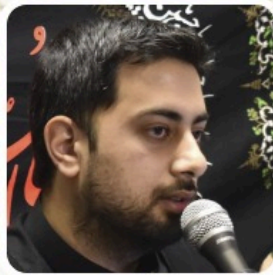


The Army Of Imam Al-Hasan Ibn Ali

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by Syed Ali Imran

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Imam al-Hasan ibn Ali ('a) is known to have had some of the most troublesome companions. Many of them gave him problems due to which the Imam had to go through turbulent times after the martyrdom of his father Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib ('a). After his father's demise, Mu'awiyah had still not been at ease and not long after the scene of another war was being set up between him and the second Imam. Mu'awiyah being a cunning man knew the situation Imam al-Hasan was in, in relationship to his followers and used this to his own advantage. The war (that didn't formally take place, besides a few minor skirmishes) ultimately resulted in the sulh. A lengthy discussion on the sulh itself can be read in the book **The Peace Treaty of al-Hasan [a]** by Shaykh Radi Aal-Yasin¹.

Recently I have been reading up a bit on the army that Imam Al-Hasan ('a) had and what kind of individuals or groups of people it compromised of. There is debate over the number of soldiers the army itself had; some saying it was over 12,000, Tabari has recorded 40,000 in his work² and some historians have recorded almost 100,000 men. In any case the numbers were great. What is important is that despite such large numbers, why the Imam faced such hardship from his own army. This is primarily due to the men that compromised the army itself.

Sheikh Mufid in his Kitab al-Irshad on the chapter of Imam al-Hasan ('a) describes that the army was essentially compromised of five groups of people:

- First were the actual Shi'as of Imam al-Hasan ('a) and many were those who had also been true Shi'as of his father Imam Ali ('a). The numbers of these Shi'as is predicted not to be too many since history would have told another tale if it had been the case. In the sense that Imam Ali ('a) would not have had to resort to a truce at Siffin and Imam Al-Hasan ('a) would not have had to resort to the sulh. Nevertheless, Imam Al-Hasan ('a) did have these followers who were loyal to him till the end of his life.
- The second group of people were the Muhakkima. The term Muhakkima was derived from those who raised the slogan of takhim: La hukm illa li-Llah [No judgement but God's]. They were essentially the Khawarij. Though they were very much against Ali ('a) and also al-Hasan ('a) – they were heavily influenced by their desire to fight against Mu'awiyah and thus joined the army to take heed of the opportunity that was being given to them.

- The third group were those who were motivated to fight due to their inclination towards the material gain. They were not religious, but rather were interested in obtaining the spoils of war after their victory. They had chosen this side after carefully determining who had a greater advantage in terms of achieving victory and subsequently joined the forces.
- The fourth group of individuals were those who were considered doubters, and were influenced by both the Khawarij and the heavy Ummayyad propaganda. While they were part of the army, they had no real motivation to fight or a reason to defend Imam Al-Hasan ('a). Had a war broken out, these group of people would have most probably stepped out of the scene.
- The last group of people were those who merely followed their tribal leaders. It is said that they were the greatest in number within the army and they had no sense of religious responsibility, or the will to fulfill their religious duties.

Due to such large varying factions, the Imam unfortunately always faced a greater threat from his own army as opposed to the army of Mu'awiyah and this threat eventually transpired. Throughout their preparation and journey towards the war, various individuals and groups of people had tried to humiliate the Imam. The Imam ('a) at one point delivered a brief sermon after congregational prayers as follow:

Praise belongs to God whenever a man praises Him. I testify that there is no god but God whenever a man testifies to Him. I testify that Muhammad is His servant and His apostle whom He sent with the truth and whom He entrusted with revelation, may God bless him and his family. By God, I hope that I shall always be with God's praise and kindness. I am the sincerest of God's creatures in giving advice to them. I have not become one who bears malice to any Muslims nor one who wishes evil or misfortune to him. Indeed, what you dislike about unity (jama'a) is better for you than what you like about division. I see what is better for you better than you see for yourselves. Therefore, do not oppose my commands and do not reject my judgement. May God forgive both me and you and may He guide me and you to that in which there is love and satisfaction.

After this, many of the men began to think that the Imam is trying to make excuses to avoid war against Mu'awiyah. Many of the men became angry and plundered the tent of the Imam, took the prayer mat that he was on and one of the men later stabbed him in the thigh. The Imam ('a) later himself describes some of the reasoning for their differences as follow:

By Allah, neither doubt nor regret turns us away from the people of Sham; rather we used to fight against the people of Sham with safety and patience. However, safety has been mixed with enmity and patience with impatience. When you marched towards Siffin, your religion was before your world, while today your world is before your religion. Indeed, you have become between two killed ones. One was killed at (the battle of) Siffin, and you have wept for him. The other was killed at (the Battle of) al-Nahrawan, and you have demanded his blood. As for the rest, they are deserters and rebels.

Reading the details of such historical events and trying to comprehend how people behaved around and

with the Imams makes one feel very uncomfortable. This is what the Imams had to deal with and this is what they had to go through. At times it sends shivers down your back knowing that some of those who opposed the Imams were some of the most religious people alive. The Khawarij for example were known for their worship, yet they resorted to labeling not only Imam Ali (‘a) as an unbeliever, but also Imam al-Hasan (‘a).

Truly it is very hard to be a real Shi’a of the Imams – this is a given, you will face hardships. But I pray that Allah (swt) gives us enough insight to not only recognize the rights of the Imam, but also the strength to face these hardships and not let us drift off the path lest we treat the Imam of our time (ajtf) in this manner when he appears.

1. Online at: <https://www.al-islam.org/sulh-al-Hasan-shaykh-radi-aal-yasin> [2]

2. The History of al-Tabari. Between Civil Wars: The Caliphate of Muawiyah; page 3. Translated by Michael G. Morony

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