) called Saeed by his name and advised him to wait as he could hurt himself in the darkness. Imam's servants brought candles which helped Saeed to get into the house unharmed. He saw the Imam (a.s.) dressed in woollen clothes, sitting on the prayer carpet, reading the Quran in the candle-light.

After a thorough search, Saeed found nothing significant to confiscate except a bag of golden coins, bearing Mutawakkil's mother's seal.

When Saeed was about to depart, Imam (a.s.) treated him and his soldiers with milk! Saeed gave a complete report to Mutawakkil who could not understand how his mother would give financial support to the Imam (a.s.). On inquiry, she informed him that when he (Mutawakkil) was sick, she had taken an oath that she would give a bag full of gold coins to Imam (a.s.) on her son's recovery. This is how the bag of coins had ended up in Imam's chamber.

Another instant is recorded when Saeed was sent with strict orders from Mutawakkil to arrest the Imam (a.s.) and bring him in the royal court. This was done. When the Imam (a.s.) arrived in the court, Mutawakkil and his courtiers were engaged in a music and drinking party. To insult and humiliate the Imam (a.s.), Mutawakkil extended a goblet of wine to Imam (a.s.) asking him to drink it. Imam replied, "I seek forgiveness from Allah who is my sustainer and show my repentance to him. Neither I nor my ancestors have ever consumed this thing, and thus our blood and flesh have remained free from its corruption."

Mutawakkil then asked the Imam (a.s.) to sing a song or two to entertain the courtiers. Imam (a.s.) turned down this request as well. Mutawakkil then asked the Imam (a.s.) to recite any poetry relevant to the occasion. Imam (a.s.) then recited some lines of poetry composed by Imam Ali (a.s.). The gist of the poem is as follows:

1. Those who chose to build their palaces on the slopes of mountains and provided for maximum security ultimately could not be saved.
2. Having spent life of luxury, they were finally removed from those sumptuous palaces unceremoniously and lowered in their graves with no grace or dignity.
3. Then came a voice asking them to explain about the fate of their throne, their crowns and their expensive gowns.
4. The voice asked them as to what happened to the handsome faces that used to be masked with dignity and those houses decorated with heavy curtains at the doors.
5. The reply came from the grave: Those handsome faces you are asking about have become the feeding ground for the worm.
6. For years we went around feeding ourselves only now to become food ourselves.

Mutawakkil's music party turned into a mourning chamber. Every single courtier and court attendant was moved by Imam's recital. Mutawakkil was put to shame and he let the Imam (a.s.) return to his quarters unharmed.

MUTAWWAKIL INVITES MUSA BIN MUSA TO SAMARRA TO DEGRADE THE IMAM

All the steps that Mutawakkil had taken to harm and hurt the Imam (a.s.) proved futile. The Imam's popularity was on the rise day by day. It was at this time that one of the royal advisers came with a vicious scheme to destroy Imam's credibility. The scheme was to invite to the court one misguided relative of the Imam (a.s.) by the name of Musa bin Musa, a descendant of Imam Ridha (a.s.) and introduce him to the public as Ibnur-Ridha, the name by which Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) was known by the public. The public would be made to believe that the immoral Musa whose lifestyle was like Mutawakkil and his courtiers, represented the true Muslim-value as he was Ibnur-Ridha, the son of Imam Ridha (a.s.).

Mutawakkil liked this proposal and Musa was invited to Samarra. Imam (a.s.) warned Musa of the royal strategy and advised him to save himself from being used by Mutawakkil. But Musa paid no attention to this advice. Fortunately, Mutawakkil must have seen the stupidity of this strategy; that the public was not that naive as to be fooled so easily. So he did not pursue this strategy any more. Consequently, Musa never had an opportunity to meet Mutawakkil nor be presented in the royal court.

MUTAWAKKIL'S OTHER MEANS OF HARASSMENT

Although the Imam (a.s.) was now living in his own house, he was constantly being harassed, one way or another. A few instances are described here to illustrate this point:

- Mutawakkil had built a game park and kept such wild animals as lions and bears. Mutawakkil used this park to amuse himself by throwing his enemies in the park and watch them be torn into pieces and be fed on by the wild beasts. Once he called Imam (a.s.) and let him into the park with the sole intention of watching him being killed by the beasts. Contrary to his expectations, Mutawakkil and all those who had gathered around to entertain themselves saw that the wild animals circle around the Imam (a.s.) and were lowering their heads. The Imam (a.s.), too, treated them like common pets. He then prayed while the animals stood by watching him. Mutawakkil had no option but to get the Imam (a.s.) out of the park.
- Mutawakkil's personal secretary, Fazal bin Ahmed reports that once as was his duty, he took Mutawakkil's son Mu'taz to him, when he was in his royal court. Normally, Mutawakkil would display playfulness to his son and make him sit next to him. But on this particular occasion, he did not even notice him. For he was fuming with anger, screaming at his Prime Minister, Fateh bin Khaqan. It appeared that Mutawakkil was angry because of some reports that alleged that the Imam (a.s.) was plotting against the government. The Prime Minister was

trying to convince the Caliph that this report was false and the Imam (a.s.) was innocent. After silencing his Prime Minister, Mutawakkil ordered four of his Turkish soldiers to arrest the Imam (a.s.), bring him in presence of Mutawakkil and behead him. The Imam (a.s.) was accordingly brought in front of Mutawakkil. On seeing the Imam (a.s.), Mutawakkil stood up as a sign of respect and welcomed the Imam (a.s.) gently and gracefully. He pretended not to know why the Imam (a.s.) had come to him. When told that the Imam (a.s.) was there by his express orders, he apologised to the Imam (a.s.), saying there must have been a mistake and asked the Imam (a.s.) to return to his quarters.

After his departure, Mutawakkil's previous state of anger and anxiety returned. He asked his Turkish soldiers as to why they did not kill the Imam (a.s.). They replied that when they arrested the Imam (a.s.), they saw a supernatural person who warned them that should they intend to harm the Imam (a.s.), he would kill them. They therefore abstained from killing the Imam (a.s.).

MUTAWAKKIL'S FINAL ACT OF HARASSMENT

For about 14 years, Mutawakkil's efforts to humiliate and to lower the high status of Imam Naqi (a.s.) in the eyes of the Muslim public proved futile. In his frustration, he committed yet another desperate and heinous act against the Imam (a.s.) and this led to his own destruction.

Mutawakkil decided to go out on a parade, accompanied by the dignitaries of the state. Amongst those "invited" to attend was Imam Naqi (a.s.). Mutawakkil accompanied by his Prime Minister, were riding in a chariot drawn by fast horses. The dignitaries, however, were required to keep pace with the chariot. The intention behind this parade was obvious: to make fun of and to humiliate the dignitaries who were made to run behind the chariot throughout the city in the sweltering heat.

It was in the Course of this shameless parade that the narrator, Zarraqi noticed the Imam (a.s.) who was sweating profusely. On complaining about Mutawakkil's cruelty in harassing the Imam (a.s.) in this way, Zarraqi says that the Imam's reply was enigmatic. He compared himself with Prophet Saleh's she-camel, saying that he, the Imam (a.s.), enjoyed a similar status, (if not better) of the said she-camel in the presence of Allah.

Zarraqi says, "When I relayed my conversation with the Imam (a.s.) to my children's tutor, who was a shia, he told me that if this is what the Imam (a.s.) had said, then Mutawakkil had only three days to live. For those who slaughtered the camel of Prophet Saleh died from divine punishment three days after the effect."

Zarraqi did not like to hear this, but to be on the safe side took all precaution to safeguard his life and wealth. Exactly three days after the parade, both Mutawakkil and Fateh bin Khaqan were killed.

CONCLUSION

Imam Naqi (a.s.) lived for yet another 7 years after the death of Mutawakkil. Admittedly, the intensity of harassment against the Imam (a.s.) decreased significantly with the death of Mutawakkil. However, as we shall see in the next Chapter, the Imam (a.s.) was not free to return to Medina. The political storm that was brought about by Mutawakkil's reckless life and violent death, made it impossible for the Imam (a.s.) to even mention the issue of his return. There was no direct oppression against him, but the succeeding Caliphs (except for Muntasir, who ruled but for a few months) continued their anti-Alawid policy and the followers of Imam (a.s.) continued to suffer. It is not surprising that the Imam's life was ended by the poison of the Mu'taz, the son of Mutawakkil.

CHAPTER 3

MAJOR HISTORIC EVENTS DURING THE IMAMAT OF IMAM ALI NAQI (A.S.)

INTRODUCTION

The period of the Imamate of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) constitutes an important historic 'watershed'; it marks the beginning of the end of the Abbasid Regime that was founded by Mansoor and brought to its pinnacle by Mammon, and finally ended in 656 AH with the assassination of the last Abbasid Caliph.

To trace the process of decline of the Abbasid Regime that once prided of its magnificence and majesty, it is important to study, even briefly, the regimes of each Caliph under whose reign the Imam (a.s.) lived and conveyed the message of Islam.

MU'TASSIM (218 AH - 227 AH)

His real name was Abu Ishaq Muhammad. He was the first Abbasid Caliph to assume a title ending with Allah and be known by it. His assumed title was Al-Mu'tassim Billah, meaning he who was steadfast in Allah. All others who followed him adhered to this rather hypocritical tradition; this tradition was hypocritical because their actions were contrary to this title that they assumed.

Strangely enough Mamoon chose his brother Mu'tassim, instead of his son Abbas, as the next Caliph. As a matter of fact, the Abbasid army preferred Abbas to Mu'tassim and there would have been another civil war if Abbas had not backed down in favour of his uncle. This may be one reason why Mu'tassim disbanded the army that he had inherited from Mamoon and started to build a new army under the Turks. It is interesting to note that his mother was a Turkish slave; he spoke Turkish better than Arabic and his personal bodyguards numbering 3000 were all Turks.

His policy to alienate the Arabs and the Persian soldiers and generals who had helped the previous Abbasid Caliphs build and strengthen the Empire, started serious domestic problems. Abbas, the son of Mamoon, became the centre of the secret move to overthrow Mu'tassim. Mu'tassim acted fast. He got Abbas arrested and put to death mercilessly, with the help of his Turkish officers.

His policy to build his army on the Turks brought a lot of resentment amongst the Arabs for several reasons. First, the "ego" of the Arab generals was hurt, as they were demoted in preference to the Turks. Second, the behaviours of the newly appointed Turks to the corridor of power made the Turks behave recklessly. Instances are recorded when they would speedily ride on their horses in the crowded bazaars of Baghdad, pushing aside or even killing those who came in their way. The general public therefore became so much so angered that they began to retaliate. Tabari mentions of an incident when a Turkish general was ambushed and killed by the local residents. When the Government asked for witnesses to come forward and name the culprit, none came out, to the chagrin of Mu'tassim.

Mu'tassim, therefore, decided to move his Capital from Baghdad to a new site to the north, to be called Samarra or Surra-man-raa ("He who saw it, was delighted"). Rather than focus on strengthening the boundaries of his empire that had started to flounder, he began to invest his time and resources in the construction of Samarra. According to Ameer Ali, "Mu'tassim...built for himself a palace, with barracks for two hundred and sixty thousand soldiers and stables for a hundred and sixty thousand horses." (*A Short History of the Saracens*)

The internal unrest, coupled with Mu'tassim's craze to invest heavily in his unproductive projects in Samarra, encouraged the Romans and the Greeks to raise rebellions. To bring them under control, he turned to his Turkish generals, such as Bugha the Elder, Ashnas,

Itak and Wasib. These Generals willingly came to help the Caliph but for a heavy price. By the end of Mu'tassim's reign, these Turks were the true rulers of the Abbasid Regime.

At the beginning of his reign, Mu'tassim, it will be recalled, summoned Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) to Baghdad and kept him there for a while. Fearing the Imam's growing popularity in Baghdad, he let him go back to Medina, only to call him back and to get him martyred. After that, his preoccupation with domestic problems, and the constant uprisings in the various parts of the empire, left little time for him to worry about Imam Naqi (a.s.). As seen in chapter 1, it was during this time that Imam Naqi (a.s.) continued to serve peacefully in Medina.

Having ruled for eight years, Mu'tassim died in 227 AH at the age of forty-six. At the time of his death, he is recorded to have said, "Had I known that mine would be such a short reign, I would have ruled differently." By this he might have meant that he would have ruled more harshly.

WATHIQ (227 AH - 232 AH)

His real name was Abu Jafar Harun. He assumed the name of Wathiq Billah meaning "he who is trustful in the help of the Lord". His religious thinking was the same as that of Mu'tassim. Mu'tassim, like Mamoon favoured the Mu'tazalites and opposed the traditionalists, the As'habul Hadith, whose uprisings he had to suppress.

His next move was to curb the growing powers of the Turks. To do this, he used the policy of "divide and rule". He used one Turkish group against the other. He went after those Secretaries of State who had been appointed by the Turks and served under them. For instance, not only did he imprison Sulayman Bin Habib, Itak's secretary, but also confiscated from him 200,000 dirhams (by other accounts 400, 000 dinars).

His strategy did nothing but cause instability and confusion. The central authority in Samarra continued to weaken. The uprisings were rampant throughout the empire. The local people were resentful of the oppressive means used to keep them in control, especially of the cruelty of the Prime Minister, Muhammed Bin Zayyat.

The administration in Samarra therefore had neither time nor energy to think of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) who continued his services to Islam almost uninterrupted in Medina.

Having ruled for five years, Wathiq died mysteriously in 232 AH. He had wished to be succeeded by his son. However, as noted earlier, the ultimate decision-making power rested with the Turkish generals, not the Caliph. The Chief Kazi, the Prime Minister and the courtiers wished to fulfil the dead Caliph's wishes. However, Wasif, the powerful Turkish general objected saying, "The crown, the robes, and the sceptre are too big for the lad."

The wishes of the Caliph were put aside. Instead of his son, his brother Abu Fadhl Jafar (Mutawakkil) was nominated as the next Caliph. He adopted the title of Al-Mutawakkil Alallah, meaning "he who puts his trust in Allah". We shall soon see how unfit he was to assume this title.

MUTAWAKKIL (232 AH - 247AH)

There was no love lost between Wathiq and his brother Abu Fadhl Jafar. Tabari mentions in his *Tarikh al-rusul wal Muluk* an incident which happened when Wathiq was in power that focuses on this point very well.

Mutawakkil wanted to be reconciled with his brother and approached Muhammed Bin Zayyat, the Prime Minister, for his help, but the latter not only insulted him verbally, but also threw away his letter of appeal in the garbage can!

However, when Mutawakkil finally succeeded in meeting Wathiq, Wathiq only insulted him by getting a barber cut Mutawakkil's hair, throw it on his face and send him out. Mutawakkil is reported to have said "I was never distressed so much than on this occasion ...I went to him in my best dress to please him, he had my hair cut upon it." As a matter of fact, Wathiq had Mutawakkil imprisoned.

As luck would have it, Mutawakkil moved from prison to the throne on the death of Wathiq.

It is not surprising that once in power, Mutawakkil would want to punish all those who were the favorites of Wathiq. No sooner had he ascended the throne then Mutawakkil embarked on a policy of oppression that earned him the title of "The Nero of the Arabs" and "The Yazid of the Abbasid" from latter day historians. Mutawakkil unleashed untold cruelty on these four groups:

1. Those who constituted the core of the administration of Wathiq especially Muhammad Ibne Zayyat
2. The 'Alawids' or the progeny of Imam Ali (a.s.) and their supporters, the Shias.
3. The Mu'tazalites-that group of Muslims who believed in the doctrine that the Quran was created; the traditionalists held the view that the Quran was eternal.
4. The non-Muslims who had enjoyed freedom and some form of fame and power in the previous administration.

THE DOWNFALL OF MUHAMMAD BIN ABDUL-MALIK AL-ZAYYAT:

Al-Zayyat, who had enjoyed power and privilege under Mu'tassim, and who was the Prime Minister in Wathiq's times became a 'common' prisoner as soon as Mutawakkil rose to power. Not only were his properties and wealth confiscated, Al-Zayyat was imprisoned and cruelly tortured. Ironically, the torture instruments that Al-Zayyat had devised, and used to punish his enemies, were used by Mutawakkil to torture and kill him.

THE 'ALAWIDS':

We have already noted how the system of Wikala had been put in place to ensure the survival of those who followed the Imams from the progeny of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.). We observed how the Imams - from the sixth Imam onwards - had appointed agents in several places to represent them, to serve the day-to-day needs of the followers. It happened, at times, that some of the Shi'as would rise against the Government of their own accord. For example, in 250 AH Muhammad bin Maraf al-Hilali who rose against the Government in Hijaz. Also, the leader of the rebels in Kufa in 250 AH was Yahya ibn Omar who was a sympathizer of Imam Hadi (a.s.).

These uprisings were unfortunately used by the government as an excuse to crack down on the Shia communities in general and the 'Sadat' in particular. Whereas Wathiq had shown some consideration for the Sadat (according to Abu al-Faraj Isfahani, some descendants of Imam Ali (a.s.) who were residing in Samarra were paid regular salaries and those in other provinces were paid large amount of money by Wathiq's orders), Mutawakkil declared open war on them and all those who happened in any way to sympathize or support the Wikala.

Imam's agents in Baghdad, Medina and Kufa were all killed by Mutawakkil's orders. As we noted earlier, Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) suffered the most. He was called in Samarra and was imprisoned. Mutawakkil ordered that no Shia be allowed to enter Samarra and none be offered government jobs. To survive, they therefore started export trade and some migrated to distant parts of the Empire where Mutawakkil's rulership was weak or non-existent. The only places where the followers of Imam (a.s.) could meet freely Najaf and Kerbala, where they went to those places for pilgrimage (ziyarah). Mutawakkil therefore decided to bring an end to these meetings by making it illegal to pay visits to Najaf and Kerbala. At first heavy penalties were imposed on those who dare break the law. Finding

that these measures did not discourage visitations to these Holy places Mutawakkil sent his army on different occasions not only to kill those who resisted them, but also to totally erase the shrines. It is only through the miracle of Allah, that the said shrines survived; Mutawakkil had wanted to wipe them from the face of the earth.

As Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) was regarded the head and leader of the Alawids and the Shias, Mutawakkil was very harsh with him as has been noted before. According to some historians, the only mitigating factor was in the person of Fateh Bin Khaqan.

Fateh Bin Khaqan was Turkish by birth but adopted the Arabic culture. He is described as being “Arabicized Turk” because of his knowledge of the Arabic language, which he blended with his Turkish culture. Because of his accomplishments, he rose to the status of being Mutawakkil’s Prime Minister. Some people consider him to have been a Shia. If he was one, he kept his true faith to himself though several instances are mentioned when he showed sympathy and concern for Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.). For example, credit is given to him for asking the initiative of allocating land to Imam (a.s.) for the latter to have his own private residence. Also he is quoted to have urged Mutawakkil against acting against the Imam (a.s.) on mere suspicion.

THE NON-MUSLIMS:

like the Umayyads, the Abbasid Caliphs beginning with Haroon Rashid and all those who followed him, gave the non-Muslims privileged positions in the court. As a matter of fact, many times they were given preference over deserving Muslims. Mutawakkil decided to go in the opposite direction. He passed some highly repressive laws against the non-Muslims that included:

- All non-Muslims were to wear identification signs (crosses) on their clothes.
- Non-Muslims were banned from government jobs.
- The graves of the non-Muslims were to be razed to ground level.

Mutawakkil's cruelty did not end with outsiders only; he did not spare members of his own family. He had many children, but, in the initial stages, his favourite sons were Muntasir and Mu'taz. His son Muntasir did not support his father's suppression and extravagance. It is said that he was very critical of his father for cursing and ridiculing Imam Ali (a.s.) in public. As a result, not only did, Mutawakkil disown him as his successor, but would humiliate him in public. For example, he used to call him Muntadhir (instead of Muntasir) meaning the one who is waiting; in this case he was accusing Muntasir as waiting eagerly for his father to die, so that he could succeed him. His harsh behaviour toward Muntasir cost Mutawakkil his life.

EVENTS LEADING TO MUTAWAKKIL'S DEATH:

Mutawakkil's erratic behaviour and his complete lack of respect for all and sundry, isolated him not only from his Turkish generals, but his own son Muntasir. According to Allama Majlisi, Muntasir decided to remove his father by force when his father insulted Hazrat Fatima (s.a.) in his court.

One night when Mutawakkil retired to his chamber drunk, Muntasir and some Turkish generals went into his chamber and killed him, and his Prime Minister, Fateh Bin Khaqan.

According to Tabari, Mutawakkil's rule extended over a period of 14 years, 10 months and three days. At the time of his death he was 40 years.

MUNTASIR (247 AH - 248 AH)

His name was Muhammad. Like his predecessors, he assumed the name of Muntasir Billah (victorious by the help of Allah). When he came to the throne, he was 24 and he ruled for about six months only.

Mutawakkil named him as his successor in the year 235 AH.

However, because he did not agree with his father's suppressive methods of government and his extravagance, and because he openly criticized him, his father became very angry with him. Not only did Mutawakkil replace Muntasir as his successor with Mu'taz, but also began to insult him regularly and that too, in public. It is believed that he was plotting to kill his son. Muntasir therefore arranged to kill his father in self-defence.

With the help of the Turks, Muntasir succeeded Mutawakkil. Though his rule lasted only six months, he accomplished more than his father. He abrogated his father's repressive laws against the Alawid. He returned the Fadak to their rightful owners. He ordered the shrine of Kerbala to be restored to its original structure that had been pulled down by his father. He lifted the ban to visit the mausoleums of Najaf and Kerbala. He had great respect for the progeny of Imam Ali (a.s.). Tabari reports in his *Tarikh al-rusul wal Muluk* that when he appointed Ali Bin Husayn as the governor of Medina, he instructed the latter to treat the family of Imam Ali kindly as they were Muntasir's "flesh and blood".

Unfortunately, the very Turks who had helped him come to power, planned to kill him. In his *Tarikh al-rusul wal Muluk*, Tabari describes the death of Muntasir in this way: The Turks planned to kill Muntasir. They bribed his servant who fed Muntasir with a poisoned pear. They then bribed the royal physician, Ibn Tayfar who treated the Caliph with poisoned lancets. In this way Muntasir's brief rulership was ended.

At the time of his death Muntasir was 25 years old. His rulership lasted for about six months only.

MUSTA'EN (248 AH - 252 AH)

He was Mutawakkil's younger brother. His name was Abu al-Abbas Muhammad Bin Mu'tassim. He assumed the regal name of Musta'en Billah (He who seeks assistance of Allah). He became Caliph at the age of 28.

On the death of Muntasir, there were proposals to put to power Mu'taz, Mutawakkil's other son. However, the fear that Mutawakkil's son, once in power, might wish to avenge his father's murder, made the Turks choose Musta'een as the next Caliph. At the time of taking over as Caliph, Musta'een was 28 years old. His rule too was short-lived; he ruled for only three years and nine months.

Once in power, he reinstated Mutawakkil's oppressive rulership. Fearing that his nephew, Mu'taz and Mu'ayyad, would plot against him, he stripped them of their wealth. According to Tabari, Musta'een "bought" all the properties of Mu'taz and Mu'ayyad for twenty thousand dinars though the actual value for Mu'taz's properties was 10 million dinars and two pearls, and that of Mu'ayyad 3 million dinars and three pearls. The two brothers were allowed to own just enough properties to earn 20,000 dinars annually for Mu'taz and 5,000 dinars annually for Mu'ayyad. They were then sent to prison under the custody of a Turkish general, Bugha the younger. Musta'een wanted his imprisoned nephews dead but the Turks saved them, for their own reasons.

Rivalry among the Turkish generals resulted in an uprising in Samarra itself in the year 251 AH. Musta'een, accompanied by two of his trusted Turkish generals, Wasif and Bugha, fled to Baghdad, fearing that he would be killed if he stayed in Samarra. The Turks from Samarra requested Musta'een to return to Samarra but he refused. This angered them and they decided to depose him, in favor of his nephew Mu'taz. Mu'taz, who had been imprisoned in a cell in Jawsaq Palace, was freed and declared the Caliph in the year 251 AH.

With the help of the Turks, Mu'taz raised an army and commanded his brother Abu Ahmad to march towards Baghdad. The civil war had begun. Musta'een gradually lost the support of his Turkish generals who had come to live with him in Baghdad. Bugha and Wasif urged him to abdicate in favour of Mu'taz. Also his host,

Muhammad Bin Abdulla, who had helped him face the Turkish assaults from Samarra, decided to make peace with Mu'taz. Mustâ'een had no other choice but to agree to abdicate on one simple condition that his life would be spared and he would retire in the city of Medina. Thus came the end of the Caliphate of Mustâ'een in 252 AH. Mustâ'een was not allowed to live in Medina or Mecca despite the written guarantee that had been given to him by Mu'taz. He was kept imprisoned with Wasif and was later murdered mercilessly by the orders of Mu'taz. Tabari reports that Mustâ'een's severed head was brought to Mu'taz when he was playing the game of chess. He awarded Mustâ'een's killer 50,000 dirhams and made him in charge of security in Basra.

MU'TAZ (252 AH - 255 AH)

His name was Muhammad Bin Jaffar, the son of Mutawakkil. He assumed the regal name of Mu'taz Billah (he who is prepared with the blessing of Allah). He came to the throne at the age of 20 years by the choice of the Turkish generals, who for their own selfish reasons did not want Mustâ'een to continue being the Caliph.

It is interesting to note that "logically" Mu'taz should have become the Caliph on the death of his elder brother Muntasir but he did not. And then he became Caliph when he was in prison, waiting to be hanged anytime by the orders of his uncle, Mustâ'een.

He began as the Caliph of Samarra only. This is because his uncle, Mustâ'een, was still the official Caliph though stationed in Baghdad. He waged battle after battle against his uncle and finally succeeded in dethroning him through treachery. He managed to win to his side the main supporters of Mustâ'een, and through them he forced Mustâ'een to abdicate. Instead of fulfilling his promise to let the deposed Caliph to retire in Medina, he got him killed.

Mu'taz did not trust his own brothers Mu'ayyad and Abu Ahmad. He put them both behind bars. Not satisfied with that, he got his brother Mu'ayyad killed mercilessly.

He who showed no mercy to his own uncle and he, who had his own brother who had helped him win battles against Mustà'een, killed, and he who got his other brother put behind bars for no other reason than that they were a threat to his kingship, naturally would show no sympathy to Imam Naqi (a.s.). He therefore arranged to get Imam (a.s.) poisoned. The Imam (a.s.) passed away two years before Mu'taz.

Having ruled for four and half years, Mu'taz was finally deposed and killed by the very Turk officers who had initially put him in power. At the time of his death he was twenty-four years old.

CONCLUSION

A brief study of the lives of seven Caliphs under whose reign Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) lived reveal the highlights of the problems and the dangers that lay on the way of Imam (a.s.) in his efforts to deliver the true message of Islam and to keep alive the Madhhab of Ahlul-Bayt.

One thing that worried these tyrannical Caliphs (with the exception of Muntasir, Wathiq and Mustà'een to some extent) was the fact that the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) had told the Muslims of the coming of the Mahdi, who would be his 12th successor. The fear of the Abbasid Caliphs almost culminated during the lifetime of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.), as he was the 10th successor of the prophet, and by common sense predecessor of the twelfth Imam. This must have been the main cause to have prompted Mu'taz to arrange for the martyrdom of the Imam (a.s.).

CHAPTER 4

IMAM ALI BIN MUHAMMAD: HIS CHARACTER

INTRODUCTION

Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) had a short life of only 42 years, half of which was spent in imprisonment of one form or another, and that also in a foreign country. Despite these hurdles, the Imam (a.s.) served the cause of Allah very well and impacted the lives of many people from all walks of life. Therefore, he was loved and respected by the public when he was alive, and remembered by many after his passing away. To illustrate this point we shall briefly refer to a few prominent Sunni scholars' views on the character and the accomplishments of the Imam (a.s.).

VIEWS ON THE PERSONALITY OF THE IMAM (A.S.) HELD BY THE SUNNI SCHOLARS

- Ibne Katheer portrays in his book *Al Badaya Wan Nahaya* the personality of the Imam (a.s.) in the following words: “The son of Imam Jawad (a.s.) and the father of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) was ascetic and pious.”
- Ibne Khalkan says, “The grandson of Imam Ridha (a.s.) known as Askari, is one of the Imams of the Imamia Sects. Because of false allegations, he was forced to leave Medina and live in Samarra...”
- Ali Bin Muhammad Maliki of “*Faslul Muhimma*” says, “...The words of praise, the eulogy and commendations that one cannot even imagine for others are appropriate for this Imam whose soul was pure, whose behaviour and general conduct with people exuded brilliance....”

KNOWLEDGE

Like the other divinely appointed Imams from the progeny of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.), Imam Naqi (a.s.) was the master of unique

intelligence and wisdom, which he reflected through his character throughout his short life. As a matter of fact, the Imam (a.s.) himself is reported to have said that all the divinely appointed Imams (including himself) are blessed with unique knowledge endowed to them by the Almighty; this knowledge is in 73 parts, 72 of which have been given to the 12 Imams from the progeny of the Prophet and only Allah himself possesses all the 73 parts.

From the time he took over as the Imam of the time (on the passing away of the ninth Imam (a.s.)), till his martyrdom, that spanned a period of 35 years, Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) was a power house of knowledge that touched the lives of many people. For the sake of simplicity, this knowledge is categorized as follows:

KNOWLEDGE OF THE QURAN

Incidents are described hereunder that show his unique insight and understanding of the Holy Book, the Quran:

- Once Mutawakkil was poisoned and there was little hope that he would survive. He made a “nadhr” that if he recovered, he would give “much wealth” in charity. He became well but did not know how much wealth he should give in charity to fulfil his vow. In other words, he did not know how much wealth constituted “much wealth”. He consulted the scholars, but none would give him a satisfactory answer. One of his servants, who was in contact with the Imam (a.s.), and who was probably aware of the Imam’s unsurpassable understanding of every branch of knowledge, volunteered to get a satisfactory answer for Mutawakkil. He paid Imam Naqi (a.s.) a visit. Before he could ask the Imam’s help, the Imam (a.s.) said, “You want to know what constitutes ‘much wealth.’ Go to Mutawakkil and tell him that ‘much wealth’ is eighty dirhams”. Imam’s ruling was based on verse number 25, chapter 9 of the Holy Quran in which Allah addresses the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) telling him that He has helped him in many battles. These battles in which there was divine help were 80 in all. Mutawakkil was highly pleased

with this explanation and rewarded his servant handsomely for his solution.

- A Christian was caught committing adultery with a Muslim. When he was brought in the court to be judged, he proclaimed himself ready to accept Islam and escape the punishment. The Chief Justice, Yahya Bin Aktham, was prepared to free the man of the grounds that he had accepted Islam; some Jurists objected and faulted this ruling. There was chaos in the court. Mutawakkil decided to ask Imam Naqī's ruling on this matter. The Imam (a.s.) overruled the verdict of the Chief Justice, and reinstated the punishment on the basis of the following verses of the Quran: BUT WHEN THEY SAW OUR PUNISHMENT THEY SAID "WE BELIEVE IN ALLAH ALONE AND WE DENY WHAT WE USED TO ASSOCIATE WITH HIM." BUT SHALL NOT BENEFIT THEM THEIR FAITH WHEN THEY HAD BEHELD OUR PUNISHMENT. (SUCH IS) THE PROCEDURE OF GOD WHICH HATH INDEED BEEN IN USE CONCERNING HIS SERVANTS; AND THEN THE DISBELIEVERS HAVE LOST. (Ch.40, v.84-85) Mutawakkil accepted Imam's ruling and punished the culprit accordingly.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE FUTURE

- It is reported in Shaykh Saduq's *Amali* that there used to be an engraver by the name of Yunus Naqqashi who was a regular visitor of Imam (a.s.). One day he came to the Imam (a.s.) seeking his help. What happened was Musa Bin Bugha, the Turkish General, had given Yunus a rare stone to fix it in a ring. In the process of fixing it, Yunus broke the stone accidentally. Yunus now feared for his life. Imam (a.s.) was all in smiles. He assured Yunus that nothing but goodness would come out of this accident, and advised him to retire in his home without any fear. In the morning, Musa's servant came to take Yunus to their master. Yunus first went to the Imam (a.s.) asking for his advice.

The Imam (a.s.) again reassured him that nothing but goodness would come to him. After a short while, Yunus came back to the Imam (a.s.). This time he was happy. He informed the Imam (a.s.) that Musa had called him (Yunus) to inquire if it was possible to split the stone into two halves and make two rings instead of one so as to end a quarrel between his two concubines, each wishing to have a ring with that rare stone embossed on it.

- Shaykh Saduq mentions another incident when a man by the name of Abu Hashim Jafary visited the Imam (a.s.) so as to express his poverty to him and seek financial help. Abu Hashim says that before he could tell the Imam (a.s.) of his poverty, the Imam (a.s.) started to numerate the blessings of Allah that Abu Hashim enjoyed: faith that would shelter him from hell fire, good health and strength that would allow him to worship; contentment and honour. The Imam (a.s.) then disclosed to him that he was aware of the intentions of Abu Hashim and accordingly gave him one hundred dinars of gold.
- Shaykh Mufid reports in *Al-Irshad* quoting Kheeran Asbaati who says that he went to see Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) in Medina. The Imam (a.s.) asked about Wathiq Billah, the Caliph of Samarra. Kheeran said that he was alive and kicking. The Imam (a.s.) responded, "People say that he had passed away." Kheeran said that out of modesty, the Imam said that people say so; in reality it was Imam (a.s.) himself who had this knowledge. The Imam (a.s.) then inquired about Jafar (Mutawakkil). Kheeran said that Jafar was in a miserable situation, locked behind bars. The Imam (a.s.) said, "He is the Caliph now." Then the Imam (a.s.) asked about Ibne-Zayyat. Kheeran said his words were the laws of the land. Imam said that things had changed; Wathiq was dead, Mutawakkil was in power and Ibne Zayyat's stars were declining and that soon he will die.

Imam (a.s.) had this knowledge in Medina as events were unfolding in Samarra, thousands of miles away.

- Shaykh Tusi reports that a man by the name of Abu Musa Isa Ahmed Bin Isa al-Mansur went to see the Imam (a.s.) when the latter was in Samarra. He complained to Imam (a.s.) that Mutawakkil was treating him very badly, depriving him even of his livelihood. He asked the Imam (a.s.) to intervene and put in a good word or two to Mutawakkil. Imam (a.s.) assured him those things would change in his favour very soon.

On that same night Mutawakkil's servants came to Abu Musa and took him to Mutawakkil's palace. Mutawakkil treated him with great respect and gave him a lot of money and other gifts. On his way home, Abu Musa asked Fateh Bin Khaqan, Mutawakkil's Prime Minister if Mutawakkil's sudden change of heart towards him was because of Imam's recommendations. Fateh said that it wasn't Imam's direct recommendation but his prayers that changed Mutawakkil's attitude towards Abu Musa.

The bottom-line is Imam (a.s.) knew in advance the change of fortune in store for Abu Musa.

- Shaykh Tabrasi reports that there was a person by the name of Jaffar Bin Qasim Hashim al-Basri, who was muslim of Waqifi denomination. He noticed the following two incidents which made him change his denomination and become a Shia of Imam Naqi (a.s.). The two incidents are:
 - First incident: The Imam (a.s.) was invited at a luncheon. When everybody was respectful, there was a young man who was very disrespectful and kept on talking a lot of nonsense. The Imam (a.s.) warned him, telling him to be mindful of his behaviour since he had only three more days to live. After three days, the man died as foretold by the Imam.
 - Second Incident: This incident also happened at a lunch party. There was a man who was cracking jokes and was

a nuisance. The Imam (a.s.) told Jafar who was next to him, “This man will not have the opportunity of having his meals. Soon he will hear bad news that will take away all his happiness.” No sooner had Imam (a.s.) made this observation, the man’s servant entered the room with the news that the man’s mother died from an accident by falling from the roof of the house.

These two incidents made Jafar became a follower of the Imam (a.s.).

- Yahya Bin Harthama was Mutawakkil’s trusted army general. Mutawakkil sent him with a contingent of 300 soldiers to Medina to bring the Imam (a.s.) to Samarra. Yahya reports that at that time he was a Muslim of Waqifi designation. But incident that took place on the way to Samarra made him change his denomination and become Shia. This incident is described as follows:

Yahya says that the day when they were to depart from Medina, he went to see if the Imam (a.s.) was ready to start the journey. Among the Imam’s luggage, he noticed some cotton quilts and woollen clothes that are needed only in cold winter. In his mind, Yahya thought that such items were useless and cumbersome for such a journey and thought very little about Imam (a.s.). He thought how could a man claim to be Imam when his general knowledge was so petty? Soon he was to be proved wrong.

The journey commenced. In the course of this long and arduous journey, one day this caravan stopped at a place that was totally uninhabitable for miles on end, covered by shifting sands and barren rocks. There was no sign of life. However, as the army was fully equipped with food and other necessities of life, Yahya and his men felt safe. In Yahya’s caravan, there were two of his attendants, one a Shia and another, a Sunni. They were always arguing with each other in support of their religious

denominations. Noticing the complete lifelessness that surrounded them, the Sunni attendant started to tease the Shia attendant by saying: “Your Caliph, Ali Ibne Abu Talib, has said that there is no place on the face of the earth, where there are no graves where the dead have been buried. Where would you find graves in this desert where none has ever lived? How can you then prove the truthfulness of your Imam?” The Shia attendant could not come out with an answer and all those who were present there began to laugh and make fun of him.

Soon after this occurrence, clouds began to form in the sky and strong wind began to blow. It started to rain heavily and the torrent was followed by heavy snowfall. The storm raged the whole night and continued to do so till the next day. The army had all the provision except warm clothing. Yahya says that he was freezing to death in his army not knowing how to protect himself, let alone his companions. At this moment, in the darkness of the night, Imam’s servant entered his camp with cotton quilts and woollen clothes that had made Yahya belittle the Imam’s intelligence in Medina! The servant conveyed Imam’s instructions: the warm clothing was for Yahya and his Shia attendant. Yahya regretted for having bad thoughts about the Imam (a.s.) and became a follower of the Imam (a.s.) from that moment onwards.

In the morning, when the storm had subsided, Yahya went to thank the Imam (a.s.) for saving his life. For many soldiers had died from the cold and wetness of the storm. Among the dead was the Sunni attendant who had doubted the truthfulness of Ali Ibne Abu Talib (a.s.). Imam (a.s.) addressed Yahya thus:

“Yahya, go and arrange for the burial of your dead companions. Be convinced also that the Omnipotent Allah will fill the face of the earth with graves this way. Nothing can contradict the sayings of Ali Ibne Abu Talib, the Commander of the Faithful.”

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

In an effort to humiliate the Imam (a.s.), Mutawakkil arranged for

a question-answer session in his court and hired the most renowned Scholar of the times, Ibn Sikkit with the understanding that Ibn Sikkit would ask questions which the Imam would be unable to answer and so fall in esteem in the eyes of the public.

Ibn Sikkit asked the Imam: “Prophet Musa had the divine power of turning his staff into a snake. Also, his palm was illuminating with a strong light. Prophet Isa, on the other hand could perform miracles by turning the dead alive, cure the sick and lepers and infuse life in birds made of clay to turn into live ones. Why was each Prophet given a different miracle?”

Imam’s reply was that the miraculous powers given to a Prophet depended on the level of development of the times in which he lived. By this token, since in the times of Prophet Musa the “art” of magic was at its peak and determined the highest status of magicians, he was given the miracle that is real and more powerful compared with the “art” of the magicians. During the time of Prophet Isa, medical science was regarded as the most prestigious discipline. Prophet Isa was given the ability to cure those who could not be helped by the existing medical practices. He could even bring back to life the dead. On the other hand, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) lived in an era when the art of rhetoric was considered to be above every other art. Prophet Muhammad’s miracle was in the Holy Quran which was a miracle in language that was unsurpassable in all times.”

Ibn Sikkit raised a supplementary question: “How can one differentiate between right and wrong in absence of miracles?”

Imam (a.s.) replied: “The differentiation between truth and falsehood is done through intelligence and through the experience that one has developed in the course of his life.”

Ibn Sikkit: “If intelligence and experience were the key to

segregate the right from the wrong; then why were miracles given to the Prophets?”

The Imam’s reply was that blind prejudice was a barrier towards using the intelligence and experience to reach at the right path. The miracles gave the Prophets the ability to clear blind prejudice and prepare Man to use his intelligence and experience correctly and beneficially.

Ibn Sikkit asked further questions along the same lines: “Why didn’t Prophet Suleiman assign the job of bringing the Queen of Sheba’s (Bilkis) throne to Asif Bin Barkia in the first place and instead asked for any other person in the court to do the same job? Is it because Prophet Suleiman did not know the ability of Asif?”

The Imam (a.s.) replied that Prophet Suleiman knew the abilities of Asif but wanted it to be understood by others. The offer was open for all: only Asif could comply within the shortest stipulated period.

Ibn Sikkit realized his own limitations and complemented the Imam (a.s.) saying that he had never known all this information that was now available to him because of the Imam (a.s.).

PIETY

Like the other “Masoom” Imams, he spent his days fasting and his nights in prayers. As has been mentioned elsewhere in this booklet, every time the soldiers of Mutawakkil invaded his privacy in his home, they would find him reading Quran or in deep prayers.

One practice that is essentially associated with this Imam’s piety is he had a grave dug in his living room. When people inquired as to why he had a grave next to him, he would tell them that the open grave reminded him of the reality of this life and made his vision be down-to-earth.

Several supplications (dua) are said to have been compiled by him and then taught to his followers. The salutation of Jamiah or “Ziyarat Jamiah Kabeera” was compiled by this Imam (a.s.) when he was in the prison of Mutawakkil. A follower, Musa Ibn Abdulla Najafi requested the Imam to teach him a perfect salutation that he could utter when visiting the Shrine of any Imam. The Imam (a.s.) taught him this Ziyarat. Indeed, this salutation is a perfect work and gives an insight into the role, function and above all the status of the Prophet and the other 13 Masoomeen.

GENEROSITY

With a few marginal exceptions, the general behaviour of the Abbasid Administration towards the Imam (a.s.) and his followers was as best mean, at worst callous and cruel. However, the Imam’s reaction to them all was full of gentleness and generosity. You will recall how gently and kindly the Imam (a.s.) greeted the soldiers of Mutawakkil who had intruded into his house in search of incriminating evidence to be used to implicate and punish the Imam (a.s.).

Remember also that when Mutawakkil himself needed the assistance of the Imam (a.s.) to help him cure his life-threatening disease, the Imam (a.s.) came to his rescue.

Many more instances could be described, but his would exhaust the limited scope of this small booklet. Readers are requested to carry out their own research for more illustrations of the Imam’s generosity.

CHAPTER 5

IMAM ALI BIN MUHAMMAD (A.S.): HIS MIRACLES

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes situations are such that a divinely appointed person has to show to his challengers some extraordinary strength to prove to them the truthfulness of his claims. The Holy Quran provides us with several such instances. For example, we are told of the miraculous staff of Prophet Musa; the staff that would turn into a snake and back to its original self on the command of Prophet Musa. The parting of the sea-water and the safe passage of the Bani Israel through the walls of waves is yet another example of the extraordinary happenings. Different miracles happen at different times.

Ibn Sikkit, a renounced Abbasid Scholar asked our tenth Imam, Ali Naqi (a.s.) the following questions: “Why did Allah give different miracles to different Prophets? Prophet Musa (a.s.) would turn his staff into a serpent and produce light in his palms; Prophet Isa (a.s.) would show miracles in the field of health-care and Prophet Muhammad’s (s.a.w.w.) miracle was in verbal and listening skills.”

Imam (a.s.) replied: “During the times of Prophet Musa the “art” of witchcraft was wide-spread. Prophet Musa was therefore endowed with that miracle that could prove the fallacy behind the current witchcraft and establish the truthfulness of the message of Allah. On the other hand during the times of Prophet Isa (a.s.) the community focus was on the art of preventive and curative medicines. Prophet Isa therefore established his status as the messenger of Allah by raising the dead, curing the sick, especially the lepers. In the same way, during the times of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) the literary art and eloquence was of greatest regards among the people. The Prophet’s miracle was in these fields

so that he could excel and establish his position as the messenger of Allah.”

From Imam’s reply we can understand then that the kind of miraculous powers a representative of Allah shows depends upon the level of educational development and the social circumstances of the people of a given age. In light of the observations, let us now look at some of the miracles that are associated with Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.).

MIRACLE ONE

At a particular place in his court, Mutawakkil had an aviary full of chirruping birds. Whenever, Mutawakkil decided to have his sitting there, the courtiers would have a hard time conversing with each other and hearing what Mutawakkil was saying. This was because of the intensive chirruping of the birds. However, whenever Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) was present, the birds would remain completely quiet and conversation between the courtiers and Mutawakkil would be conducted with ease.

MIRACLE TWO

A young woman claimed herself to be Hazrat Zainab, the daughter of Imam Ali (a.s.). People questioned her that if she were indeed Hazrat Zainab, her age would be over 400 years, and this was not normal. She claimed that the Prophet (s.a.w.w.), her grandfather, had prayed for her longevity of life and she had therefore lived this long without aging. She also stated that as a matter of fact after every forty years, she would rejuvenate.

Mutawakkil consulted his courtiers on this matter; their reply was that Hazrat Zainab had passed away long time ago and this was a historical fact. However, being what he was, Mutawakkil demanded a more sound evidence to prove that the young lady was a fake. This issue could not be resolved until when it was referred to Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.).

Imam's reply was that this lady was only an imposter: she was not Hazrat Zainab. To put her claim to test, Imam (a.s.) suggested that she be put in front of wild beasts. If she were truly Hazrat Zainab, no harm would come to her, as no animal would dare hurt the daughter of Hazrat Fatima (s.a.).

The young lady protested, saying that this was only a trick to kill her! At this juncture, a courtier who had wished to harm the Imam (a.s.), suggested to Mutawakkil that to prove the Imam's claim let him be put in front of the wild animals. For wasn't he also the close member of the progeny of Hazrat Fatima (s.a.). Mutawakkil liked the idea. The proposition was made to the Imam (a.s.). He willingly agreed to be placed in front of the wild animals. This was done, while the entire public sat to watch. The animals showed great respect to the Imam (a.s.). The Imam (a.s.), too, showed compassion, patting their heads with gentleness and love. Fearing that the Imam's fame would increase among people, Mutawakkil ordered that the Imam (a.s.) be brought out without any further delay.

The imposter was now told to go and face the roaring animals. She pleaded for mercy and admitted that she was no Zainab, the daughter of Imam Ali (a.s.).

MIRACLE THREE

Abu Hashim Jafary says that "Once I was alone with Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) in the desert. I took this opportunity to disclose to him my financial problems. The Imam (a.s.) bent down, took a handful of sand and gave it to me saying that I should go and sell it and end my financial problems. Looking at the sand, I was shocked. For in my hand was pure gold! The Imam (a.s.) instructed me to keep this a secret (in his lifetime). I went to a gold smith who asked me where from I acquired such purified gold that he had never seen in his entire career as a gold smith. I kept the secret and did not tell him the true source of the gold."

MIRACLE FOUR

Abu Hashim Jafary was living in Baghdad. He complained to the Imam (a.s.) that he (Abu Hashim) could not visit the Imam (a.s.) because his horse had grown too old and he had no other means to go to Samarra to meet the Imam (a.s.). The Imam (a.s.) prayed for him. Consequently, Abu Hashim said that he observed a new strength in his horse which would now carry his master to Samarra daily and at a fast pace too.

MIRACLE FIVE

A group of slaves showed great respect to the Imam (a.s.) in the presence of Mutawakkil. Mutawakkil was annoyed and on inquiry for the reason was told that "...this is the man who comes and teaches us religion. He is the representative of the last Prophet of the age and we have seen him do many miracles."

Mutawakkil ordered Bultan, the man in charge of those slaves, to kill them all. Accordingly, he killed them all and buried them.

In the evening, he went to the Imam (a.s.) to explain to him what had happened. Before he could say anything, the Imam (a.s.) inquired for the slaves and when Bultan told him that they were all dead, the Imam (a.s.) took Bultan in a room where he saw all the slaves alive, enjoying themselves eating fruits placed in front of them.

CHAPTER 6

IMAM ALI BIN MUHAMMAD (A.S.): HIS SAYINGS

INTRODUCTION

Like his father, Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) assumed the position of the Imam of the age when he was very young. However, unlike his father whose life was very short, Imam Naqi (a.s.) had a relatively longer life than his father. As a young man, he was not considered to be a threat to the Abbasid regime and was therefore left unmolested in the earlier period of his Imamate. He had an opportunity to impart knowledge to the world unhindered. He conducted his classes in the mosque of the Prophet and students converged there from all over the Islamic world especially from Iraq, Persia and Egypt. This practice continued for about 12 years.

Knowledge that was imparted by him during these years was recorded and transmitted throughout the Muslim world. A part of this knowledge was in the form of traditions and sayings, some of which are produced hereunder.

THE TRADITIONS AND SAYINGS OF THE IMAM (A.S.)

1. This world is a “sooq” - a market: some reap profits, others face losses.
2. He who fears Allah, people fear him, and he who obeys Allah, people obey him.
3. Jealousy eats away good deeds and brings about punishment.
4. The displeasure, of parents brings about shortage of sustenance, and humiliation.
5. Anger is the key to hardship, but malice is worse than anger.
6. Waking up in the night makes the sleep sweeter, and hunger adds to the enjoyment of food.

7. Remember that time when you will be lying in front of your family and friends, and there will be neither a physician to prevent your death nor a friend to help you.
8. He who has a complete faith in Allah finds the hardships of this life very light despite the fact that he may be cut into pieces.
9. A man's worth in this world is in his wealth, whereas his hereafter is in his deeds.
10. Beware of jealousy for it will harm you not your enemy.
11. He who unites in him your love and good thoughts, for him you must have obedience.
12. Trivial talks are the enjoyment of the stupid and the ignorant.
13. For the patient, a calamity is single, but for those who complains about it, it is double.
14. Conceit prevents learning and invites scorn and ignorance.
15. Allah has made this life a series of testing and hereafter a place of rewards. He has made trials of this life a measure for the reward for the next life.
16. Wisdom has no effect on those with a corrupt character.

CHAPTER 7

IMAM ALI BIN MUHAMMAD (A.S.): HIS FAMILY

HIS WIFE

Her name was Hudayth. She is also known by her other name: Salil. She was a slave; Imam (a.s.) married her and made her part of the family. She was a very pious person and learned too. Imam (a.s.) used to praise her for her piety and wisdom. She was Imam Hasan Askari's mother. Because of her piety, knowledge and wisdom, she became one of the representatives of the Twelfth Imam, after the martyrdom of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.). She provided leadership and guided the Shia community to such an extent that she became known as "Jaddah"-the Grandmother.

Some people questioned as to how could a woman be a trustee of the Imam (a.s.) (referring to her role after the passing away of our eleventh Imam (a.s.)); they received the reply from the twelfth Imam: she was working on the basis established by Hazrat Zainab Binti Ali who was in charge of affairs after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.) when Imam Zainul Abeedeen (a.s.) was sick.

Jassim M. Hussain in his *The Occultation of the Twelfth Imam* quotes Masud as his source, stating that following her son's instructions, she took the twelfth Imam (a.s.) to Mecca for pilgrimage and then retired in Medina for his safe-keeping. Such was her status in the eyes of the Imam of the time.

HIS CHILDREN

There were five male and one female children of the Imam (a.s.)

1. IMAM HASAN ASKARI (a.s.)

2. HUSAYN:

He was a very pious person; so much so that together with his brother Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) they were referred to as SIBTAIN (like Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn (a.s.)). He is buried near the grave of his father and brother in Samarra.

3. MUHAMMAD: (who is popular by the name Sayyid Muhammad).

He was the eldest son of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.). He, too, was very knowledgeable and devout. He passed away during the lifetime of his father. It was at the time of his death that Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) introduced to the community his son, Hasan Askari (a.s.) as their next Imam.

Muhammad is buried in the village of Balad, which is a few miles outside the city of Samarra.

4. JAFAR:

He was the opposite of his brothers. Scholars liken him with the disobedient son of Nabi Nuh. After the passing away of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.), he pressed his own claim as the Imam of the age. However, none accepted him as such. He came to be known as Jafar Kadhab (the “liar”).

It is said that later on in life, he repented and scholars advise that he be called Jafar Tawwab (the repentant).

5. ALIYA:

Nothing has been written about her in the books of history.

QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 1

1. Briefly describe Imam Ali Naqi's childhood years in Medina.
2. How would you describe the relationship between:
 - a. Mu'tassim and Imam (a.s.)
 - b. Ummul Fadhl and Imam (a.s.)
 - c. Al-Junaid and Imam (a.s.)
3. Who was Al-Junaid? How was he "used" to undermine the growing fame of the Imam (a.s.)? Did this strategy work? Explain.
4. What were the main characteristics and functions of the Institution of Wikala?

CHAPTER 2

1. Why did Mu'tassim favor the Turks over the Arabs?
2. Why was the public unhappy with Mu'tassim's policy regarding the Turks? How did they show their resentment?
3. Explain why Imam (a.s.) had ample time to spread the message of Allah in the reigns of Mu'tassim and Wathiq.
4. Why did Mutawakkil invite Imam (a.s.) to Samarra? What kind of treatment did the Imam (a.s.) receive when he arrived in Samarra as a "Royal Guest"? Why?
5. Describe briefly what type of life Imam (a.s.) led in Samarra.
6. Who was Musa Bin Musa? Why was he invited to Samarra? What advice did the Imam (a.s.) give him? What was the outcome of Musa's visit to Samarra?
7. Briefly describe any two instances showing how Mutawakkil would harass the Imam (a.s.). What factors made Mutawakkil harass the Imam (a.s.)?

CHAPTER 3

1. In question (i) to (x) below, for each question there is one best answer out of the options (a) to (d). Choose this correct answer.

- i. Mamoon chose Mu'tassim to be his successor because:
 - a. The army preferred him.
 - b. Mamoon's son, Abbas, backed down in favour by his uncle
 - c. Mu'tassim was steadfast in Allah
 - d. We do not know why.

- ii. Building the City of Samarra was a mistake because:
 - a. The Arabs resented it
 - b. This led to the ambush of the Turks
 - c. This project diverted Mu'tassim from managing his empire well
 - d. None of the above.

- iii. Mu'tassim killed his nephew Abbas because:
 - a. Abbas was plotting against him
 - b. Abbas caused serious domestic problems
 - c. Abbas befriended the Persian soldiers
 - d. Mu'tassim did not trust Abbas

- iv. By relying too much on the Turkish generals:
 - a. The Romans and the Greeks rebelled
 - b. The Turks became the true rulers
 - c. Samarra became an unproductive project
 - d. Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) continued to serve peacefully in Medina

- v. Wathiq's treatment of the Turks was different from Mu'tassim:
 - a. He favoured only one group of Turks
 - b. He wanted to reduce the growing powers of the Turks
 - c. He weakened the central authority
 - d. He caused instability and confusion

- vi. Wathiq's wish that his son succeed him as the next Caliph was not fulfilled because:
 - a. The powerful Turkish generals opposed it

- b. His son was just a lad
- c. The courtiers objected
- d. (a), (b) and (c) together.

vii. Mutawakkil is known as the “Nero of the Arabs” because:

- a. Circumstances surrounding his rulership are mysterious
- b. He was very fast to punish his enemies
- c. He was very much oppressive
- d. Of his swift move from being a prisoner to becoming the Caliph.

viii. Fateh Bin Khaqan’s most worthiness was:

- a. He was the Prime Minister
- b. He was highly accomplished person
- c. He was a sympathizer of the Imam (a.s.)
- d. He was Turkish but lived like an Arab

ix. Mutawakkil hated his son, Muntasir, because:

- a. Muntasir considered himself Muntadhir
- b. Muntasir was disobedient
- c. Muntasir was not good enough to be the Caliph
- d. Muntasir opposed his father’s repressive policies

x. Muntasir’s reign can best be described as:

- a. short-lived but promising
- b. chaotic
- c. repressive
- d. short-lived and uneventful

2. Briefly describe Mutawakkil’s policy toward the following:

- a. the Alawids (or the progeny of Imam Ali (a.s.))
- b. the Mu’tazalites
- c. the non-Muslims

3. How does Mutawakkil’s rulership compare with Mu’tassim’s?

4. How was Musta'een related to Mutawakkil and how did he succeed Mutawakkil? Why was he subsequently deposed in favour of Mu'taz? How did Mu'taz treat him? Why?
5. Describe briefly how Mu'taz became the Caliph and how did he treat his brothers to maintain his hold on to his rulership?

CHAPTER 4

1. How would you describe Imam Naqī's knowledge? Give examples
2. Write a brief account of Imam's piety or generosity.

CHAPTER 5

1. What did you learn about miracles from the conversation on this issue between Imam (a.s.) and Ibn Sikkit?

CHAPTER 6

Choose anyone saying of the Imam (a.s.). Briefly explain what it means and how can you use this saying to improve your life.

CHAPTER 7

1. Why was Hadhrat Salil called "Jaddah"?
2. Write a brief account on the children of the tenth Imam (a.s.).



ISBN 9976 620 17 5

Published and Printed by:
Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania
P.O.Box 20033
Dar es Salaam – Tanzania