

IMAM ALHADI [A.S]

امام الهادي (ع)

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Know the historical and political environment of the time of Imam al-Hādi (as), including:
- The circumstances around the martyrdom of Imam al-Hādi (as)
- Understand what it means to be a guide and what is required to be guided
- Understand the harms of refusing advice

Imam al-Hādi (as)

Imam 'Ali al-Hādi (as) lived most of his life in Samarrā', a city in the north of Iraq. The Abbasid government imposed on him house arrest. He was like a prisoner. The spies and enforcers of the Abbasid government surrounded his house watching all his movements and the movements of all associated with him. He suffered the most severe political pressure during the reign of al-Mutawakkil, the Abbasid tyrant, who saved no effort in oppressing the Imam and his Shi'ah.

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 4

THE IMAM IN MEDINA

The Imam (as) was only eight years old when his father died. Thus, like his father, he also took over the responsibility of Imamat at a very young age. The Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mūn was succeeded by al-Mu'tasim, who ruled for eight years. He was in turn followed by al-Wāthiq Billāh. During the five years of the reign of Wāthiq, the Imam (as) and the Shi'ah were allowed to live peacefully. After Wāthiq, his brother al-Mutawakkil came to power.

Al-Mutawakkil was notorious for his free living, immodesty and intoxication. He was the first Abbasid Caliph to hold and participate openly in parties where music, drinking, vain talk and all kinds of evil were practised.

For the first four years of his rule, al-Mutawakkil was occupied in state matters, so he did not trouble the Imam (as). After he was free from his affairs, he turned his attention to the activities of the Imam (as).

At the time, the Imam (as) was preaching to the people in Medina, guiding them to the right path and increasing their faith in Islam. The recognition of his great knowledge and attributes grew day by day. When al-Mutawakkil heard about his reputation and popularity, he was overcome by jealousy and felt that his own power was threatened.

Al-Mutawakkil disguised his hatred for Imam (as) and wrote to him, respectfully inviting him to come to Samarrā' to meet him. He claimed that he believed in the position of Imam (as) and wanted to settle matters peacefully. Although the Imam (as) was well aware of al-Mutawakkil's evil intentions, he knew that the consequences of refusing would be sure death.

THE IMAM MOVES TO SAMARRĀ'

He therefore reluctantly decided to leave Medina, the beloved city of the Holy Prophet (saw). When he arrived in Samarrā, al-Mutawakkil totally ignored him and ordered that he should be put up in an inn provided by the state for beggars and homeless people.

Al-Mutawakkil imposed a serious economic blockade on Imam al-Hādi (as) and imposed severe penalties on whoever sent *khums* or gifts to him. During the reign of al-Mutawakkil Imam al-Hādi (as) was in serious hardship and difficulty. The believers refrained from giving him the *khums* as they refrained from visiting and having the honour of serving him for fear of the oppressive government

al-Mutawakkil now showed his true colours by imprisoning the Imam (as) under the custody of a cruel hearted man. This man, however, soon changed his feelings on witnessing the manners and behaviour of the Imam (as). Thereafter, al-Mutawakkil transferred him to the prison of another cruel man called Sa'īd.

Here the Imam (as) remained until Fataḥ bin Khāqān became the prime minister of al-Mutawakkil. Fataḥ was a Shi'ah and could not bear to see the miserable condition of Imam (as), so he used his influence to secure his release. However, al-Mutawakkil kept a close watch on the activities of Imam (as), trying to prove that he was acting against the government so as to have an excuse to kill him.

Although al-Mutawakkil was his most deadly enemy, the Imam (as) did not return this enmity. Once al-Mutawakkil happened to suffer from a serious sickness and his own doctors declared him incurable. Al-Mutawakkil's mother approached the Imam (as) for help, and he prescribed an ointment that resulted in a quick cure.

Al-Mutawakkil made it his mission to hunt out and kill all the descendants of Abu Ṭālib and made life so terrifying for them that they were scattered far and wide. He did not content himself with this, but also showed the ultimate disrespect by demolishing the shrine of Imam Ḥusayn (as).

He prohibited anyone from going to visit Karbala. If anyone tried, they were put into underground prisons, never to be seen again.

Al-Mutawakkil was finally killed by his own son al-Muntaṣir, who succeeded him. He was followed by al-Musta'in Billah and al-Mu'tazz Billah.

It was the accursed Mu'tazz who decided to kill the Imam (as) because he could not bear to see the devotion of the people to him. A messenger of al-Mu'tazz came to Imam (as) and managed to poison him.

The Imam (as) died within a few hours. The funeral prayers were conducted by his son, Imam Ḥasan al-'Askari (as), and he was buried in Samarrā'. He was only 42 years old at the time. Of the 34 years of Imam al-Hādi's (as) Imamate, 17 years were spent in freedom and the other 17 years were spent in prison.

WHO IS A GUIDE?

There are some general qualities that are required for person to be a guide; these are that the guide should be:

- Knowledgeable
- genuine or honest
- caring, and understanding

However, a guide can only guide if the person who needs guidance accepts the guidance. For a person to benefit from the guidance that can be provided by others, they must be willing to take advice. They need to put away their pride and be willing to listen and reassess their thoughts and actions regularly.

It is therefore a two-way process for success to be achieved. When it comes to the Guidance that God provides to us through so many channels, we will not benefit from any of these channels unless we are able to accept guidance.

WHY THE IMAM (AS) WAS CALLED AL-HĀDI (THE GUIDE)

1. The Imam was always emphasising the role of the Qur'an as the Scale of Truth when people doubted the Qur'an and tried to use narrations to change the religion. In such a time, the Imam made sure everyone referred to the Qur'an as the main reference.
2. The Imam guided people to the right answer in one of the most difficult debates to take over the Muslim world- the debate about free will and determinism. We have learnt about this in previous lessons.
3. At the time, the Shi'ah were being accused of saying that God had a body, because of a mistake by one Shi'ah scholar. The Imam (as) made sure that this was refuted and did not let this accusation spread.

4. The Imam (as) guided us towards understanding the true status of the Ahlul Bayt (as). This was done mainly through an amazing visitation called: *al-Ziyārah al-Jāmi'ah al-Kabirah*.

TAKING ADVICE

We know that people who are more knowledgeable and more experienced than us are always in a better position to guide us. This is because they are able to see many of the consequences of our decisions better than we can. By seeking advice, we are actually getting more knowledge and with more knowledge we can obviously make better and more profitable decisions.

Seeking advice also demonstrates a person's intellectual and social development. Imam 'Ali (as) says:

"He who consults with men of understanding, shows his development..."ⁱ

WHO SHOULD I ASK ADVICE FROM?

When seeking advice, we should go to a person who is an expert. This is the main condition. Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) has told us as to how to take advice and from whom, saying:

"Seeking advice from others is a virtue. If you do not do it, you will face a great loss. However, there are conditions. The first is that the person you seek advice from should have intellect (i.e. be an expert). Secondly, he should also be religious and impartial. Thirdly, he should also be a friend. Fourthly, you must divulge all the details to him, so that he knows our affairs as much as you do. The counsellor should then keep this a secret and not divulge it."

In this narration, the Imam (as) says we should take advice from people who:

- Are knowledgeable (not just any ordinary friend or random person)
- Are religious, especially when it comes from religious issues or issues of right and wrong, we should seek advice from practising Muslims.
- Are nice and kind to us, such as our parents, teachers, friends. We should not take advice from people who may dislike us or who have problems with us, as it will be harder to take their advice.

The harms of not taking advice are quite a few, but to list them in brief – a person who does not take advice:

- Is likely to do more harm than good, not only to himself but to others around him

- Is likely to do the wrong thing and put him/herself in difficulty afterwards
- Prevents him/herself to improve their situation even if they are in a problem
- Becomes arrogant and makes more mistakes

Therefore we must be humble and polite enough to seek advice from those who know more than us, and we must be willing to consider their advice at least, even if we sometimes may not agree with the advice entirely.

However, it is important to know that we do not have the choice or wisdom to disagree with religious advice as this is always in our best interests – i.e. we cannot disagree with the Laws of Allah and choose not to follow them if someone advises us to do so.

BRIEF SAYINGS OF THE IMAM (AS)

"In a friendly manner, advise your friend and say to him: When God intends goodness for somebody, He makes him accept the advice of the friends."

"He who fears God, all others will fear him. He who obeys God, will be obeyed. He who obeys God will not care for the dissatisfaction of the creatures. He who enrages the Creator should be sure of encountering the dissatisfaction of the creatures."

"This world is like a market in which some profit and others lose."

Review Questions

Q1. The tyrant who poisoned Imam al-Hādi (as) was:

- a. Al-Mu'taṣim
- b. Al-Mutawakkil
- c. Al-Mu'tazz

Q2. We are encouraged to take advice from:

- a. Friends
- b. Enemies
- c. People we have problems with

Q3. When we are given advice, we should:

- a. Usually ignore it, because people don't always understand us
- b. At least consider it, because it will allow us to improve
- c. Always take it, no matter where it comes from

ⁱ [Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 75, p. 105]