

Political Life

The political life in the age of Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) was very bad and unstable. Oppression, injustice, and seditions prevailed everywhere, and many revolts broke out. That, as I think, was due to the domination of the Turks over the reins of government, and their absolute control over all affairs of the state, though they were expert neither in politics nor in administration. They oppressed people, transgressed the rules, and spread terrorism. The other reason behind this was the ignorance of the Abbasid kings, their indulging in pleasures and lusts, and their inadvertence to the interests of people, which caused many political crises at that time.

Oppressing the Alawids

The Alawids were severely tried and extremely burdened during most periods of the Abbasid rule. The Abbasid kings officially oppressed the Alawids, and pursued and punished them severely. They imposed on them economical blockade until they were in utmost neediness.

Historians say that during the reign of al-Mutawakkil, the Alawids suffered neediness and deprivation so bitter and horrible that could not be described. They had nothing but one cloak, and whenever an Alawid man or an Alawid woman wanted to go out, he or she put it on. People refrained from associating with them for fear of the tyrannical government. One day, Muhammad bin Salih (bin) al-Husayn asked Ibrahim bin al-Mudbir (to be as a mediator) to ask 'Isa bin Musa al-Jarmi's daughter's hand. The father of the girl refused and said to the mediator, 'I just tell you the truth. By Allah, I do not know one nobler or more honorable than him, but I refused him just because I fear from al-Mutawakkil and his sons after him for my life and wealth.'¹

Muslims refrained from contacting the Alawids, and even from greeting them, because the Abbasid governments punished severely whoever showed any kind of respect and regard towards the Alawids.

The worst period the Alawids underwent was the reign of al-Mutawakkil who poured all his rage and spite on them. They ran away to all towns and villages² for fear that the government might arrest and lead them either to graveyards or prisons.

The Imam's Amulet

Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) suffered different kinds of oppression and cruelty during the reign of al-Mutawakkil and other Abbasid kings whom the imam was contemporary with. Therefore, he resorted to Allah to protect him from their plots and save him from their evils. He armed himself with this du'a:

“I have charmed myself with the charm of Allah; the light by which He has hidden from eyes, and taken precaution for my self, family, children, properties, and all that under my charge by the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful, and sought refuge for myself and all that from what I fear and beware of with Allah Who *(there is no god but Him, the Everliving, the Eternal. Slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep; whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His, who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases, His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of them both tires Him not, and He is the Most High, the Great),*³ *(And who is more unjust than he who is reminded of the signs of his Lord, then he turns away from them and forgets what his two hands have sent before? Surely We have placed veils over their hearts lest they should understand it and a heaviness in their ears; and if you call them to the guidance, they will not ever follow the right course in that case),*⁴ *(Have you seen him who makes his desire his god, and Allah sends him astray purposely, and seals up his hearing and his heart, and sets on his sight a covering? Then who will lead him after Allah (has condemned him)? Will ye not then heed?),*⁵ *(These are they on whose hearts and their hearing and their eyes Allah has set a seal, and these are the heedless ones),*⁶ *(And when you recite the Qur'an, We place between you and those who do not believe in the hereafter a hidden barrier. And We have placed coverings on their hearts and a heaviness in their ears lest they understand it, and when you mention your Lord alone in the Qur'an they turn their backs in aversion),*⁷ and may Allah have blessings on Muhammad and on his pure progeny...”⁸

This du'a shows the extent of the fears the imam (a.s.) felt from the Abbasids, and therefore, he resorted to Allah to save him and his family from their (the Abbasids') oppression and plotting.

He also charmed himself against the oppression of the Abbasids by this du'a:

“O You, my means at my distress, O You, my succor at my grief, O You, my relief at my loneliness, guard me by Your eye that does not sleep, and shield me by Your shelter that is unreachable.”⁹

Persecuting The People of Qum

The Abbasids persecuted the people of Qum and treated them with oppression and terror. They appointed Musa bin Yahya, who was wicked and unjust, as wali over them. He was impolite, immoral, and inhuman, and people desisted from him. He treated people in a very bad way and excessively oppressed them until the notables of Qum resorted to Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) complaining to him about what that tyrant did to them.

The imam prayed to Allah the Almighty to save them from the evil of that mean, oppressive wali, and taught them this du'a and asked them to recite it in the qunut of their prayers so that Allah might relieve them from this calamity:

“Praise be to Allah as gratefulness to his blessings, calling for His abundance, imploring His livelihood, being loyal to Him and not to other than Him, and refraining from disbelieving in Him and denying His might and exaltedness, a praise of one who knows that all the blessings he has are from his Lord, and the punishments that afflict him are for the wrongs his hands have committed, and the blessings of Allah be on Muhammad His slave and messenger, and the best of His creation, and the means of believers towards His mercy, and (blessings be) on his pure progeny who are his guardians.

O Allah, You have called (Your people) for Your favor, and ordered (them) to supplicate You, and You have insured response to Your people. You have not disappointed whoever resorted to You with a wish and turned to You with a need. You have not let any asking hand come back empty from Your gift or desperate of Your donation. Was there any traveler who traveled to You and did not find You near, or a comer who came to You and You put obstacles between You and him?! Was there any insister on asking You that the flow of Your favor did not include him...?

O Allah, I come to You with my wish, the hand of my request knocks at the door of Your favor, my heart invokes You with the reverence of submission, and I found You the best intercessor for me with You. You know my request before it comes to my mind or gets in my imagination. O Allah, so complete my du'a by Your response to me and meet my request by the satisfying of my wish!

O Allah, the aberration of seditions has included us, the haze of confusion has overcome us, meanness and lowness have fought with us, the untrustworthy on Your religion have ruled over us, the wicked, who have annulled Your rule, have extorted our affairs and tried to damage Your people and corrupt Your land.

O Allah, our wealth is appropriated after it was distributed (among all), and our rule has become domination after it was shura (consultation) and monarchy after it was the nation's option; amusements and musicals have been bought by the shares of orphans and widows, non-Muslims rule over the believers, and sinners have been entrusted with their (people's) affairs, and no protector protected them from a danger, and no guardian looked at them with the eye of mercifulness, and no kind one satisfied the thirsty hearts from a famine, and so they are weak and hungry in a home of loss, captives of wretchedness, inheritors of melancholy, meanness...

O Allah, the plant of falseness has come to harvest, reached its full, its stick has become firm...its branches have gone high and fixed.

O Allah, bring, from the truth, its reaper to reap it, break its stock, smash its branches, cut off its hump, and amputate its extents, so that falseness, with its ugly picture, disappears, and truth, with its beautiful dress, appears.

O Allah, leave no pillar of oppression, but You tear it down; no shield, but You expose it; no unity, but You separate it; no heavy force, but You slight it; no high rank, but You make it low; no post of a banner, but You turn it over; and no lively thing, but You perish it.

O Allah, cover his¹⁰ sun, put out his light, efface his mention, hit, by the truth, his head, scatter his armies, and frighten the hearts of his people!

O Allah, do not leave a remainder of him, unless it is annihilated, nor a structure unless it is torn down, nor a unity unless it is broken, nor an arm unless it is disabled, nor a boundary unless it is violated, nor a flagpole unless it is overthrown!

O Allah, show us his supporters scattered after affinity, separate after unity, and disgraced after their domination over the nation!

O Allah, bring us the day of justice, and show it to us eternal with no darkness in it, and pure light with no pollutant in it, and make its goodness fall down on us, and its blessing come down on us, and avenge on his¹¹ opponent, and support him over his enemy!

O Allah, show the truth,¹² and make it shine in the dusk of darkness, and ambiguity of confusion!

O Allah, enliven by it the dead hearts, unite by it the separate desires and different opinions, establish by it the annulled penalties and neglected rulings, satiate by it the hungry stomachs, relieve by it the weak and tired bodies, as You made us mention it, and put into our mind Your supplicating, made us successful in calling for it, and keeping the people of ignorance away from it, house in our hearts its love, and eagerness to it, and expecting it to establish its ceremonies!

O Allah, give us complete certainty about it, O You, the Achiever of good wills, the Attainer of delayed hopes. O Allah, refute the fabricators who fabricate against You in it, and confute the suspicions of the desperate of Your mercy and desperate of it!

O Allah, make us a means of its means, a figure of its figures, a fort of its forts, and brighten our faces with its brightness, honor us by its support, and make our intention good...

O Allah, You have made us know our selves, and see our defects that we fear not to be able to respond to You, while You favor those who do not deserve it, and bestow on requesters before they request, so give us due to Your generosity and favor, for You do what You like, and determine as You want, and we have resorted to You, and repented of our sins.

O Allah,...and the caller for You, the doer of justice from Your people, the poor to Your mercy, and the needy of Your help on Your obedience...You have given him your blessing, dressed him with the dresses of Your honor, thrown on him the love of Your obedience, fixed his love in the hearts, made him successful to do Your command that the people of his time are indifferent of, made him a resort of the wronged of Your people, and a support to those who do not find a supporter save You, and a restorer of

what has been annulled of the verdicts of Your Book, and a builder of what has been ruined of the laws of Your religion, and the rulings of Your Prophet, Your blessing, peace, and mercy be on him and on his progeny. O Allah, make him safe from the plotting of enemies...and take him to the best that You have taken the doers of Your justice from among the successors of prophets. O Allah, degrade by him whoever does not turn back to Your love, and whoever bears enmity against him, and shoot by Your deadly stone whoever incites against Your religion by degrading him and scattering his power...

O Allah, as he has made himself a target to the far for the sake of You, and sacrificed his soul to defend the believers, and resist the evil of suspicious apostates until he shall remove the spread of disobediences, and show what *Ulema* [scholars] have left behind their backs, whereas they have covenanted to declare it for people and not to conceal it, and he shall call for the obedience of You alone, without ascribing a partner to You from Your creation that his command may be over Yours...O Allah, assist him by Your victory, enable him in what he is unable in, increase his power from Your assistance...

O Allah, honor him with the doing of Your command to see the standing of Reckoning as it is, delight Your Prophet (Your blessings be on him) by seeing him and whoever follows him in his mission, reward him with the best for doing Your command, take him closer to You in his life, and pity our wretchedness...O Allah, make him safe from what is feared for him, drive away from him the arrows of plotting that the people of grudge throw at him, and at the participant in his matter, and his assistants on the obedience of Allah whom You have made as his fort, resort, and comfort, and who leave their families and children and country, give up comfortable beds and ease, stop their trades, harm their livings...and rejected the transient pleasures of this world. O Allah, keep them in Your safety and protection, defend them against whoever has enmity against them from Your people, suffice them and provide them with Your help, assistance, and victory. Defeat, by their right, the falseness of whoever wants to put out Your light. O Allah, fill by them every horizon and every country with justice, fairness, mercy, and virtue, and thank them due to Your generosity and bounty with what You have bestowed on the doers of justice from Your people, and saved for them from Your reward that might raise in degrees. You do whatever You like, and determine whatever You want...'13

Oppression and Tyranny of Viziers

Most viziers of the Abbasid rulers were tyrannical and oppressive. They were disdainful of people and were excessive in subjugating and harming them. One day during the reign of al-Muntasir, his vizier Ahmad bin al-Khasib went out riding on a horse. Some man approached him complaining, and he (the vizier) took his leg out of the stirrup and kicked the man in his chest and killed him. 14

Muhammad bin Abdul Malik, the vizier of al-Wathiq, made an oven and put nails into it to torture people in it. 15

In addition to that, the viziers embezzled the wealth of the state. Uthaman bin Imarah, who was the wali

of Sajistan during the reign of Harun ar-Rashid, was put into prison for five thousand dirhams.

Those viziers just imitated their masters the Abbasid kings who extorted the wealth of Muslims and left them in terrible poverty. Historians say, 'Al-Mansur took from people until he left nothing with them. What he had taken from them was about eight hundred million dirhams.'¹⁶

Internal Revolts

It was natural for the Muslim peoples to struggle and rebel against the Abbasid governments that ruled unjustly and appropriated the wealth and the economical powers of those peoples. Many local revolts took place aiming at getting rid of enslavement, oppression, and persecution. Here we mention some of those revolts to prove our saying that the political life at that age was unstable, confused, and lacking security.

The Revolt of Yahya

The great martyr Yahya bin Umar at-Talibi rebelled against the Abbasid rule calling for the achievement of social justice and the distribution of Muslims' wealth among the poor and the needy. The deprived and all other classes of people joined him because of his real and true aims of improving the general life of the nation. He occupied Kufa and set free all the wronged and oppressed people from its prisons. However, later on, the Abbasid government was able to overcome and kill him. His head was taken to Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Tahir one of the tyrants of that age who took the head to the tyrant caliph al-Musta'een. The head was hung in Samarra' to be as a lesson for whoever might think to rebel. Opportunists went to Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Tahir congratulating him on that victory! Abu Hashim al-Ja'fari as well went to this emir but said to him, 'O emir, you are being congratulated on the killing of a man that if the messenger of Allah (a.s.) was alive, he would be consoled on.'

All present people became silent and no one answered him with anything.¹⁷ He left angrily while reciting the following:

"O Family of Tahir, eat it harmfully,

for the flesh of the Prophet is not edible.

A revenge such that its seeker is Allah,

Definitely will be taken."

The killing of Yahya was one of the disasters that afflicted Muslims at that age and caused a great loss. Poets composed many poems elegizing this great revolutionary leader.

The Revolt of The Negroes

From the revolts that dazed the Abbasids in that age was the revolt of the Negroes led by Ali bin Abdurrahim from bani Abdul Qays who claimed that he was Alawid. He claimed that his lineage belonged to the eternal martyr Zayd bin Ali bin al-Husayn, so that the public might join him and support his revolt.

Anyhow, Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) denied the claims of Ali bin Muhammad the leader of this revolt and said, 'The man (leader) of the Negroes is not from us the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.).¹⁸ The details of this revolt have mentioned in all books of history.

The Revolt of Sham

In Sham¹⁹, Al-Mutawakkil appointed a wolf from among his agents and mercenaries who turned the life of people there into hell, but then they free rebelled against him and drove him away. When al-Mutawakkil found out about that, he sent an army of seven thousand horsemen and three thousand infantrymen, and authorized the general leader to ravage Damascus for three days as Yazeed bin Mo'awiya had done to the town of the Prophet (a.s.) Medina before.²⁰

The Domination of the Turks on the Rule

From the prominent factors of the political and administrative corruption in the body of the Abbasid government at the age of Imam Abu Muhammad (a.s.) was the domination of the Turks over the government and their playing with the destinies of the state. The Abbasid throne was under their will and desire. They appointed and deposed whomever they liked. All constitutional authorities were in their hands, and the king was but in name, for he was deprived of all his administrative authorities and all things else except amusement and lusts.

Al-Mu'tamid was disabled by the Turks to a degree that he was prevented from spending any money whereas the entire world was under his throne. The Turks had control over everything.

Some poet said about al-Musta'een the Abbasid caliph,

"A caliph in a cage,

between Waseef and Bugha.

He says whatever they say to him,

*As a parrot does."*²¹

When al-Mu'tazz assumed the caliphate, some of his companions sent for a diviner and asked him how

long the caliph would sit on the throne and how long he would live. A humorous man from among the attendants said, 'I know that.' They asked him to tell them and he said, 'The matter is in the hands of the Turks. They decide how long he rules and how long he lives.' They all burst into laughter.²²

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1. Maqatil at-Talibiyeen, p.604.
 2. Ibid., p.615.
 3. Qur'an, 2:255.
 4. Qur'an, 18:57.
 5. Qur'an, 54:23.
 6. Qur'an, 16:108.
 7. Qur'an, 17:45-46.
 8. Muhaj ad-Da'awat, p.44-45.
 9. Muhaj ad-Da'awat, p.45.
 10. The unjust ruler.
 11. The awaited savior.
 12. He meant by "the truth" the savior who would rule with justice, and remove all kinds of oppression.
 13. Muhaj ad-Da'awat, p.63-67.
 14. Lectures on the History of the Islamic nations, p.270.
 15. Al-Mahasin wal Masawi', p.531, al-Fakhri, p.214.
 16. Tareekh al-Ya'qubi, vol.3 p.125.
 17. Maqatil at-Talibiyeen, p.164.
 18. Hamish (footnote or margin) al-Kuna wal Alqab, vol.2 p.402.
 19. Nowadays Damascus, but then, Sham encompassed the present Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine.
 20. Mir'at az-Zaman, vol.6 p.169.
 21. Murooj ath-Thahab, vol.4 p.61.
 22. Al-Fakhri, p.181.

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