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Consensus of the Shi'a Regarding the Imamah of Imam Sahib al-Amr (may Allah hasten his return) after the Demise of Imam Hasan al-'Askari (peace be upon him)

Question:

According to what Nawbakhti has written the books of Shi'a sects, the Shi'a after Imam Hasan al-'Askari (peace be upon him) split up into fourteen sects. To what extent is this statement correct and until what time were these sects extant?

Answer:

As has passed, Nawbakhti writes:

The Shi'a after the demise of Imam Hasan al-'Askari (peace be upon him) were divided into fourteen sects. However, it appears that there has been some exaggeration in this view, since he and the remaining writers of books pertaining to sects have collected all the views that have been forwarded—even if held by only one person who himself did not remain firm in that opinion until the end. It may very well be that they have mentioned “sects” about which using the word “sect” or “group” would not be correct.

This is because the number of their believers, if they had more than one individual, is not known. It does not appear that they exceeded a few people. Or it is not known until what time and to what extent they were firm in their opinion; thus, they should not be counted as sects, or else the number of sects would reach the hundreds or thousands.

Shaykh Mufid and Shaykh Tusi, may Allah have mercy on them, have also forwarded this same view.

Shaykh Mufid in the second volume of *Al-Fusul al-Mukhtara*, narrating from al-Nawbakhti, mentions the names of these sects and says: None of these sects except the Shi'a exist in our time – 372 A.H.

Thus, it becomes known that these sects have not existed to an extent that they be worthy of being pointed out at all.

Of course, if an opinion is attributed to them, even if it has no clear follower, it is necessary to research it, as Shaykh Mufid and Shaykh Tusi have performed, and they have proven the falsity of the views of all of these sects except the Twelver Shi'a.

In summary, books of sects and schools of thought have been involved in carelessness and exaggeration in counting groups and sects.

Thus, such material in books cannot be relied upon – except in case of sects that exists even today or whose existence as a group is affirmed by reliable histories and references.

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