

With Infallibles

Learning about the life of Infallible Imams (p.b.u.t), regardless of familiarizing us more with their high statues, it can also teach us very constructive lessons. In this part of the magazine through recourse to literature, to offer a page of their life's history of Imam Hasan Askari (p.b.u.h.) – the 11th Imam of Shia- under the title of "Great Secret".

The Great Secret (story)

It was a few days that the holy Imam Hasan Askari (p.b.u.h.) was in his sickbed. The spies had surrounded Imam's house. The news of his sickness had spread among the people too. They thought that the caliph had poisoned the Imam; but didn't dare to say anything out of fear of the caliph's soldiers. But whenever they saw me in the streets, they asked about Imam's health and prayed for him.

I could feel that the Imam was spending his last days. I was about to go crazy out of grief. I knew that I was getting close to hard and dark days, days which I could no longer have access to the Imam as easily as before. But there was nothing I could do. I had no idea of what I could do. I wanted the Imam to be happy and healthy forever so that I could be at his service and take his orders immediately.

Two weeks ago Imam Hasan Askari had sent for me and said, "Oqaid, go to Abol-adyan's house and ask him to come here immediately."

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I mounted a swift horse and passed through the dusty and dirt covered pathways, the green fields of "Samera", its long line of palm trees; and arrived at Abol-adyan's house. He was eating breakfast. We greeted each other and then I conveyed Imam's message to him. He put down the bite he was holding and got up to change his clothes. Then he mounted his horse and started off.

Imam was waiting for him at home. Abol-adyan greeted the Imam and kissed his hand. Imam gave him a few letters. He had to take the letters to Madayen and bring back the replies.

Abol-adyan took the letters, kissed them and put them on his eyes. Imam had confidence in him and sent him for conveying important messages. Then, Imam looked at Abol-adyan with tearful eyes and said, "You are a good friend. So I shall give you some news."

After a short pause he continued, "Your trip will take fifteen days. When you come back, I will no longer be among you."

Abol-adyan started to cry loudly. He knelt down in front of the Imam and took hold of his hand, kissing it several times. Imam's hand got wet from Abol-adyan's tears. Imam stroked his head with a hand full of kindness. Abol-adyan asked, "My lord, what should we do?"

Imam said, "Be patient and, for God's sake, tolerate the upcoming hardships."

Abol-adyan became silent and tried to hold back his tears and asked again, "After you, how can we find the "Promised Mahdi", and how can we recognize him?"

Imam said with a smile, "You can recognize the Promised Mahdi in three ways;

1. He will perform my funeral prayer.
2. He will ask the replies of these letters from you.
3. He will describe the contents of the pouches which will be brought for me."

One week after Abol-adyan's departure, Imam's health suddenly deteriorated. One day, as I was sitting by his side, someone knocked on the door. One of the servants opened the door. The premier of the caliph (vizier) and a few of his staff entered the room. The vizier kissed Imam's hand and sat before him, next to his feet and said, "I heard about your illness. I went to the caliph and informed him about you. He immediately ordered five of his best physicians to attend your health and cure you. God's willing you shall get well soon." Then vizier ordered the physicians to stay there, and paying his respect went away. I knew that there was something more. For sure, the Abbasid government had poisoned the Imam; otherwise there was no way that vizier could get informed this soon.

I knew some of those physicians. They were proficient in their work but they worked for the caliph and took out his plans. That is why I was suspicious of them.

Day by day, Imam's physical condition worsened. His strong and healthy body had turned unbelievably pale and thin.

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Five days later, the vizier came to visit the Imam again and kissing his hand said, "O my God! How thin and pale you have turned?"

One of the physicians whispered to the vizier, "His health is really terrible and he will pass away in a few days."

The vizier ordered them to stay there for longer and report every incident. I secretly heard what they said and conveyed them to the Imam. Imam knew everything.

A few hours later, the town's judge, accompanied with some of the aristocrats and a number of soldiers, came in and greeted the Imam and said, "The caliph has ordered these soldiers to stay here, and keep an eye on you."

By the order of Imam, we had submitted to God's will and were watching the caliph's game in silence. Those days were the hardest in my life.

The soldiers had eyes on us and followed us everywhere. How I hated the caliph! He counted the Imam's existence as a great danger for his government and that is why he had arrested and imprisoned the Imam several times. Once he sent the Imam to "Wasif's jail". He had ordered the guards to watch out for what the Imam did and to annoy him. But Imam's character influenced the guards greatly. Wasif found out about the sudden change in the attitude of the guards. He, a stonehearted and cruel man, went to the caliph and told him that his guards, who had been frivolous and immoral men, have become believers of the Imam and turned into virtuous

and praying men. He added if the Imam stayed in jail any longer, all of the guards would convert and they would revolt against the caliph. The caliph got worried and ordered for release of the Imam. This news was later told to Imam, by one of his followers who was in the caliph's palace.

The soldiers and spies searched every where. They had found out that the "Promised Mahdi" is the son of Imam Hasan Askari (p.b.u.h.). And that he will fill the world with justice and fairness and will put an end to all tyrants. The physicians were careful. The midwives occasionally examined the wives in the home of the Imam so that if they saw any sign of pregnancy, they would inform it to the caliph. But God had uncovered his secret and completed His light long ago.

On the eighth of the month, Imam's health got worse than before. That is why he asked for my presence. I went to him quietly. The soldiers were all sleeping. Imam told me to close the door. Then he asked for a pen and paper, so that I could write a few letters to the Shias in different towns. Imam spoke in a quiet voice and I wrote down whatever he said. This is his letter to the Shias of "Medina",

"...I invite you, oh Shias, to be pious and to struggle for God's satisfaction, and also to be honest and truthful. If you borrow something, give it back to its owner, whether he is a believer or a sinner. Be attentive and careful towards your prayers and prolong your prostrations. Be kind towards your neighbors and be gentle towards others.

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"...if you act likewise, they will tell each other that they are the Shias and followers of the Ahlul Bayt. These words will please us. Try to be pious, because piety causes honor and glory. So, you should try to be the cause of our honor and glory, rather than the cause of our disgrace and shame. Attract the hearts of the people toward us and discharge any bad and false unlawful accusations from us.

We are the household of the prophet. Qur'an counts us as sinless and infallible and has considered a right for us. Anyone apart from this household who claims such a right is a liar and a non-believer.

Then we gave some medicine to Imam. At that time, apart from Imam, there were three other people present in the room; "Narjes khatoon"; the wife of Imam, and the mother of Imam Mahdi; the "Promised Mahdi"; who was five years old; and I, being the confidant of the Imam.

At this time the call to prayer echoed through the dark and gloomy sky of the town from the mosque. Imam handed me back the bowl of medicine to perform his morning prayer. I brought a piece of cloth and spread it on his legs so he could perform his ablution.

Imam prayed in the same sitting position. Then he took the bowl of medicine and brought it to his mouth; but his hand shook and the bowl hit against his teeth. Narjes Khatoon took the bowl from his hand. At that moment, his soul flew from his body; and his holiness went to meet his God.

The room was filled with crying and weeping. The soldiers opened the door and entered, but there was no sign of Imam Mahdi. The news immediately got to the caliph and his vizier. After some time, Imam Hasan Askari's brother, Jafar, came into the room, anxious and drowsy. When he saw the lifeless body of Imam lying on the floor, he took a deep breath and covered his face in his hands, asking me to take the body into the yard to prepare and wash it for burial.

I didn't like Jafar. He was a corrupt and immoral man! He was a friend of the caliph and the vizier and obeyed them. All of the Shias kept distance from him.

Imam had tried to guide him in the right path several times, but there was no result. Jafar wanted to take advantage of the situation and introduce himself as the successor of Imam Hasan Askari (p.b.u.h.) to the people. For this reason, he wanted to pray on the dead body of the Imam. Because he had heard that by the Order of God, only the successor of Imam has the right to pray on the dead body of an Imam.

I was sure that God would reveal the true face of Jafar, but at the same time, I was nervous. I knew that something will come up, but I didn't know what that was.

I took the body of the Imam to the yard. That night the sky was darker than ever. The moon had hidden itself behind thick clouds. There was a chill in the air.

The date palm trees were howling under the lashes of the wind. Crying could still be heard from the house.

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The soldiers were careful and awaited for that "Great Secret". Little by little the darkness of the sky failed and turned bright. A group of the Imam's followers and friends, who had become informed of the event, had come there. They too were crying and hitting themselves on the chest and head. At that moment, Jafar entered the yard. The soldiers went to him one by one and congratulated him on his imamate! Jafar pretended to be very sad.

At that time, Abol-adyan came back from his trip and when he saw the tearful eyes of the people, scratched his face with his nails and his face was covered with his tears and blood.

We were ready for funeral prayer. Jafar stood up and prepared himself for prayer. Everyone present in the yard, stood behind him. He brought his hands up to start praying. Suddenly a handsome boy appeared in front of him and pulled at his garment saying, "step back uncle! I have the right to pray on the body of my father!"

Jafar turned pale and became as white as a sheet, and immediately went to one side.

One of the soldiers asked him, "Who is this boy?"

Jafar answered, trembling "How am I supposed to know?"

But I recognized that child. He was the "Promised Mahdi", the twelfth Imam of the Shias. I felt exceedingly from the inside.

After the prayer, Imam Mahdi told me, "Tell Abol-adyan to bring the answers to the letters."

I gave him Imam Mahdi's message. He was stunned, like all other people who were present there. The soldiers were frozen on their spots. Imam passed them and went into the room. A moment later the soldiers came to themselves and searched the entire house. But there was no trace of his holiness.

When the sun spread its golden rays in the town, we took the body of Imam Askari (p.b.u.h.) to the square of the town. The news spread in the town and every shop was closed. The whole people came to the square, crying at the loss of the Imam. The town of "Samera" had never seen such a huge crowd of mourners.

Abol-adyan and I had sat in a corner, next to Imam Mahdi when a group of the Shias came to on us and told about what was happening in the town. They had come from Iran and had a bag with them. Imam informed them about the contents of the bag. They, who had become surprised about the knowledge of the Imam, gave the bag to the Imam, kissed his hand and went out.

Abol-adyan gave the reply of the letters to Imam Mahdi and went out of the house, having tears in his eyes, in the loss of Imam Hasan Askari (p.b.u.h.), and a smile on his lips in the joy of seeing Imam Mahdi.

At that time, I recalled the promise of God who had said,

"God will complete His Light, although the disbelievers may not like this."